



LAS January 2016 Headlines:

**OREGON ARCHAEOLOGISTS DISCOVER
15,000-YEAR-OLD KNIFE**

Oregon Public Broadcasting by Amelia Templeton March 6, 2015

In the high desert west of Burns, Oregon, a team of archeologists have discovered an unusual artifact they suspect is new evidence of one of the oldest human settlements in North America.

The discovery has yet to be published in a peer reviewed scientific journal, but if it is, it will add to the mounting body of evidence that suggests humans arrived in the Americas earlier than archeologists once thought.

The discovery is a small, beautiful knife carved out of a clear orange agate. One side has a number of serrated points, like a saw. The other edge has a steep, flaked edge that could have been used to scrape hides and cut meat off of bones.

"Its kind of a neat little artifact, the prehistoric version of a Swiss Army knife," says Scott Thomas, an archeologist for the Bureau of Land Management.

Thomas believes the knife was made more than 15,000 years ago. He's part of a team, led by Dr. Patrick O'Grady at the University of Oregon, that is excavating an ancient human camp sheltered by a rock overhang along a now-dry stream in Eastern Oregon.

The team has found many signs of human occupants, including dozens of stone points and an old fireplace, but it has just started exploring the oldest layers of the site.

In the fall of 2012, a seasonal excavator named Chuck Morelan struck a bit of luck. Morelan was tasked with excavating a small area all the way down to the bedrock, to see how deep the site extended. About 10 feet down, he discovered a thick layer of volcanic ash. A little further down, he found fragments of animal teeth, and the striking orange knife.

Thomas, who was working alongside Morelan, says the knife struck him as a little mysterious. The site is littered with obsidian, and yet it was carved out of agate, a rarity in the Oregon high desert.

"I've been here 20 years, and I've seen a lot of sights, and I've never seen this color of an agate in any site," he said.

The mystery of the little tool deepened when Thomas sent a sample of the volcanic ash found just above it to an expert at Washington State University for radiocarbon dating. The result: the ash came from an eruption of Mt. St Helens between 15,200 and 16,400 years ago.

"My jaw dropped. We didn't expect it to be that old," Thomas said. The ash effectively dates the tool and the animal teeth, which were found about 8 inches below it.

Dr. Patrick O'Grady, with the University of Oregon Archaeological Field School, has been directing the Rimrock Draw Rockshelter excavations since they began.

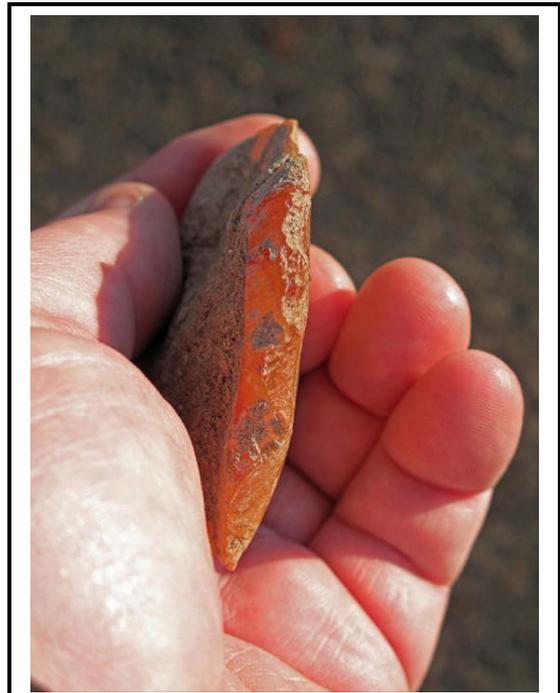


Photo courtesy of Bureau of Land Management, Oregon



“That would make this stone tool one of the oldest artifacts in North America. Given those circumstances and the laws of stratigraphy, this object should be older than the ash,” said O’Grady.

The team hopes to find more artifacts below the layer of ash that can be analyzed and potentially build a solid case for human occupation of the site more than 15,000 years ago.

“We have this intriguing piece of evidence that says this site is among the oldest, but we still have a lot of work to do,” O’Grady said.

