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# Using bird remains to reconstruct palaeohabitats at Sibhudu Cave, South Africa, from MIS 5 to MIS3

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## Résumé

Located in the subtropical biome of the Indian Ocean Coastal Belt of South Africa, Sibhudu Cave is a large rock shelter that preserves archaeological sediments associated with human occupations dated from the Marine Isotopic Stage (MIS) 5 until the MIS 3. The site has yielded the largest and most taxonomically diverse Late Pleistocene avifaunal assemblage retrieved in southern Africa to date. We have adapted the habitat-weighting method, which traditionally uses small mammals to propose palaeoenvironmental reconstructions, to the bird assemblage, in order to identify changes and continuities in the local habitats through time. We recognize the persistence of an evergreen forest throughout all phases of human occupation of the shelter. We have identified direct evidence for the occasional exploitation of forest birds by people. Existing data on mammals demonstrates a clear focus on species endemic to Afrotropical forests, namely bushpigs and blue duikers. Combined, these results indicate that the Late Pleistocene inhabitants of Sibhudu Cave were routinely exploiting animal resources from a subtropical environment from at least 100 000 years ago.

**Mots-Clés:** MSA, Avian Fauna, Palaeoenvironment, Sibhudu Cave, Late Pleistocene Habitats

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