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Honey's effects on human evolution excite UNLV anthropologist

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Honey's effects on human evolution excite UNLV anthropologist
By **Richard Lake** LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL Apr. 16, 2012

Sometimes, life throws things at you. What you decide to do with them can mean nothing.

Or it can mean everything.

Like when Alyssa Crittenden was an undergraduate and she took an introduction to evolution class at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Whoa. Blew. Her. Away.

"It changed my life," said Crittenden, now an anthropology professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas whose most recent study is shaking up the way anthropologists think about the evolution of the human diet.

After that first class threw her a curve ball, Crittenden handled it like this: She gave up on being a doctor, she changed her major, she went on to get a doctorate degree, she decided to study the Hazda people in east Africa, and she noticed something kind-of odd living out there in the bush.

The Hazda simply love honey.

Yes, you're saying right now, of course they love honey. Who doesn't love honey? It's yummy!

Well, yes. But. Would you risk your life to get it?

These folks do.

Which got Crittenden thinking. The wheels churning up in her brain, she began to do some research.

What she figured out might change the way the world sees early humans.

Instead of ferocious hunters stalking game across the African savannah, maybe instead -- or in addition to that -- we started out singing duets with tiny little birds with a craving for beeswax.

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Crittenden used to be a kid who waited around with her grandpa for the new issues of National Geographic to arrive every month, so it's not really a shock that she became an anthropologist.

As she grew up, she refined her interests, focused on health and disease, how they relate to reproduction and diet, that sort of thing.

So of course she was a pre-med major when she went off to college.

And then the anthropology class changed everything. She learned about the study of biological anthropology. She learned about how evolution helped design the human body to be more efficient when it lived off some foods, but not some others.

She's become an expert on food and the evolution of the human diet.

Humans evolved first as bands of what anthropologists call hunter-gatherers, which is a pretty descriptive term. Small groups survived by hunting game and gathering wild plant materials to eat. Humans lived this way from about 2½ million years ago until the invention of agriculture about 10,000 years ago.

One way to get a glimpse into humanity's past is to get familiar with the people who still live that way, mostly.

There aren't many of those groups left. One of them is the Hazda people, a small population in Tanzania.

Over the last eight years, Crittenden has studied them. She lives with them sometimes. She's become good friends with many of them.

She noticed the honey thing. When asked what their favorite food was, virtually every member of the group said honey.

But it's not like these people can just get some at 7-Eleven. They have to work for it. Often, it's guarded by hives of killer bees.

So, they get help from the honeyguide, a bird. Mostly, it's the men who do this.

They'll go out looking for honey. This bird will know where it is. The bird will notice the honey hunter, and the bird will chirp out a song.

The hunter will answer. They'll go back and forth. The bird will eventually lead the hunter to the hive, which is often burrowed deep inside a really high branch on a tree.

The hunter makes his way up there, with great difficulty. He smokes out the bees, which calms them. He breaks the branch open with tools, snags the honey, brings it back to his people, and everyone digs in.

The bird cleans up on the remains; bee carcasses and beeswax are a particular favorite. ●●●

Why expend so much effort to satisfy a sweet tooth?

This is the question that drove Crittenden.

She researched the literature. She found references to cave art drawings of honey extraction from tens of thousands of years ago.

Apparently, honey's been a big deal to people for a long time.

There are also plenty of other primates -- chimpanzees, baboons, etc. -- who eat honey, too.

Crittenden also knew that human brains got much bigger a couple million years ago, right around the same time people started using complicated tools.

Big brains are great. They're what makes us people.

But they're also expensive. They require lots of energy to maintain.

"What happened 2 million years ago that all of a sudden, we starting seeing these things coincide?" Crittenden said.

There had to be a fairly substantial change in diet.

The theory, in general, has always gone like this: The new tools those big brains allowed people to create were used to hunt meat, which gives lots of energy, protein and fat, all of which is good for a big brain.

"Most of the debate has focused on meat versus plant foods," Crittenden said.

There's ample fossil evidence to back this up.

But is it really that simple?

Maybe, Crittenden thought, there was more. Maybe honey, which leaves no fossilized evidence behind, was a big deal too.

Honey is energy dense, after all. And in the wild, the stuff is packed with bee larvae, which is full of fat and protein.

So, Crittenden wrote all this up, published it in an academic journal.

Smithsonian magazine covered this on its website. It's gotten lots of attention. It's not common for a single idea to throw a wrench into everything we thought we knew in a field that's more than a century old.

"People have been so caught up in this meat vs. plant foods debate, the idea that it could be honey is counterintuitive," Crittenden said.

All of this isn't just academic. It can have implications in the real world.

Crittenden said we're not supposed to be eating all the processed foods we do. Our bodies weren't designed for it. We can't cope and be healthy.

Looking into how we got where we are, she said, can help us figure out where we should be now, where we're going, and how to get there.

Contact reporter Richard Lake at rlake@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0307.

