THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF
THE SNAKE RIVER PLAIN

Second Edition

Mark G. Plew

Boise State University
# The Archaeology of the Snake River Plain

## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. An Historical Outline of the Archaeology of the Snake River Plain</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. The Natural Setting</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. The Ethnographic Context</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Snake River Plain Chronologies</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Holocene Environmental Change on the Eastern and Western Snake River Plains</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holocene Environments of the Eastern Snake River Plain</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holocene Environments of the Western Snake River Plain</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Paleoindian Traditions</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Discoveries at Wilson Butte Cave</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Clovis Subperiod</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible Clovis Age Materials from Jaguar Cave</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Simon Clovis Site</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleistocene Deposits at Kelvin’s Cave</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Buhl Burial: A Paleoindian Woman</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversion Dam Cave: A Paleoindian Site Near Boise, Idaho?</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Folsom Subperiod</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folsom Points and Elephants at the Wasden Site (Owl Cave)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Plano Subperiod</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Horizons at Bison and Veratic Rockshelters</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haskett Points: A Unique Plano Type</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Idaho Plano</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. The Archaic Period</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Archaic Components</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Snake River Plain</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Archaic Materials at Bison and Veratic Rockshelters</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackknife Cave</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunting at Malad Hill</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Archaeology of the Snake River Plain

Early Archaic Bison Hunting at the Wasden Site (Owl Cave).............54
Weston Canyon........................................54
Early Archaic Deposits at Jimmy Olsen Rockshelter.....................57
Wilson Butte II Assemblage..................................58
Rock Creek: Little Lake Technology and Upland Land Use.............58
Middle and Late Archaic Components at Milner Rockshelter
(10-JE-47), Southern Idaho..................................60
Western Snake River Plain......................................61
Early Holocene (Archaic) Occupations at the Hetrick Site.............61
Bachman Cave....................................................62
Summary..................................................................65

VIII. The Middle Archaic Period..............................................67
Eastern Snake River Plain............................................67
The Dean Site: Human Occupations on Brown's Bench...............67
Kueney Site: Little Lake Technology and Mussel Collecting
in the South Hills...................................................69
Warm Creek Spring: A Prehistoric Lithic Workshop..................70
Bobcat Cave Scaredy Cat and Tomcat Caves: Evidence of
Prehistoric Cold Storage on the Eastern Snake River Plain........70
Middle Archaic Occupations in Willow Creek Canyon...............76
Western Snake River Plain............................................77
Middle Archaic Components at Nahas Cave.............................77
Dry Creek Rockshelter..............................................80
Midvale and Mesa Hill: Evidence of Lithic Quarrying..............82
Early Middle Archaic Components at 10-OE-128 and
10-OE-129 ...........................................................82
Danskin Rockshelter................................................83
Middle Archaic House Structures at Givens Hot Springs..............85
Middle Archaic Occupations in the Payette River Drainage..........87
Montour: A Middle Archaic House..................................88
Horseshoe Bend......................................................89
The Western Idaho Archaic Burial Complex: Evidence of
Hunter-Gatherer Social Differentiation................................90
Test Excavations at 10-OE-2296: A Possible House Structure
Near Hammett.......................................................93
Summary..................................................................94

IX. The Late Archaic Period...................................................95
Western Snake River Plain............................................95
Big Foot Bar..........................................................98
Excavations at 10-AA-15............................................99
The Midden Site.......................................................101
Archaeological Test Excavations at Swan Falls (10-AA-17)........102
Cromwell: A Mussel Collecting Station................................104
Archaeological Test Excavations at 10-CN-1.........................104
Archaeological Excavations at 10-CN-5........................................... 109
The Archaeology of Site 10-CN-6.................................................. 111
Archaeological Investigations at Bonus Cove Ranch.................... 114
Schellbach Cave No. 1: A Late Archaic Fishing Cache................. 115
Activity Area Archaeology in the Birds of Prey National
Conservation Area........................................................................ 118
Archaeological Investigations at 10-EL-392.................................. 119
Test Excavations at the Medbury Site Near Hammett..................... 122
Three Island Crossing: A Fishing Station on the Middle
Snake River.................................................................................. 123
Three Island Crossing and Prehistoric Salmon Fishing.................. 131
Archaeological Excavations at the Knox and Swenson and
King Hill Creek Sites.................................................................... 136
  Knox......................................................................................... 137
  Swenson................................................................................. 140
  King Hill Creek....................................................................... 143
Bliss: Late Archaic Occupations in the Eastern Hagerman Valley... 148
10-TF-352..................................................................................... 151
Hagerman National Fish Hatchery Locality.................................... 152
Early to Late Archaic Components at the Crutchfield Site............. 155
Burials and Funerary Practices on the Western Snake River Plain... 157
  Mecham Site............................................................................ 157
  Manning Site.......................................................................... 158
  The Royston Burial Site.......................................................... 158
  The Hardtrigger Creek Burial Site......................................... 159
  Rattlesnake Canyon Cremation Site....................................... 160
Middle and Late Archaic Occupations at Lydle Gulch.................... 162
Late Archaic Prehistory of the Owyhee Uplands............................ 164
Camas Creek II-III Phase Settlement Pattern............................... 165
Five Fingers and “Y” Buffalo Jumps: Possible Middle and
  Late Archaic Bison Hunting in the Eastern Owyhee Country?....... 170
Eastern Snake River Plain............................................................. 170
The Dietrich Phase at Wilson Butte Cave: Late Archaic
  Evidence of a Possible Fremont Presence on the Snake River
  Plain?...................................................................................... 170
Kanaka Rapids............................................................................ 179
Kwahadu Rockshelter................................................................... 179
Pence-Duerig Cave: Evidence of Perishable Material Culture........ 180
Bison Heights: A Late Holocene Bison Kill Site?......................... 185
Late Archaic Occupations at Aviator’s Cave................................. 186
Baker Caves I and III: Late Archaic Bison Hunting on the
  Eastern Snake River Plain......................................................... 188
Rock Springs: Late Archaic Evidence of Bison and Pronghorn
  Procurement............................................................................. 192
Wahmuza: Late Archaic Shoshonean Occupations in the
  Fort Hall Bottoms.................................................................... 193
Middle and Late Archaic Occupations at Corn Creek and Dagger Falls: Great Basin Culture in the Northern Rocky Mountains......197
Late Archaic Horizons at Meadow Creek Rockshelter............198
Prehistoric Site Structure at Poison Creek......................198
Ashtrap Rockshelter..............................................199
Kitty's Hot Hole................................................201
Columbet Creek Rockshelter.......................................203
Hemmer: Late Archaic Fishing in Southeastern Idaho..............205
Ancillary Studies: Archaic Settlement Archaeology..............207
The Rock Art of the Snake River Plain...........................209
Stone Alignments and Complexes of the Snake River Plain........217
Archaeological Studies of Mobility................................220
   Assemblage Variability.......................................220
   Mobility Driven by Specific Resource Exploitation...........221
   Time Investments in Ceramic Production.......................222
   Acquisition and Transport of Lithic Resources...............222
   Lithic Caching Strategies....................................224
   Storage as an Indicator of Mobility............................226
Summary....................................................................228

X. Protohistoric and Early Historic Period Archaeology of the Snake River Plain..................................................231
   17th and 19th Century Occupations at Bliss......................233
   18th and 19th Century Occupations at Wahmuza..................239
   Historic Challis Bison Jump?....................................239
Summary....................................................................241

XI. Summary..................................................................243

References Cited..........................................................245

Index..........................................................................287