

LAS February 2017 Headlines:

The First Americans Didn't Arrive by the Bering Land Bridge, Study Says

Mental_Floss, by Megan Gannon, August 10, 2016

For much of the 20th century, scientists believed that the first settlers of the Americas could only have arrived one way. As the conventional story went, an ice-free super highway opened up across the Bering Land Bridge toward the end of the last ice age, allowing people from Eurasia to follow big game like bison and mammoths down through the interior of North America.

New archaeological discoveries have challenged that narrative in recent years. And a study published in the journal Nature offers further evidence that this northerly corridor wasn't the first route to the continent.

University of Copenhagen researchers Eske Willerslev, Mikkel Pedersen, and their colleagues found that this harsh route only became viable for human migration 12,600 years ago—when the first plants and animals showed up in the region. Meanwhile, archaeologists have ample evidence that people were living in the Americas long before then.

“We know conclusively that human groups were in the interior before that date—perhaps as early as 15,000 calibrated radiocarbon years before present—so it is highly unlikely that they came south through the corridor,” said Michael O’Brien, an anthropologist and current academic vice president of Texas A&M University—San Antonio, who wasn’t involved in the study. “A more likely scenario is that they came south along the Pacific coast.”

For the study, Pedersen and colleagues drilled sediment cores from beneath the frozen surface of two lakes in western Canada: Charlie Lake and Spring Lake. These were among the last areas to lose their ice cover when the two huge ice sheets that blanketed the region (the Laurentide and Cordilleran ice sheets) split during the end of the last glacial maximum, around 15,000 years ago. The retreating ice opened up a path some 1500 kilometers long into the interior of North America.

With the sediment cores, the scientists were able to reconstruct a history of environmental conditions along this route based on algae, pollen and other plant matter, fossils, and ancient DNA trapped in the layers of chilly soil. They concluded that before 12,700 years ago, patchy grass was the only life along the ice-free route. Slowly, plants like sage brush and willow started to change the barren corridor into a steppe landscape. By 12,600 years ago, bison arrived. About 2000 years later, the route started to look more lively as it became populated by jackrabbits, voles, and other small mammals, which were followed by mammoths, elk, and predators like bald eagles. The route likely became impassable for humans and big mammals again about 10,000 years ago, when dense coniferous forests started to grow.

The results of the study suggest the route was only usable between 12,600 and 10,000 years ago. This narrow window is too late to match with the once-prevailing “Clovis First” hypothesis. The Clovis people, who are named after their characteristic fluted stone spearheads first found near Clovis, New Mexico, were thought to have been the first inhabitants of the Americas. The earliest Clovis points show up in the





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archaeological record about 13,500 years ago. It was long believed that they got here by crossing the Bering Land Bridge sometime before then.

Recently, several before-Clovis sites have been discovered in the Americas. Fossilized feces more than 14,000 years old have been found in Oregon's Paisley Caves. Stone tools alongside mastodon bones in Florida were recently found to be 14,550 years old. And much further away from northwestern Canada, in southern Chile, humans inhabited Monte Verde at least 14,000 years ago (and possibly even earlier).

Alternate migration routes have been put forth in the past, such as the controversial Solutrean hypothesis, which posits that the first Americans actually came from Europe, not Asia, via a North Atlantic route. But many anthropologists now favor a Pacific coastal route to explain how the first people got to the Americas, though more research is needed to fully understand how these intrepid settlers traveled (perhaps by boat).

"Such a study has been needed for quite some time now," said Vanderbilt College archaeologist Tom Dillehay, who wasn't involved in the new study. Dillehay, whose excavations at Monte Verde in the 1970s revealed the site's ancient age, challenging the Clovis First theory—and long considered suspect as a result—told mental_floss that this type of study is just the beginning. "I would like to see more studies of this nature done in other areas of the corridor to confirm this hypothesis—especially at the entrance and exits points of the corridor."

In Remembrance: Larry Conger (September 19, 1942 – November 27, 2016)

Larry Bruce Conger, 74, passed away Nov. 27, 2016. He was born to Vernon F. and Florence V. Conger on Sept. 19, 1942, in Bisbee, Ariz.

On Aug. 22, 1964, he married Nancy Isakson. Soon after, he reported for service in the National Guard and received an honorable discharge in 1969. Larry joined his father farming and ranching near Pierce.

In 1991 they relocated the ranching operation to Banner County, Neb.