In today's excerpt from delanceyplace.com - prior to the American Revolution, the British had forbidden the colonists from moving beyond the Appalachian mountains. With American independence, the metaphorical floodgates were opened and there was a **massive westward migration of Americans**. But this migration had a cost - the wholesale disruption of the support provided by family, community and church, and the loneliness and alienation of the frontier. For Protestant church leaders in the East, who were already under assault from the deism of the American intellectual elite, this disruption in church membership was a crisis, and they began to form missionary societies and use revivals to take the gospel to the West. With this came a pivotal moment in American history - the Great Revival of 1801 and the Second Great Awakening:

"[Encouraged by the smaller but successful Gasper River revival in 1800, Barton] Stone announced a sacramental service for August 6, 1801. While he surely believed that people would come, neither he nor anyone else could possibly have been prepared for the response that ensued. Eye-witness accounts estimated that between 10,000 and 25,000 people came to Cane Ridge. At the time there were only a quarter-million people in all of Kentucky and only 1800 in Lexington, Kentucky's largest city.

Technically this was a Presbyterian meeting, but there were many Baptists and Methodists present, including preachers from those denominations. Preaching stands were erected at several points across the camp-meeting field so that several preachers could speak at once to separate audiences. Hundreds were converted, either for the first time in their lives or as part of what Protestants often called a rededication.

"James Finley, who would later become a Methodist minister, was one of those converted at Cane Ridge, and his story was not unusual. He was 21 years of age at the time, the wayward son of a Princeton-trained Presbyterian minister. He had drifted off to the frontier and taken to drinking, dancing, and assorted other activities, all considered serious sins in the Protestant faith of the time. He went to Cane Ridge merely to observe the excitement, being determined not to be drawn in. He was also an educated young man, and the frontier emotionalism of revivals was not for him. As he watched hundreds of people shrieking and gyrating in spiritual agony, he was deeply moved and felt physically weak.

"He rushed first to the woods, then to a tavern, where he took a stiff drink to calm himself. He returned to the meeting and walked again among the people caught up in revival, feeling the weight of his own sins pressing on his conscience. After a nearly sleepless night in a haystack,

the next day he headed for home. Along the way he stopped in a woods to pray and fell to the ground, unable to move. Neighbors found him, took him to a nearby home and put him to bed. When he awoke, he reported, he felt spiritual release and was able to continue his journey home with the assurance that his sins were forgiven. Finley's is just one of the more vivid and detailed accounts of conversion at Cane Ridge. Another account has Rachel Martin entering into what was called 'catalepsy.' She lay in bed for nine days without moving, speaking, or eating before gaining spiritual release and conversion.

"When the revival was completed, it was referred to widely as the greatest outpouring of the Holy Spirit since Pentecost in the first century, when St. Peter and the other apostles preached and saw thousands converted to the new faith. Stone himself ... wrote a treatise describing in systematic fashion some of the emotional gyrations that people experienced during the revival. In addition to Rachel Martin's catalepsy, he catalogued these as spiritual exercises: 'the falling exercise, jerking exercise, dancing exercise, barking exercise, laughing exercise, running exercise, and singing exercise.' Such emotional responses have made it very difficult to evaluate the Cane Ridge revival, and many of these physical manifestations were viewed unfavorably even by contemporaries. Hardly anyone in that day or since can be objective about such things.

"As one might guess, those who opposed the revivals used the 'barking exercise' to argue that these meetings were excessive. Accounts of that particular exercise described people in the throes of spiritual agony rocking back and forth, causing grunts and groans. The faster they rocked, the louder and more staccato the noise, until it eventually sounded like a bark. Critics also pointed out that along with the spiritual experiences were other more sensate and sensory excesses. Specifically, there was a good deal of alcohol consumed by those who came to the revivals more out of carnal than spiritual curiosity. Hucksters sold whisky from wagons on the outskirts of the encampment. Moreover, for those who attended primarily to be part of a good party, there were sexual liaisons, leading some to claim that more souls were conceived than saved. While revivals were almost always emotional affairs with crying, shouting, and sometimes falling, excesses such as barking and treeing the devil, often cited to discredit the revivals, were limited. With the possible exception of the early meetings, they never became regular features of the Second Great Awakening.

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"Cane Ridge set off waves of revivals that would last for years, and this Great Revival is generally regarded as the beginning of the Second Great Awakening."

The Second Great Awakening and the Transcendentalists (Greenwood Guides to Historic Events 1500-1900) by Barry Hankins

published by Greenwood 2004 Pages: 10-12 Hardcover

Are You Sick Of 'Highly Paid' Teachers? (HUMOR) By [Guest Writer](#) April 15, 2012

By Author Unknown (if you know who wrote it, PLEASE let me know)

Teachers' hefty salaries are driving up taxes, and they only work 9 or 10 months a year! It's time we put things in perspective and pay them for what they do – babysit!

We can get that for less than minimum wage.

That's right. Let's give them \$3.00 an hour and only the hours they worked; not any of that silly planning time, or any time they spend before or after school. That would be \$19.50 a day (7:45 to 3:00 PM with 45 min. off for lunch and plan– that equals 6 1/2 hours).

