

James Allen

Sponsor: Professor John Crock

Zooarchaeological Analysis of Samples from the Rendezvous Bay Site, Anguilla: Continued Investigation into Sustainability and Overexploitation of Marine Fishes

Zooarchaeological samples from the Rendezvous Bay site, Anguilla were studied to investigate possible overexploitation of marine fish communities by Amerindians. The majority of studies focusing on pre-Columbian fishing in the Caribbean suggest that overexploitation was a common outcome of Amerindian fishing during the post-Saladoid period. Rendezvous Bay is a large Late Ceramic Age village site occupied from ca. AD 400/600 to AD 1500. Elements from various fish taxa — lutjanids (snappers), scarids (parrotfishes), haemulids (grunts), carangids (jacks), and acanthurids (doctorfishes) — were identified and measured to identify potential trends in body size over the long-term occupation of the site. Preliminary analysis reveals no correlation between body size and associated depth of excavation, indicating subsistence fishing of targeted fishes did not result in overfishing based on the sample studied. It is proposed that overexploitation of marine fishes was not universally present throughout the Caribbean during the Late Ceramic Period. Instead, both sustainable and non-sustainable exploitation likely resulted in different local environments. Variability in local ecology, human population, and cultural practice are advanced as possible explanations for varying outcomes of exploitation.