

savanna = human refugium

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Global archaeological evidence for proboscidean overkill

Todd Surovell, Nicole Waguespack & P Jeffrey Brantingham 2005

One million years ago, proboscideans occupied most of Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Americas. Today, wild elephants are only found in portions of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Although the causes of global Pleistocene extinctions in the order Proboscidea remain unresolved, the most common explanations involve climatic change and/or human hunting. In this report, we test the overkill and climate-change hypotheses by using global archaeological spatiotemporal patterning in proboscidean kill/scavenge sites. Spanning 1.8 million years, the archaeological record of human subsistence exploitation of proboscideans is preferentially located on the edges of the human geographic range. This finding is commensurate with global overkill, suggesting that prehistoric human range expansion resulted in localized extinction events. In the present and the past, proboscideans have survived in refugia that are largely inaccessible to human populations.

In the present and past, elephants have survived in refugia unreached by humans or those where humans did not exist at sufficient population densities to cause local extinction. ...

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