
Reassessment of the Neandertal fossil collection from Abri Suard (La Chaise de Vouthon, Charente, France)

*Les Néandertaliens de l'Abri Suard (La Chaise de Vouthon, Charente, France) :
nouveaux fossiles, nouvelles données, nouvelles perspectives*

Christine Couture-Veschambre, Diego López-Onaindia, Nohemi Sala, Mikel Arlegi, Antoine Balzeau, Isabelle Crevecoeur, Bruno Maureille, Jean-François Tournepiche and Asier Gómez-Olivencia

**Electronic version**

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/bmsap/6982>

DOI: [10.4000/bmsap.6982](https://doi.org/10.4000/bmsap.6982)

ISSN: 1777-5469

Publisher

Société d'Anthropologie de Paris

Brought to you by Muséum national d'histoire naturelle

**Electronic reference**

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This text was automatically generated on 16 February 2023.



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Reassessment of the Neandertal fossil collection from Abri Suard (La Chaise de Vouthon, Charente, France)

Les Néandertaliens de l'Abri Suard (La Chaise de Vouthon, Charente, France) : nouveaux fossiles, nouvelles données, nouvelles perspectives

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- 1 Abri Suard is one of the sites localized at La Chaise de Vouthon in Charente. La Chaise is a well-known prehistoric place, historically and archaeologically as it preserved long stratigraphic sequences documenting Lower to Upper Palaeolithic human occupations. A substantial number of Neandertal human remains have been discovered in a sedimentary unit associated to MIS 6-5 (250-120 kya) from Abri Suard, which makes them some of the earliest Western European Neandertals. Although most of the Neandertal human remains have been published, there are still unpublished ones. In this work, we present the new human fossils from the collection, a first assessment of the differential anatomical representation and the minimum number of individuals of the entire collection. The “new” fossils include the posterior diaphyseal fragment of a left femur, the medial diaphyseal fragment of a left tibia, an almost complete right tibial diaphysis, a proximal radial extremity presenting articular pathology, the diaphyseal fragment of a left ulna, fragments of three different occipital bones and a sub-adult right temporal bone. As a whole, the collection comprises 60 fossil remains, most of which belong to the cranium, a few long bone remains and the complete absence of other postcranial parts. The most represented bone in the collection is the left parietal accounting for a minimum number of six individuals: at least three sub-adults and three adults (one of them showing gracile cranial features). In sum, this new reassessment of the collection provides evidence of the importance of this assemblage in the interpretation of the first Neandertal

representatives of Western Europe. These preliminary results set the starting point to the new interdisciplinary project where we will evaluate the relation of the Neandertal fossils from Abri Suard to those from Western Europe and the Near East in the time comprising from MIS7 to MIS3.

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