



Institute for Canine Forensics

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Non-invasive Remote Sensing of Human Remains
Specializing in Historic and Pre-contact Burials

Getting to the Search Area is Half the Battle



We are equipped to handle many kinds of terrain. Have the tools to deal with unexpected and changing conditions. After Larry got his truck pulled out of the water, he pulled one of the ranger vehicles out that was stuck in a different creek.

We thought it was time to offer another 4-wheel drive class to our group and make sure our newer members had the opportunity to learn in a class setting. Having the equipment is critical to getting unstuck and knowing what your vehicle can do safely is paramount.



At one of our projects several of us had to cross this creek. Each time a crossing was made the conditions changed and it got harder and harder to cross. Knowing when to say no is important and having other vehicles in your group who can pull you out is important. The last person who tried (not one of our group) did not make it and it took several vehicles to pull them out.



At a project in 2022, the road to the survey area had a tree comedown overnight. A chain saw and a tow strap and the road was clear again.



This is what a disturbed burial looks like. This turned out to be a historic aircraft crash site that was completely unknown so no precautions had been taken and a trench was dug through the site. Large amounts of soil had been excavated when aircraft debris was discovered. After numerous alerts by ICF dogs, a human bone fragment was found. It was only then that it became known that there were human remains at the site.

Disturbed, Scattered, Dissipated Buried Remains

A misconception new handlers often have when they start training for old burials is thinking they will find intact burials. Sometimes this is the case, but more than likely they have been disturbed to some degree. We have had to learn new techniques so we could recognize, and incorporate, the information we get from our dogs when the possible condition of the burial indicates disturbed and/or scattered remains. Our goal is to be able to pass this information along to the Native communities so they can make informed decisions.

No one wants to find that burials have been disturbed, yet it's very common. Disturbed burials can be caused naturally over time by water, movement of soil or may be caused by construction or farming, especially plowing. Older burials can become so degraded that the remaining bones are small fragments or only grave soil remains. When a body has decomposed in the ground the "grave soil" contains the scent that the dogs recognize as human remains.

In some cases, the dog cannot access the exact location of the source. The level of scent available to the dog may be below their *target threshold* (scent

strong enough to elicit an alert). The handler observes the dog is clearly working an area containing the target odor and is searching for the strongest location of scent. The dog indicates there is scent, but their reaction to this category varies from having a difficult time pinpointing an exact location, to giving several alerts in close proximity, or not alerting. Based on this and other research, we believe the remains may be severely fragmented, grave soil, and/or located in a different area than the accessible scent. This may mean that finding visible identifiable remains may not be possible.

~Adela~



SCA 2023 ANNUAL MEETING | MARCH 16 - 19, 2023



Come visit us in the book room at the upcoming SCA annual meeting. We have missed seeing everyone the last 2 years.





SAA
SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY
88TH ANNUAL MEETING

PORTLAND
MARCH 29–APRIL 2, 2023

We are participating at the SAA annual meeting in an Organized Symposium called Canine Resources for the Archaeologist organized by Paul Martin. We will be presenting 3 of the 7 papers in the organized session:

- Key Factors Impacting the Efficacy of Canine Resources on Archaeological Surveys
- Historical Human Remains Detection Dogs: A Unique Tool for Native American Communities
- Multi-discipline Recovery of Previously Cremated Remains After Urban Wildfires

We'll have a table in the vendor room. Come see us and say hi, pet a dog or just hang out with us and discuss your upcoming projects.



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We are happy to talk with you about your project and how our dogs might help locate human remains or burials. Call, email, or check us out on facebook or our website.
(You can find past newsletters there, too.)

Please feel free to pass this newsletter along to anyone who might be interested.

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