
They have to be out there.... a strategic survey for mesolithic waterlogged sites in north western Germany

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Abstract

In the northern part of central Europe the current state of research on the Mesolithic is very unbalanced. Best results have been achieved in southern Scandinavia, where postglacial climate change and following changes in the landscape have led to fantastic conservation conditions. There, mesolithic settlement layers often got into waterlogged surroundings through sea level rise and the formation of raised bogs and give an impressive insight into the daily life of the last hunter-gatherer communities of northern Europe. In north western Germany investigations on sites with good organic preservation are lacking so far, although postglacial peat growth as well as direct influence of the holocene sea level rise is largely present in that region.

The Lower Saxony Institute of Historical Coastal Research has set up a project that is designed to conduct an extensive survey for Mesolithic sites with good conditions for organic preservation. Using an interdisciplinary approach, first insights into economical, ecological and social aspects of the Mesolithic communities in this area will be gained. These results will be the framework for further investigations on sites with waterlogged sediments.

Following a multi-level survey strategy it is planned to investigate 40 selected sites that are already known as Mesolithic surface sites situated along the edges of bogs, fens and kettle bogs as well as on the border between sandy moraines and marsh areas. These sites are going to be tested for their archaeological as well as preservation potential by surface surveying, mega-drill corings and geomagnetic investigations. Sites with the most promising results will be selected for more detailed investigations by small test excavations.

The presentation is giving an introduction to the state of the art on Mesolithic research and landscape reconstruction in northwestern Germany and the planned investigations during the coming years.

Keywords: Mesolithic, Survey, Landscape reconstruction, Peat growth

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