

My experience at the 2012 Zooarchaeology and Field Ecology Course in northern California was certainly noteworthy. My time there was spent familiarizing myself with taxonomy, ecology, and skeletal anatomy of all vertebrate species, particularly from northern California. We toured multiple habitat types throughout the northern portion of California, Oregon, and Nevada. Along the way we stopped and visited with a number of other archaeological sites and field schools. Our instructors provided a thorough review of zooarchaeological history and methods which have given each of us the essential building blocks to begin a career in zooarchaeology. Some of our labs even gave us the chance to prepare our own skeletal and skin museum specimens that we had collected on our various field trips. The final week of the field school was devoted to the development and carrying out of our own zooarchaeological research projects, which were then presented in the Stanley J. Olsen 2012 Zooarchaeological Conference. My study challenged the validity of Optimal Foraging Theory by comparing vertebrate remains found in Great Horned Owl pellets to animals captured via live trapping in the owl home ranges. My results were significant, suggesting that Optimal Foraging theory may not provide accurate accounts of abundances of ancient vertebrates. With these abundances zooarchaeologists can then reconstruct paleoenvironments. However, my sample size was relatively small and my limited sampling time may skew my results. This has prompted me to pursue this question on into my regular studies at Purdue and I plan to write an undergraduate thesis concerning this question. Overall, this field school had a profound effect on my studies, future plans, and myself. It was a perfect fit for me and I am very grateful for the experience.