

## Did dogs team up with humans to drive Neanderthals to extinction?

Ancient humans drove Neanderthals to extinction around 40,000 years ago with the help of dogs soon after canines diverged from their wolf ancestors, anthropologist Pat Shipman proposes in her new book, *The Invaders*. Using fossil and genetic studies to build her case, Shipman argues that European *Homo sapiens* used the first dogs to track and corral big game for spear-wielding hunters. Unable to compete, Neanderthals and several other meat-eating animals died out.

Shipman knows that Neanderthals have inspired intense scientific debates for more than a century. Her proposed explanation of our evolutionary cousins' demise won't put those arguments to rest. But she raises an intriguing hypothesis to keep in mind as researchers learn more about interactions between Neanderthals and Stone Age people and about the timing of dog domestication.

Shipman regards humans as the planet's most accomplished invasive predators, having exploited one new habitat after another over the last 200,000 years. Successful invasive predators spell hard times or worse for native predators.

European sites where mammoths were butchered as early as 36,000 years ago have yielded remains of wolflike creatures that some researchers regard as the first dogs. If humans domesticated wolves shortly after entering Europe, canine hunting assistants could have enabled much greater access to fat-rich mammoth meat, Shipman says.

**Read full, original article:** 'The Invaders' sees dogs as key to modern humans' success