

# The Ben Greenfield Fitness Podcast

## 132 Pound Bow Draws & 3000+ Calories Burnt Per Day: How Fit Were Our Ancestors (& Where Do Plants & Grains vs. A Carnivore or Ketogenic Diet Fit In)?

Featuring [Arthur Haines](#)

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When it comes to diet, water, medicine, awareness, nature immersion, movement, hormesis, community, and ancestral technologies, not many folks know quite as much as my guest on today's show: Arthur Haines.

Arthur is a Maine hunting and recreation guide, forager, ancestral skills mentor, author, public speaker, and botanical researcher. He grew up in the western mountains of Maine, a rural area that was home to swift streams known for their trout fishing. He spent most of his childhood in the Sandy River Valley hiking, tracking, and foraging. Arthur now runs the Delta Institute of Natural History in Canton, Maine, where he teaches human ecology, focusing on the values of foraging, wildcrafting medicine, and primitive living skills. His series of YouTube videos has inspired thousands of people interested in foraging wild edible and medicinal plants.

Arthur recently authored a very big book that I thoroughly enjoyed, entitled "[A New Path: To Transcend the Great Forgetting Through Incorporating Ancestral Practices into Contemporary Living](#)". This guide is a comprehensive work on nature connection and rewilding, detailing how to incorporate ancestral practices into modern living.

**During our discussion, you'll discover:**

**-The criteria by which humans have become "domesticated"...7:38**

- **Altered temperament**-- milder than in the natural state
  - Cows originated from aurochs (now extinct), which were very fierce
- **Altered social hierarchy**(establish that humans are in authority)
  - Our ancestors lived a more egalitarian lifestyle than we do today
- **Altered diet**
  - Diet today is far different, oftentimes poorer in quality
- **The ability to breed in captivity**
  - Humans consider pregnancy/giving birth to be an ailment

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- 99% are institutionalized; take moms out of their most comfortable habitat
- Arthur maintains that humans display all of the above traits of domesticated animals

### **-How fit were our hunter/gatherer ancestors...14:00**

- Very active lifestyle out of necessity, depending on resource density
- [Micmac people](#) (still exist in N. America) estimated to travel over a million acre home range over the course of a year
  - What we travel on foot today is a fraction of that
  - 10k steps a day would be close to the average of hunter/gatherers (5-10 miles per day)
- Arthur does not engage in any type of self-quantification
- Draw weight of bows among our ancestors:
  - The more energy required to bend the bow, the more energy can be imparted to the arrow
  - Most bows today are ~50 lb. draw
  - Bows of hunter/gatherers were much higher; ~70 lb.
  - The highest recorded were over 130 lbs.

### **-The calorie consumption and burn of our ancestors, contrasted with the modern office worker...23:40**

- Recent studies have conflicting results; some say it's the same, others say it's far less today
- Humans tend to be bigger today than in ancestral times; results in more calorie expenditure
- Hunter/gatherers spent far more calories moving
- Calorie expenditure today due to complexity of the food
- Diversity of movement in ancestral times is lost in the modern gym or fitness center

### **-Arthur's personal fitness or movement routine...29:40**

- Lots of walking; humans are meant to walk with episodes of running
- Paddling or carrying canoes
- Grains are milled by hand
- "Active lifestyle with bouts of athleticism"
- Brazilian jiu jitsu 1-2 times per week
- High Intensity Repetitive Training, HIRT (was mentioned in [Q&A 398](#))
- Moving a killed animal over terrain
- "True cross fit" training can be found in everyday life, particularly in hunting

### **-How indigenous diets fit within the context of the modern ketogenic or carnivore diets...42:00**

- Be aware of biological norms

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- 97% of our time on the earth has been as hunter/gatherers
- Homo sapiens have been shown to be as old as 315,000 years
- Domesticated human diet for just a short time
- Wild plants were a huge component of their diets (~60%)
- Ancestors were not in ketosis on a regular basis
  - Low carb diet is a "new" diet
  - It is efficacious in treating things like epilepsy, not so much as a weight-loss strategy

### **-Arthur's thoughts on the carnivore diet as a sustainable lifestyle choice...51:48**

- No group of people in history have ever been pure vegetarians
- Some have eaten mostly meat due to necessity
  - Plants can't be grown due to climate/terrain, etc.
  - However, they would gather plants in large quantities when available
  - Large proportion of Vitamin C would come from plants
- Diet can be an actual therapy; drugs just cover the symptoms
- Plants can help us fight off the deleterious aspects of nature (sun exposure, toxins in the air, etc.)
- [BGF podcast about the book "Nourishment" by Fred Provenza](#)
- [BGF podcast with Dr. Paul Saladino](#)

### **-How the variety of species of plants that we currently consume compares to what our ancestors would have eaten...1:00:40**

- Plants are edible for a finite amount of time in the wild; a natural protective mechanism as a result
- Hypotensive and hypertensive compounds in the same plant; certain suites of plants win out depending on the person
- Average # of plants consumed by American diet is 30,
  - Many of them are only one species; ex. collards, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, kale, are the *brassica oleracea* species
  - No real diversity in the diet
- [Inupiat people](#) have been documented to ingest 40+ different plant foods; more than the average American diet
- Over 100 foods in warmer climates

### **-How the micronutrient or vitamin content in modern produce compares to wild plants...1:05:00**

- Stark contrast between wild and cultivated
  - Minerals
  - Vitamins
  - Sometimes up to 100x more than what we find in the store
- Small berries have more skin; large berries are counterproductive

- Dillution effect: Individual fruits end up with lower mineral content than what's found in the wild
- Are backyard gardens wild or cultivated plants?
  - Difference in genetics of most cultivated species
  - Lettuce has been tampered with; it's more bitter in the wild
  - Difference between organic and conventional (sprayed) produce
  - When we tend plants, they don't need to work as hard to protect themselves
- Seedless grapes don't have nearly the same nutritional value
- More fiber in wild foods than in cultivated
- "Minimally modified plant foods" means eating closer to the wild
- What about grains?
  - What is making the grains we consume today bad for us?
  - Evidence of grain consumption up to 105,000 years ago
  - Stone ovens that are 30,000 years old
  - Diversify, properly prepare, choose the right type of grains
- [Jared Diamond's book "Collapse"](#)

**-Ancestral skills Arthur believes fully re-wilded modern humans should have...1:22:15**

- Hunter/gatherer is not a viable goal
- The entire goal is sovereignty: to lose our dependence on industrial society
- Begin with recovering your health: diet, movement, exposure to toxins, etc.
- Don't worry about how much or how little you know
- Primitive living schools are becoming more common (avoid the prepper schools)

**-And much more**

**Resources from this episode:**

-Book: [A New Path: To Transcend the Great Forgetting Through Incorporating Ancestral Practices into Contemporary Living](#)

-[Arthur's YouTube channel](#)

-[ArthurHaines.com](#)

-[My podcast with Katy Bowman](#)

-[My podcast about the book "Nourishment" by Fred Provenza](#)

-[My podcast with Dr. Paul Saladino](#)

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[-Jared Diamond's book "Collapse"](#)

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