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BARCELONA, SPAIN—

_Margarita Díaz-Andreu_ reports that hunter-gatherers and early farmers living in the central Mediterranean may have been drawn to rock shelters with special acoustic properties. Margarita Díaz-Andreu and Tommaso Mattioli of the University of Barcelona and their team investigated echoes produced by caves in the Baume Brune cliff face in southeastern France, and in the Valle d’Ivdoro on Italy’s eastern coast. Each location consists of multiple rock shelters, but only some of them were decorated with paintings between 6,500 and 5,000 years ago. The researchers connected a special microphone to a digital recorder to measure the direction, intensity, and timing of sound waves generated by popped balloons at different distances outside each of the decorated and undecorated caves. In France, those distances ranged from 70 to 120 feet from the entrance to...
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