



New zooarchaeological reference collection in Iceland

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The Icelandic zooarchaeological reference collection housed at the Agricultural University of Iceland is now open to outside researchers. This is the first such collection in Iceland and it currently has specimens of various mammals, birds and fish found in or around Iceland. There are 260 specimens in the collection that are ready for use, with an additional 80 samples in various stages of preparation. Detailed information such as origin, species, age and sex is available for many specimens.

There are about 148 samples from mammals in the collection, mostly domestic. These include 90 partial skeletons from Icelandic sheep, which have detailed information about sex, age and size. Most of the sheep samples include at a minimum a skull, mandibles, humerus, femur, tibia, scapula, parts of the vertebral column and ribs. For wild animals the collection has dolphin, seal, arctic fox and more.

The bird bone reference collection includes a diverse range of species found in Iceland, with 150 specimens. Most of the bird specimens are whole skeletons. The collection includes 22 skeletons of Icelandic chickens, both males and females and of various ages.



Figure 1: Sheep bones in preparation for the reference collection in 2017 (photo Elísa Skúladóttir)

The fish collection is still limited; currently there are only 40 fish specimens but the plan is to expand this in the coming years.

Work on the reference collection has been funded by grants from the Archaeological Heritage Fund in Iceland (grant nos 201702-0044 and 201602-0099).

Researchers interested in visiting the collection or obtaining further information about available specimens can contact Albína Hulda Pálsdóttir at albinap@gmail.com. An annual report for 2017 with an updated sample list will be published before the end of the year.

The list of available samples is accessible on the Agricultural University of Iceland website: http://www.lbhi.is/sites/default/files/gogn/vidhengi/thjonusta/utgefid_efni/RitLbhi/rit_lbhi_nr_71_samanburdarsafn_lbhi_aui_reference_collection.xlsx.

The annual report for the year 2016 (in Icelandic) is available at: http://www.lbhi.is/sites/default/files/gogn/vidhengi/thjonusta/utgefid_efni/RitLbhi/rit_lbhi_nr_71.pdf.

Figure 2: Grey seal skeleton in preparation for the reference collection in 2016 (photo Albína Hulda Pálsdóttir)