Larry is survived by his wife, of 52 years, Nancy; daughters, Christina (Brian) Nusbaum and Michelle (Brett) Molloy; and son, Larry Vernon Conger; grandchildren, Kimberly, Jessica (Cash), Larissa (Aaron), Lane, Kix, Callan, Ace, Cade, and Taysa; great-grandson, Vernon; siblings, Bob (Donna) Conger, Marge (Jerry) Cutshall, Judy Morgan, Lynda (Darrell) Annis; and one first cousin, Connie (Harvey) Green.

He is preceded in death by his parents.

Memorial services were held for the family Saturday, Dec. 3, 2016.

Memorial contributions may be made in care of Adamson Funeral and Cremation Services, 2000 47th Ave., Greeley, CO, 80634, and will be distributed among the local fire departments near Larry and Nancy's home and the Davis Hospice Center.

Condolences may be sent to the family at <http://www.adamsonchapels.com>.

Larry's wish to all would be that in remembrance of him you would do something that you enjoy and think of him.





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In Remembrance: Arthur Earl Cooper II (November 13, 1949 - January 23, 2017)

Art Cooper, 67, passed away on January 23, 2017 in Thornton, Colorado. Art was born in Cañon City, Colorado on November 13, 1949.

He is survived by: his beloved wife Elaine, two sons James (Barbara) Cooper, Thomas Cooper, two grandchildren Colton and Isabelle Cooper, brother-in-law Gary Davis, 6 brothers: Dexter (Laura) Cooper, John (Kim) Cooper, Bill (Pat) Cooper, Chuck (Camie) Cooper, Ed (Michelle) Cooper, Jude (Rita) Cooper, his sister Georgia Lindblad, and a host of loving nieces, nephews, sister-in-laws, brother-in-laws, relatives and friends. Art was preceded in death by his father Art Cooper Sr., mother Isabelle Cooper, one sister Mary Davis, and his brother-in-law Robert Lindblad.

Art loved the outdoors, sports, and most of all his family. He was dearly loved by all who knew him and will be greatly missed.



In Remembrance: Robert “Bob” Patten

Last week we learned that Robert “Knapper Bob” Patten passed away on February 8, 2017. Bob was a staple at the Loveland Stone Age Fair for over 50 years. He always had his own “corner” where people would congregate and intently watch Bob work away at a stone cobble sometimes a foot or more in diameter, slowly working it down to an exact representation of lithic technology rivaled only by the ancient knapping masters. Bob was always happy to share and impart his knowledge, which is why he was well respected within the archaeological community, by both professionals and avocationalists alike. He treated everyone equally, always with patience and respect. Bob’s passing leaves a huge void in the science and art of flint knapping, and he will be missed by all who knew and associated with him.

The following details were copied from the *Paleo Planet* on line flint knapping forum concerning a memorial for Bob. If you have pictures you’d like to share, please email them to me well in advance, so we can forward them to Bob’s wife, Laurey, to include in the slide show.



Date, time, and venue for the “Celebration of Bob” gathering:

Saturday, March 11, 2017, from 1-4 pm
Green Mountain United Methodist Church
12755 West Cedar Drive, Lakewood, CO

The celebration will be in the downstairs hall, not the sanctuary, and will not be a religious service. Rather, the family would like folks to bring their favorite stories about Bob, so we can share them and celebrate his wonderful life.

Please share this with anyone who might be interested in attending. It’s a large hall, so hopefully will accommodate everyone comfortably. Appetizers and desserts will be served (If you’re local, feel free to bring something if you like, but it is not at all necessary.)



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LAS News and Upcoming Events:

Speakers Needed!

Really!! We need speakers for our 2017 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!

- March 7, 2017 March meeting. Program: DVD, "History of the Stone Age Fair." Rich Savino taped Mr. Allen Crawford giving a history of the Stone Age Fair going back to the first Fair in Cornish. Join us in reliving this poignant interview.
NOTE: This meeting will be held at the Rialto Theater Center at 222 E. 4th Street in Loveland. The Pulliam Bldg is completely closed for construction. We apologize for the inconvenience. See minutes for a map to the Rialto.
- March 31 through
April 2, 2017 Fort Collins Rockhounds Club annual Gem and Mineral Show at the Ranch (McKee 4-H, Youth and Community Bldg) in Loveland, Colorado. See the website for more information: www.fortcollinsrockhounds.org.
- April 1, 2017 2017 Spring Into Archaeology Fair. We will again be joining with the Fort Collins Rockhounds Club and having our 2017 Spring Into Archaeology Fair at the McKee 4-H, Youth and Community Building at the Ranch in Loveland on April 1, 2017. If you plan to exhibit please call Andy Coca at (303) 286-7711 for table space. A map with directions to the McKee Building is attached. Parking is free. See you there
- April 4, 2017 April meeting. Program: To be announced.

