
The stratigraphic sequence of Lapa dos Coelhos (Central Portugal): functionality and subsistence during the upper Pleistocene

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Abstract

Archaeological excavations undertaken between 1997 and 2010 at Lapa dos Coelhos – a small cavity in the Almonda River karst system near Torres Novas, Portugal, indicated intermittent occupation by humans during the Upper Pleistocene. During the Magdalenian the site served as a specialized temporary camp, probably related to hunting and fishing activities. A ‘laurel leaf’ fragment suggests human occupation during the Solutrean. The Mousterian artefacts identified in the lowest layers may correspond to runoff from other galleries of the same karstic system. Interpretation of the faunal remains shows that during the earlier periods the site also served as a hyaena den. We also note an important increase of small animals, especially rabbits, during the Tardiglacial period which probably reflects the ‘Mesolithic Crisis’.

Keywords: Palaeolithic, Magdalenian, Solutrean, Mousterien, lithics, fauna, Portugal

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