

Late Pleistocene diet of raptors at Kids Cave

Trevor Worthy

Abstract

A vertebrate fauna from stratified deposits in Kids Cave, West Coast, South Island, New Zealand is described. Excavation of 2 m² of deposit revealed 3699 identified bones from one species of bat, 41 species of birds, 2 species of frogs, unspecified geckoes and skinks, a rat and a fish. This fauna derives from sediment with a shallow stratigraphy (<50 cm) deposited almost entirely within the Late Glacial Maximum from about 17000 to 13800 ¹⁴C years BP, dates based on moa eggshell.

The deposit is near an open cave entrance and on the basis of faunal composition and taphonomic features, is attributed to multiple depositional origins. The majority of bones are attributed to prey remains of birds, primarily New Zealand falcon *Falco novaeseelandiae* but also to Haast's eagle *Harpagornis moorei*.

Eggshell attributed to *Falco* is abundant, but that of possibly the eagle and of 2 moa species is present. Stratigraphic features of the deposit will be discussed that indicate marked climatic variability in the LGM with the earliest period 16859±118 to 14584±98 ¹⁴C yrs BP (20400-19700 to 17750-17150 cal yrs bp) an interstadial of relatively warm climate, which gave way to a markedly colder period between 14584±98 and 13852±122 ¹⁴C yrs BP (17750-17150 and 16900-16300 cal yrs bp).