# Endurance Hunting in Hunter-Gatherer Societies May Have Shaped Human Evolution into Long-Distance Runners



New research indicates that the practice of endurance hunting in hunter-gatherer societies may have been instrumental in humans evolving to become long-distance runners. This insight was detailed in a study led by Professor Eugene Morin from Trent University in Canada, published in the journal Nature Human Behaviour.

The study challenges previous assumptions that such hunting methods, involving slow-paced, long-distance running to catch large animals like wildebeest and deer, were not only rare but also very taxing on early humans. Contrary to such beliefs, data collected by Morin and his colleague Bruce Winterhalder from the University of California, Davis, shows that endurance hunting was a common strategy among hunter-gatherers around the globe, found in 272 documented cases from diverse environments including the Canadian tundra, the mountains of Hawaii, and snow-covered regions.

The researchers reviewed nearly 400 historical accounts of nomadic groups such as the Evenki in Siberia, the Innu in Canada, and others. Some accounts noted running distances exceeding 100 kilometers. Findings suggest that humans, capable of profuse sweating and equipped with muscles evolved for stamina, were well-adapted for long distances in harsh environments, giving them an evolutionary edge over other predators.

The study supports the endurance running hypothesis, which posits that human evolution to run long distances dates back around two million years. The decline in endurance hunting practices was linked to the adoption of technologies like rifles and the use of horses and dogs in hunting, as well as disruptions from colonial impacts on traditional societies.