

## LAS February 2013 Headlines:

### **Study suggests Neanderthals died out earlier**

By Frank Jordans Associated Press

BERLIN—Theories about when the last Neanderthals walked the Earth may have to be revised, according to a study that suggests they became extinct in their last refuge in Spain much earlier than previously thought.

Previous dating of bone fossils found at Neanderthal sites in the region put the youngest at about 35,000 years.

But researchers from Australia and Europe re-examined the bones using an improved method to filter out contamination and concluded that the remains are about 50,000 years old.

If true, the study, casts doubt on the idea that modern humans and Neanderthals co-existed—and possibly even interbred—for millennia, because humans aren't believed to have settled in the region until 42,000 years ago.

"The results of our study suggest that there are major problems with the dating of the last Neanderthals in modern-day Spain," said Thomas Higham, deputy director of the Radiocarbon Accelerator Unit at Oxford University in England. "It is unlikely that Neanderthals survived any later in this area than they did elsewhere in mainland Europe."

The study, which was published Monday by the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, doesn't completely exclude the possibility that Neanderthals survived until 35,000 years ago. The problem is that the warm climate on the Iberian peninsula quickly degrades a key protein used in so-called radiocarbon dating.

The researchers were only able to test bones from two of the 11 known Neanderthal sites in Spain. They were subjected to a new method called "ultrafiltration." This removes more recent carbon molecules that have contaminated the bones and made them appear younger than they actually are.

Such techniques often lead to older radiocarbon dates, said, Chris Stringer, a senior research fellow at Britain's Natural History Museum. "Science moves on and technology moves on," he said.

Stringer, who was not involved in the study, said the new techniques should now be applied to other sites in Spain. "Until this is done, there must be a significant question mark over the possible late survival of Neanderthals in the region."

If the remains from the other sites, too, turn out to be older, any encounter between Neanderthals and humans would have to have taken place earlier than previously thought, he said.

"Evidence from Britain, Belgium, France, Germany and Italy is increasingly pointing to a modern human presence before 40,000 years ago," said Stringer. "The new chronology suggests that any interaction between the last Neanderthals and the earliest moderns in Europe will similarly move before, rather than after, 40,000 years."

There is also the chance that Neanderthals survived longer in other corners of Europe, said Rachel E. Wood of the Australian National University in Canberra, a co-author of the study.



A reconstructed Neanderthal skeleton, right, and a modern human version of a skeleton are on display at the Museum of Natural History in New York. Theories about when the last Neanderthals walked the Earth may have to be revised, according to a study published Monday, Feb. 4, 2013 that suggests they became extinct in their last refuge in Spain much earlier than previously thought. ((AP Photo/Frank Franklin II, File))



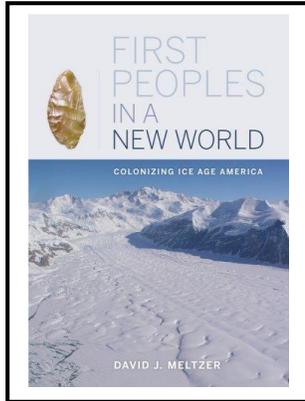
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"There are some other possible areas that may have also acted as a refuge for the species, such as the Caucasus, but the 'young' radiocarbon dates in these areas have also found to be problematic," she said.

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### Book Review by Mike Pearce



#### **First Peoples In A New World, Colonizing Ice Age America,**

by David J. Meltzer

In *First Peoples*, David Meltzer has presented an authoritative, detailed, and primarily scholarly discussion of ideas about how humans came to occupy the Americas, from Alaska to the southern tip of South America. Probably in deference to lay readers, Meltzer occasionally, when exploring the theories and proofs of the peopling of America, offers a sidebar or parenthetical explanation of some scientific topic that would not likely have needed illumination for scientific readers. Specific areas of discussion include Clovis and Pre-Clovis cultures and arguments, exhaustive discussion of dating techniques, the history of Paleoindian archaeology, glaciation and its impact on Paleo explorers and settlers, and much more. With its 400-plus pages of fairly small print text, *First Peoples* is not likely to

be a one-sitting read through, but a thorough study is worth the effort for those who really want to understand what archaeologists know or hypothesize about Paleoindians in America.

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### 35th Annual Flint Hills Archaeological Conference

*Sponsored by Kansas State University*

Friday, March 22, 2013 - Saturday, March 23, 2013

Location:

Kansas State University  
Manhattan, KS 66506

Meeting Friday and Saturday (March 22-23, 2013) at Kansas State University with Friday evening reception at the new Flint Hills Discovery Center in downtown Manhattan. Presentations on the following topics are invited: Preservation and Archaeological Stewardship, Kansa Indian Archaeology, other topics related to the archaeology and early peoples of Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and western Iowa and Missouri.

Presentations should be no more than 20 minutes long. Send paper title and abstract by March 1, 2013 to: Donna C. Roper (droper@ksu.edu).

Website: <http://www.flinthillsarchconf.info/>

Contact:

Lauren W. Ritterbush  
lritterb@ksu.edu  
785-532-6828



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### LAS Find of the Month, January - February 2013:

Members can bring an artifact to be entered into the competition at the monthly meeting, which will be judged based on the following rules:

1. Must be a member of LAS in good standing.
2. The artifact must be a personal find.
3. It must have been found within the specified time frame, i.e., within the month prior to the meeting.
4. The artifact doesn't have to be a Colorado find—all that matters is that it was found in the last month.

The Find of the Month for January - February 2013 was made by Alvin Plucker

Type: Oxbow

Material: Flattop Chalcedony

Location: Weld County, Colorado



### LAS News and Upcoming Events:

- Speakers Needed!** We need speakers for our monthly meetings starting April - June 2013. If you would like to give a presentation or know of someone who would give a great program please contact Andy Coca, Jean Steinhoff or Kevin Zeeck. No experience is necessary. All that is needed is a passion for our hobby and a willingness to share that passion. Thanks!
- March 5, 2013** March meeting. Program: McKean Culture Night. Andy Coca will give a presentation on the McKean culture and it's variants, Duncan and Hannah. Everyone is encouraged to bring in their McKean artifacts so we'll have many examples on hand. Let's make it a big McKean night!
- April 2, 2013** April meeting. Program: to be announced.
- April 20, 2013** 2013 Spring Into Archaeology Fair, Poudre Valley REA Building. If you plan to exhibit please call Andy Coca at (303) 286-7711 for table space. A flyer with directions to the REA Building is attached. See you there!