The team has one more clue about the knife’s origins. An analysis of protein residue found on it matched the signature of bovine blood. The team believes it likely came from an extinct bison species, *Bison antiquus*.

Archeologists once believed that the first people to arrive in North America were from a distinct culture called the Clovis, which arrived roughly 13,000 years ago by crossing the Bering Strait during the last ice age.

In recent years, radiocarbon dating of artifacts at a handful of sites in North and South America have suggested an earlier arrival date, 15,000 years ago or before.

Another site in Oregon, Paisley Cave, is considered home to the earliest known residents of North America based on human physical evidence. In 2008, a team of archaeologists, led by Dr. Dennis Jenkins, discovered coprolites - fossilized feces - containing human DNA dated over 14,000 years old.

But little is known about who the people were who occupied these first sites, and where they came from.

Scott Thomas, the BLM archeologist, says the small number of sites more than 13,000 years old and the lack of skeletons make it difficult to draw conclusions about pre-Clovis culture.

“These theories are actually multiplying about how people got here, not getting tighter, with all these new discoveries,” Thomas said.



Camel tooth enamel fragments. Bureau of Land Management Oregon

ARTIFACT FOUND IN DOUGLAS COUNTY MAY VERY WELL BE THE ARTIFACT OF THE YEAR

7News Mark Boyle Nov 10, 2015

DOUGLAS COUNTY, Colo. - It could be the state’s artifact of the year and it dates back 5,000 years, about the same time Egyptian pyramids were being built.

The sculpture of what some experts believe is a dog was found in Douglas County during the construction of the Rueter-Hess Reservoir. It measures about 4 inches tall and is kept under lock and key in Douglas County.

And it’s not the only artifact found during the construction of this reservoir. “There were quite a few artifacts found on the Rueter-Hess site,” said Steve Koster, executive director of planning in Douglas County.





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Because other artifacts could potentially be in the area, Douglas County has a section of its land development application where it requires developers who are moving earth to dig carefully and report anything that they find.

"We have a pretty typical condition of approval on most subdivisions where we know there will be earth-moving going on," said Koster.

The county also owns land around the reservoir that it plans on keeping as is. Koster said it's not the county's intention to dig up any of the land in search of artifacts that may exist.

"If there's not development happening in an area, we're not going out and trying to disturb these and find them and dig them up either, we're going to let them stay in place," said Koster.

Find of the year, October 2014 ~ September 2015:

By popular vote at the January 2016 meeting Helene Bindner was named winner of Find of the Year for the period October 2014 through September 2015. Helene's find was the Find of the Month for June 2015. Congratulations Helene!



Don't forget! Sign up to give a presentation or bring refreshments!



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LAS Find of the Month, January 2016:

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 2016 was made by Shane Skutvik.

Type: Pryor Stemmed
Material: Quartzite
Location: Douglas County, Colorado



LAS News and Upcoming Events:

Speakers Needed!

We need speakers for our 2016 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. All that is needed is a passion for our hobby and a willingness to share that passion. Thanks!

Ongoing:	Univ of Colorado Museum of Natural History. "Unearthed: Ancient Life in the Boulder Valley" exhibit featuring the Clovis artifacts from the Mahaffy Cache found in Boulder, Colorado in 2008. The exhibit will run through September 2016. Cost is free.
February 2, 2016	February meeting. Program: 2015 LAS/Walts Scholarship recipient Leslie Brown will discuss her research for her PhD. Title: Isotopic examination of human remains associated with the Korell-Bordeaux site (48GO54) from bone apatite and dental enamel.
March 1, 2016	March meeting. Program: Andy Coca will give a presentation on Allen and related obliquely-flaked transitional paleo points. Bring your Allen, Frederick, Anderson, Angostura, and other diagonally-flaked artifacts and share your favorite hunting stories. Let's have plenty of examples on hand!
April 5, 2016	April meeting. Program: Rich Savino will give a presentation on "Rock Art of the Bighorns, Wyoming."
May 3, 2015	May meeting. Program: Tom Westfall will give a presentation on Lithic Casting of artifacts and how casts help students and collectors learn about point types and lithic technology. Tom will also demonstrate how a point is cast once the mold is made.

- Sponsor of the Annual Loveland Stone Age Fair -

www.stoneagefair.com