Each parent should pay \$19.50 a day for these teachers to baby-sit their children. Now how many students do they teach in a day...maybe 30? So that's $\$19.50 \times 30 = \585.00 a day.

However, remember they only work 180 days a year!!! I am not going to pay them for any vacations.

LET'S SEE....

That's $\$585 \times 180 = \$105,300$ per year. (Hold on! My calculator needs new batteries).

What about those special education teachers and the ones with Master's degrees? Well, we could pay them minimum wage (\$7.75), and just to be fair, round it off to \$8.00 an hour. That would be $\$8 \times 6 \frac{1}{2} \text{ hours} \times 30 \text{ children} \times 180 \text{ days} = \$280,800$ per year.

Wait a minute — there's something wrong here! There sure is!

The average teacher's salary (nation wide) is \$50,000. $\$50,000/180 \text{ days} = \$277.77/\text{per day}/30 \text{ students} = \$9.25/6.5 \text{ hours} = \1.42 per hour per student—a very inexpensive baby-sitter and they even EDUCATE your kids!) WHAT A DEAL!!!!

Make a teacher smile; repost this to show appreciation for all educators.

“ My school is very unusual. **North Country School** is a boarding school, and every morning, students are woken up at 6:30 to go to the barn and work with the horses, muck their stalls, clean a classroom, take care of the compost, feed the chickens, wash the eggs, work in the kitchen, or tend the sheep, pigs, or goats. I think this aspect of our routine makes my school very unique, and it is a good policy for every kid, to work every morning, on something other than school work. This work ties our community together, and every kid has interactions that they may have never had in their life. For instance, grooming a horse, being in their stall, knowing their name, giving them their grain, knowing exactly what they eat; this all gives you a connection with the horse that many kids have never felt. It is so rewarding to know that the horse depends on you. It gives each student a sense of responsibility that I never felt at my public school. Another way my school is unique is that all our meals are served at a table, family style, with five kids and one adult. Not to mention that every day, we probably consume something that we have grown, whether it is meat, vegetables, potatoes, or eggs. When I was at public school, eating was so different; I never felt connected to my food. Also, we have very different academics. First of all, we have small classes; my grade has 22 kids in total. I think more schools should adapt to having small classes, because they feel more individualized. The teacher can address your needs specifically. Second we call our teachers by their first name. I think this is one of the most

valuable parts of our academics. I feel that to have teachers live with you and still call them by their last name is odd; furthermore it brings the students and teachers very close; it levels the playing field. I find my current school like a way of life, as it is similar to a town, we are a tightly knit community with 86 kids, and I believe that every student should have the ability to experience that.”

– *Lucy H.* *What Can Other Schools Learn -- and Copy -- From Your School?*

PEEPS You need to Know:

Leadership: For the duration of the current grant period (2008-2012), ATALM is sponsored by the Oklahoma Department of Libraries and led by Susan Feller, Development Officer. Project Management is provided by Melissa Brodt. National Leadership Committees and Advisors are working on various phases of the project

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NEW SHORT FILM CASTING.....

Short Film- "Date With The Dead"

9 people to cast

Casting on 4/28/2012

Shoots in Hawthorne, Nevada September 19 and 20th

Accommodations provided if out of town talent are cast.

Gina- 18/19, Caucasian, Attractive

Pete (Zombie dating Gina) - teenage 18/19

Father (Gina's)- mid 40's (kind of like dad on 70's show) knows something is off about Pete but does not know what

Alexis- (Gina's friend)- 18-19 years, any ethnicity

Wally (dating Alexis) 18-19, any ethnicity

Jack - 18/19, any ethnicity

Waitress- late 30's early 40's, well weathered mentality, been around for a while kind of waitress

Father Cummings (Pete's dad Who is Zombie) - late 30's early 40's

Mother Cummings (Pete's Mom who is a Zombie) late 30's early 40's...

To audition for this project, email Toni@integritycasting.com head shot/resume and availability for audition on 4/28 and shoot dates on 9/19 and 9/20/2012.

Water: Our most precious resource

Bertha Velasquez, La Voz

The Colorado River is a source of contention not only in Colorado, but also along neighboring Western states.

The river basin serves as a major water source for more than 30 million Americans living in Western United States (Arizona, California, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming) including Colorado and for several million Mexicans.

Commentary: Why do women steer clear of engineering?

Guest post by Kristin R. Tichenor, senior vice president for enrollment and institutional strategy at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Washington Post

Whenever I read about a dearth of women in engineering, I am struck by the fact that many young women continue to resist the opportunities awaiting them in this male-dominated profession. Twenty years ago, high school girls simply were not taking the requisite math and science classes to gain admission to college-level engineering programs. Today, there are plenty of young women taking AP calculus and physics in high school, yet we have made little progress in the number of women choosing to pursue engineering in college. The issue is no longer a matter of academic preparation but one of academic inclination. Women continue to steer clear of engineering due to a lack of familiarity with the profession, -particularly in terms of its potentially positive social impact, - and a lack of confidence in their ability to succeed in the field.