



Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's "Third Thursday Food for Thought" Series

# A Cat's Tale: How Domestic Cats Came to the Americas

A Zoom Presentation by Archaeologist Martin H. Welker, PhD



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The domestic cat (*Felis catus*) is both one of the most popular pets and companion animals, and one of the least studied domesticated animals. Cats are variably portrayed as cute and fuzzy pets, lauded for their effectiveness as mousers, or vilified for their role in the decline and extinction of small native species.

Despite their popularity and impacts on human society, cats have received relatively limited study by archaeologists. In many ways, this likely reflects cats' own independence and solitary nature. For much of human-cat coexistence, cats have been left to their own devices, hunting the mice and rats drawn to human settlements at will.

As sailors began undertaking longer and longer voyages, they came to rely upon cats to keep down the mice and rats aboard ships. Because of this, cats were likely one of the earliest Eurasian domesticates to catch sight of the Americas. In this lecture Dr. Martin Welker will explore the domestication of cats in the Near East, their spread in Europe, and their arrival in the New World.

Thursday September 18, 2025

7 pm ARIZONA/Mountain Standard Time

(Same as Pacific Daylight Time)

**To register for the Zoom program click on this link:**

[https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_QnAgXGbISwumggNu8TEa](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_QnAgXGbISwumggNu8TEa)

For more information contact Old Pueblo at [info@oldpueblo.org](mailto:info@oldpueblo.org) or 520-798-1201.

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Left: "Kitty on a Galleon": Merged photos of a kitten and a section of the 1650 Cornelis Verbeeck painting "A Naval Encounter between Dutch and Spanish Warships" in the National Gallery of Art (Illustration by Allen Dart)



Center: Cat on a square knot carved onto the column of the 16th century Jerónimos Monastery in Portugal



Right: Perce Blackburow and Mrs. Chippy, ship's cat of 1914 Endurance expedition to the South Pole (Frank Hurley photo)

## Our September 2025 Third Thursday presenter Dr. Martin Welker

is the Associate Curator of Zooarchaeology for the Arizona State Museum, and an Associate Professor in the School of Anthropology at the University of Arizona. His research focuses on the analysis of animal remains from archaeological sites, the methods employed in identifying animal remains, and the role of animals, especially domesticated species, in human society. He currently works largely on domestic dogs, especially the methods used to differentiate dogs from wild canids in North America and dogs' roles in past human societies. He has worked on many of the domesticates introduced to the Americas from Eurasia including rats, cattle, and chickens, and this year coauthored "Exploring the Arrival of Domestic Cats in the Americas" with John R. Bratten and Eric Guiry in *American Antiquity* Vol. 90, pp. 263-28.



Martin Welker photo (upper right) courtesy of the Arizona State Museum, University of Arizona



Left: Domestic cat cervical vertebra and metacarpal from the Emanuel Point 2 Wreck (John Bratten photo)

Right: Florida coast location of the Emanuel Point wrecks (EP1-EP3) and the Luna Settlement (Map by Greg Cook, Meghan Mumford, and Andrew Willard)  
(Unattributed photos courtesy of Martin Welker)



Old Pueblo Archaeology Center Third Thursday Food for Thought Lectures						
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT

**The Third Thursday Food for Thought Series.** Old Pueblo Archaeology Center's Third Thursday Food for Thought Zoom webinars, on the Third Thursday evening of each month, feature presentations on archaeological, historical, and cultural topics. If you would like to be added to Old Pueblo's list of persons who receive semimonthly email announcements about Old Pueblo's and other southwestern archaeology organizations' activities, go to [www.oldpueblo.org](http://www.oldpueblo.org), scroll down to the "Subscribe" box, and enter your name and email address there. One can unsubscribe from Old Pueblo's emailing list at any time.

