

LAS June 2015 Headlines:

ARCHAEOLOGISTS DISCOVER ONE OF THE OLDEST KNOWN CLOVIS HUNTING SITES IN NORTH AMERICA

Popular Archaeology Vol. 13 12012013, Mon, Jul 14, 2014

Site yields first evidence Clovis people hunted gomphotheres, an extinct species of elephant, in North America.

When University of Arizona archaeologist Vance Holliday and colleagues began uncovering large fossilized bones at the site of El Fin del Mundo in the Sonoran Desert of northwestern Mexico in 2007, they weren't sure what kind of animal they were unearthing.

"At first, just based on the size of the bone, we thought maybe it was a bison, because the extinct bison were a little bigger than our modern bison," said Holliday, who has been researching geoarchaeology at Paleoindian sites across the U.S. for years.

Then, in 2008, they discovered something that clinched it for them.

"We finally found the mandible, and that's what told the tale," Holliday said.

It was a gomphothere. Actually, two of them. About the same size as a modern elephant, but smaller than their extinct cousins the mammoths, gomphotheres were once widespread in North America but were thought to have disappeared from the fossil record long before humans arrived in North America some 13,000 to 13,500 years ago.

Until now.

Radiocarbon dating of charcoal flecks and burned bone found within the context of the fossils indicated a reliable age of 13,390 years. This made these two gomphotheres the last known gomphotheres in North America.

But there was more.

As they excavated among the bones, they also uncovered human artifacts—Clovis artifacts, to be specific—including 7 projectile points, some stone cutting tools and 21 flint flakes from stone tool-making. The position and proximity of the Clovis fragments relative to the gomphothere bones at the site suggested that humans did in fact kill the two animals there. Of the seven points found at the site, four were in place among the bones, including one with bone and teeth fragments above and below. The other three points had eroded away from the bone bed and were found scattered nearby. This suggested that the gomphotheres were likely hunted and thus constituted a Clovis prey species, along with mammoths, mastodons, and bison, already known to have been hunted by the Clovis.

"This is the first Clovis gomphothere, it's the first archaeological gomphothere found in North America, it's the first evidence that people were hunting gomphotheres in North America, and it adds another item to the Clovis menu," Holliday said.



The fully excavated and prepared gomphothere mandible. Courtesy Joaquin Arroyo-Cabrales / Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia.



The Clovis culture, today considered the oldest clearly defined and recognized Paleoindian culture in the Americas, is characterized by its distinctive stone tools, particularly the fluted projectile points. The first examples of this culture were discovered by archaeologists near Clovis, New Mexico, in the 1930s. The El Fin del Mundo site, along with the Aubrey site in Texas, is now among two sites that show the earliest solid evidence of Clovis hunting in North America, indicating that the earliest widespread and recognizable group of hunter-gatherers were already in place 13,390 years ago in the North American Southwest.

Holliday and colleagues suggest that the finds support the model of an American southwestern origin for the Clovis material culture. As they conclude in the study, published this week in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences: "These data expand our understanding of the age range for Clovis, Clovis diet, raw material preference, and the late Pleistocene megafaunal assemblage of North America, and provide evidence for a southern origin of the Clovis technocomplex."*

Holliday and the study team report that the radiocarbon ages from El Fin del Mundo were made based on testing the site's charcoal, shell, and organic matter at the Arizona Accelerator Mass Spectrometry Laboratory.





ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG IN ARK CITY COULD MAKE IT ONE OF COUNTRY'S MAJOR HISTORIC SITES

KAKE.com, By Ben Jordan - Email Wed 7:28 PM, Jun 03, 2015

ARKANSAS CITY, Kansas -- A team of archeologists from all over the nation are in south central Kansas this week. They're hoping what they find could make it one of the country's major historic sites.

Volunteers and researchers are searching along a five mile stretch in Arkansas City that used to be home to a Native American tribe of around 20,000 people. They're looking for artifacts above and below ground to confirm what people in the community have known for a long time.

Volunteers found small pieces of tools and pottery in a dusty field. Norm Conley, a volunteer from Wichita, had the job of picking up the pieces. They are artifacts from a Native American settlement discovered by the Spanish explorer, Juan De Onate in 1601. The work being done here means a lot to the community.

"This is groundbreaking," said Conley. "Everybody knew for years, in the textbooks it tells about this habitation, but it's always been treated as separate sights."

Just down the road, another group looked at what's underneath the ground, but they won't be digging anytime soon. The crews have to use a sensor that detects magnetic fields to get an idea of what lies below.

"They walk them back and forth and the machines map them as they go," said Dr. Don Blakeslee, a Wichita State University Anthropology Professor.

The group has found what they believe to be homes, storage areas, and even a dancing ground, which supports the idea that all three of these areas were one town.

"People here are hoping to acquire some of the site, preserve it and draw tourists here," Blakeslee said.

A few more roads over, and down a wooded canyon is a third site that some may find even more fascinating - the site of a battle between Spanish explorers and a Native American tribe. One volunteer found a small iron ball, which is part of a shotgun-like cannon round the explorers would have used against the Native Americans.

All of the findings are then sent to a mobile research lab which is about the size of an ambulance. The lab is run by Paleo Research Institute, Inc. Each piece is run through a combination of tests which tell researchers more about the people who created them.

"We want that peek into people's lives," said Dr. Linda Scott Cummings, Director of the Paleo Research Institute. "I love making the human side of the story come out."

Hap Mcleod, who owns part of the land being researched, believes this work makes what he already suspected official.

"All this does is confirm what everybody's known for a long time and put a story to it," Mcleod said. "Here we can prove that academically."

The next spot that will be searched is a golf course, but researchers are only allowed to look when the course isn't open. That means the search has to continue in the dark. Volunteers will be using lights from the fire department to illuminate the course. Researchers believe that underneath the greens and fairways are several storage pits and houses from the tribe.

(Story provided by Darrel Wilson, Kansas Archaeological Society Membership Coordinator and Secretary)



Loveland Archaeological Society, Inc.

A Colorado Non-Profit Corporation

LAS Find of the Month, June 2015:

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 June 2015 was made by Helene Bindner

Type: San Pedro (with serrations)

Material: Obsidian

Location: Rio Arriba County, New Mexico



LAS News and Upcoming Events:

Speakers Needed!

Really!! We need speakers for our 2015 meetings! 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, just a passion for our hobby and a willingness to share that passion. Thanks!

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| July 7, 2015 | July meeting. Program: Best Finds Night. Bring your best find and be prepared to talk about it. Embellishment is allowed! We'll have a prize for the best story. Let's all bring artifacts and plan to have some fun! |
| July – August 2015 | Hell Gap site excavation. Dr. Marcel Kornfeld has extended an invitation to all LAS members to come by and visit the site, or even volunteer to help with the dig. If you are interested see the website at http://www.uwyo.edu/pirl/summer%20schedule.html . |
| August 4, 2015 | August meeting. Program: Annual picnic/potluck. This will be discussed at the July meeting, and more information will be sent in the July newsletter. Location is TBD. |
| September 1, 2015 | September meeting. Plan your presentation and give me a call today! |
| September 26 & 27, 2015 | 2015 Loveland Stone Age Fair. More information will be provided in the coming months. Put the dates on your calendar, and plan now to attend! |

- Sponsor of the Annual Loveland Stone Age Fair -

www.stoneagefair.com