Emu Butchery and Economic Utility

Implications for understanding Australian zooarchaeology and megafaunal extinctions

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BACKGROUND:

Despite continuing over the role of humans in the extinction of the Australian megafauna during the Late Pleistocene. If megafauna were human prey then it is important to try and understand their economic utility, and how they were hunted and butchered4. This paper presents the results of a forensic and economic utility study of the emu in the semi-arid zone of southeast Australia. The results are used to determine the economic return from the extinct giant flightless bird Genyornis, and butcher/belly part meat likely to have been targeted by humans. Results will provide important outcomes for interpreting Genyornis remains such as that found at Cuddie Springs, NSW, where it is found co-occurring with flaked stone artefacts between c. 30,000 to c. 36,000 years ago5. These results also have important implications for understanding and interpreting Australia’s unique suite of endemic species and its zooarchaeological record.

RESEARCH AIMS:

The specific research aims of this project include:
1. To examine and document modern emu butchery and cooking by Indigenous Australians;
2. To understand the economic utility of emu in the semi-arid of southeast Australia; and
3. To model emu butchery for interpretation of archaeological assemblages.

RESULTS:

Emus were found co-occurring with flaked stone artefacts between c. 30,000 to c. 36,000 years ago in the semi-arid zone of southeast Australia. Where it is found co-occurring with flaked stone artefacts between c. 30,000 to c. 36,000 years ago. These methods have been used to identify the emu as a target species for butchery in the region. Genyornis was the last of Australia’s endemic flightless birds ‘mihirung’. The emu is a large flightless bird that has been targeted for its meat and eggs. Genyornis was the last of Australia’s endemic flightless birds ‘mihirung’. The emu is a large flightless bird that has been targeted for its meat and eggs. Genyornis was the last of Australia’s endemic flightless birds ‘mihirung’. The emu is a large flightless bird that has been targeted for its meat and eggs. Genyornis was the last of Australia’s endemic flightless birds ‘mihirung’. The emu is a large flightless bird that has been targeted for its meat and eggs.