
Archaeozoological study of the herpetofauna from the Abri Unterkobel (Early Mesolithic to Bronze Age), Canton of Saint Gallen, Switzerland.

Salvador Bailón*^{†1}, Simone Häberle , and Fabio Wegmueller

¹Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle – UMR 7209 - 7194 du CNRS-MNHN 55 – Rue Buffon, CP 55, France

Abstract

The archaeological rock-shelter site of Abri Unterkobel is located at the western side of the Alpine Rhine Valley, near the village of Oberriet, Canton of St. Gallen (CH). The site has a remarkable stratigraphy, approximately 4,5 m in depth, dating from the Early Mesolithic to the Roman Era. The archaeological layers were grouped in 9 units: Unit I (Early Mesolithic, 8200 – 7000 BC) to Unit A (Roman Era, Iron Age, 400 BC – 300 AD). The archaeological excavation recovered about 1000 stone artefacts, more than 20 000 animal bones, about 3500 potsherds and numerous geoarchaeological and archaeobiological samples. An interdisciplinary research project lead by different institutions of Switzerland and France started in 2014. The aims of this project are the reconstruction of the use of the site by prehistoric populations, the climatic and environmental history of the area around the rock-shelter and the record of the human environment interactions throughout the prehistoric period. In Switzerland, the studies concerning the palaeoherpetofauna remain very punctual and include essentially some Neolithic sites. The study of Abri Unterkobel thus constitutes one of the rare Swiss studies concerning amphibians and reptiles in an archaeological context with a long well-known stratigraphic sequence. The Abri of Unterkobel has provided four taxa of amphibians (*Lissotriton helveticus*, *Ichthyosaura alpestris*, *Bufo bufo* and *Rana temporaria*) and at least six taxa of reptiles (cf. *Emys orbicularis*, *Lacerta bilineata*, a small Lacertidae, *Natrix natrix* and *Zamenis longissimus*). Taphonomic, climatic, environmental, paleogeographical data and the possible interaction between man and herpetofauna will be assessed in this study.

Keywords: amphibians, reptiles, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Switzerland

*Speaker

[†]Corresponding author: salvador.bailon@mnhn.fr