



The Invaders: How Humans and Their Dogs Drove Neanderthals to Extinction

By Pat Shipman

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With their large brains, sturdy physique, sophisticated tools, and hunting skills, Neanderthals are the closest known relatives to humans. Approximately 200,000 years ago, as modern humans began to radiate out from their evolutionary birthplace in Africa, Neanderthals were already thriving in Europe?descendants of a much earlier migration of the African genus *Homo*. But when modern humans eventually made their way to Europe 45,000 years ago, Neanderthals suddenly vanished. Ever since the first Neanderthal bones were identified in 1856, scientists have been vexed by the question, why did modern humans survive while their evolutionary cousins went extinct?

The Invaders musters compelling evidence to show that the major factor in the Neanderthals' demise was direct competition with newly arriving humans. Drawing on insights from the field of invasion biology, which predicts that the species ecologically closest to the invasive predator will face the greatest competition, Pat Shipman traces the devastating impact of a growing human population: reduction of Neanderthals' geographic range, isolation into small groups, and loss of genetic diversity.

But modern humans were not the only invaders who competed with Neanderthals for big game. Shipman reveals fascinating confirmation of humans' partnership with the first domesticated wolf-dogs soon after Neanderthals first began to disappear. This alliance between two predator species, she hypothesizes, made possible an unprecedented degree of success in hunting large Ice Age mammals?a distinct and ultimately decisive advantage for humans over Neanderthals at a time when climate change made both groups vulnerable.

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Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #374629 in Books
- Published on: 2015-03-10
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.50" h x 1.10" w x 5.80" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 288 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

Shipman [is] a genial and authoritative guide to a complex field... Shipman admits that scientists have yet to find genetic evidence that would prove her theory. Time will tell if she's right. For now, read this book for an engagingly comprehensive overview of the rapidly evolving understanding of our own origins. (Toby Lester *Wall Street Journal* 2015-03-20)

Few if any readers of this lucid and compelling exposition will come away believing that the early modern Europeans were not deeply implicated in the Neanderthals' disappearance. (Ian Tattersall *Times Literary Supplement* 2015-05-01)

Are humans the ultimate invasive species? So contends anthropologist Pat Shipman?and Neanderthals, she opines, were among our first victims. The relationship between *Homo sapiens* and *Homo neanderthalensis* is laid out cleanly, along with genetic and other evidence. Shipman posits provocatively that the deciding factor in the triumph of our ancestors was the domestication of wolves. Perhaps more troubling is the concept of early humans as invaders, rather than just another species finding its way. (Daniel Cressey *Nature* 2015-04-02)

Since the discovery in the 19th century of Neanderthal remains, the cause of their extinction has arguably been the most compelling mystery in human evolution... *The Invaders* offers us the appealing prospect of an expert writing on her specialism and clearly having a great deal of fun doing so. Shipman builds an extremely compelling case for the role of *Homo sapiens* as an invasive species who arrived in Europe about 40,000 to 50,000 years ago and had an immediate impact on their new ecosystem. The Neanderthals were not the only victims... What makes Shipman's argument really stand out and offer a fresh perspective on the extinction of Neanderthals is the role that she gives to wolves in the process that led to the dominance of *Homo sapiens*. (Simon Underdown *Times Higher Education* 2015-04-23)

According to a leading U.S. anthropologist, early dogs, bred from wolves, played a critical role in the modern human's takeover of Europe 40,000 years ago when we vanquished the Neanderthal locals... If Shipman is right, she will have solved one of evolution's most intriguing mysteries. (Robin McKie *The Observer* 2015-03-01)

[A] cautious but compelling argument. (Brian Bethune *Maclean's* 2015-03-22)

Provocative...Shipman's story makes for a dramatic and compelling narrative. (Mark Derr *Psychology Today* 2015-03-16)

If you want to understand your own mind, read this remarkable and important book. Summoning new evidence, Pat Shipman shows how our coevolution with wolves contributed to the extinction of Neanderthals and further transformed us through the process of domesticating dogs. You will never look at Fido the same way again! (Nina G. Jablonski, Ph.D., Evan Pugh Professor of Anthropology, The Pennsylvania State University)

Why did the Neanderthals disappear? In a judicious and enthralling account, Shipman makes a compelling case that, as a truly invasive species, humans were the main cause. An original twist adds an accomplice to

the scenario: An unexpectedly early prototype of man's best friend proved to be the Neanderthals' worst enemy. (Robert D. Martin, A. Watson Armour III Curator of Biological Anthropology, The Field Museum, Chicago)

With her lucid synthesis of recent research, Shipman demonstrates that *Homo sapiens* was and is the very model of an invasive species. (Harriet Ritvo, Arthur J. Conner Professor of History, Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

Shipman's thesis is finely crafted, with loads of explanation and discussion for her various thought processes and details of the science they are based on. She also points out competing arguments, and her academic opponents are included in her acknowledgments. The discussions of how humans are invasive species and how dogs may have contributed to our success as invaders after we left Africa are alone well worth the purchase of this book. (K. Kris Hirst *About Archaeology* 2015-08-01)

About the Author

Pat Shipman is retired Adjunct Professor of Anthropology at Pennsylvania State University.

Users Review

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