I C F

Institute for Canine Forensics

ICF is a non-profit organization in Northern California
for the advancement of research and education of Forensic Evidence
and Human Remains Detection Dog teams.

Franklin Point

Thanks to Mark Hylkema the Santa Cruz District Archaeologist for California State Parks for giving us permission for the dogs to search a historic shipwreck cemetery. Franklin Point was named after the clipper ship the Sir John Franklin that struck the rocks off the point on January 17, 1865. The ship was bound for San Francisco in thick fog when it was destroyed. Two other ships also went aground on the point, the Coya on November 24, 1866 and the Hellespont on November 21, 1868.

This is a registered site CA-SMa-207 and part of Part of CA State Parks Año Nuevo State Reserve, in San Mateo County. The site contains an estimate of 40 graves. The trails and the vegetation in the sand dunes had been damaged over the years causing the burials to be exposed. Eight sets of skeletal remains had been removed after they were exposed.

Mark was tasked with preserving the cemetery and building a wooden walkway to protect the fragile sand dunes. Fourteen years ago Mark reinterred the 8 sets of skeletal remains burring them 6 feet deep.

The ICF team including several certified teams and 2 dogs in training were given the opportunity to find the location where the skeletal remains had been reinterred as well as search for more undiscovered burials. All dogs located and alerted on the reinterred location, where the remains had been originally buried and a few other locations that will be mapped to help identify the boundaries of the cemetery.

-Adela

Franklin Point pictures pictures

top left Mark Hylkema top right Jasper alerts in a new location

bottom left Asha's first experience with reinterred burials bottom right Marcy alerts where burials had been removed

There’s a New GPS in Town

A few weeks ago we received a call from the brother of one of our clients. Rocky Holland had heard about the work our dogs do and asked if we would be willing to beta test a new long-range dog-tracking GPS that his company, Laelaps, has developed. I agreed and a couple of weeks later received two tracking collars, a receiving device and an Android tablet. While I had to use an Android tablet for the beta testing, this system is going to be compatible with both android and iOS systems once it comes to market.

When ICF works a project, we use a GPS to record our tracks and waypoints. This information ultimately goes into the reports that we send our clients. Unfortunately, our GPS tracks are tied to where the handler goes, and doesn’t give us a clear record of where the dogs have searched. We walk a straight line but the dogs quarter back and forth along that line as they search, effectively covering two-to-three times the area that the handler has actually walked.

We tried using some other on-dog GPSs but they just don’t work well for us. The accuracy is less than optimal; they are extremely expensive and not user friendly. Personally, I’ve tried using a smaller, inexpensive model and cannot find a way to attach securely to my dog. It kept snagging on brush and falling off.

The Laelaps system is specifically designed for use by hunters who use dogs in the field. They want to be able to keep track of their dogs and know when the dog is “on point” … telling them when they have found the prey. For us in ICF, it is equally important for us to know when our dogs alert on a source. The Laelaps system will alert the handler when the dog is still for 10 seconds or more. We can get to the dog and log our waypoints on this system … again with much more accuracy.

What makes this system exciting for us is that is connects over Bluetooth to our smartphone and will display the dogs’ positions on our phone (or tablet) on high resolution satellite maps. While our dogs normally work fairly close to us, this tracker will work up to 17 miles (line-of-sight) so having our dogs working out-of-sight would not be an issue.

All the information we need for our clients can then be downloaded and entered into our reports. While there are still some bugs that Laelaps is working on, this system seems to be promising and we are looking forward to using it in the future ... possibly on a major project this summer.

-Lynne Engelbert

www.http://laelapsgps.com

Lynne & Piper Miranda and Marcy
Both dogs with their GPS on

Miranda and Marcy
are taken via helicopter to a remote location to search for remains.

You can check out past newsletters on our web page.

Jasper and Piper
take a break under a tarp during a project when it started to rain.

Click HERE

(650) 503-HHRD (-4473)
www.HHRDD.org

We are happy to talk to you about your project and how our dogs might help locate human remains or burials. Email or call us.