

Rock Mounds, Graves?

Pete Cecil has spent several years researching two rock mounds on a mountain top in Oregon. Research and oral history said they were soldiers' graves. Who and why they were there is not known. Is it only a rumor that someone was buried there? He contacted ICF about using our dogs to get their opinion.... so to speak.

No one wants the backhoe to discover artifacts or human burials. That is an unhappy event for everyone involved. But many times the land owner, archaeologist, historians or inquiring minds are seeking more information about a site. Unraveling the mystery takes on many forms. Sometimes it starts with great grandma telling a story.

Trained archaeologists use a wide range of multi-disciplinary techniques to locate historic and prehistoric sites. These techniques including: oral history, historical records, physical remains, reconnaissance, remote sensing like GPR and metal detection. In essence what they are doing is layering or combining techniques and tools. Each tool or technique tell a slightly different story. By combining them a clearer picture starts to form.

Dogs trained to detect historic and prehistoric burials are another important tool. Many times they are used with other techniques to get a better picture. They are the only tool that is using scent to identify human burials.

In Mid September Adela and John agreed to meet Pete to run the dogs over the two rock mounds in question. Both Jasper and Kayle were clear they detected human remains scent at both rock piles.

This information does not tell us if it's a soldier, but at least we know someone is buried there. Pete will continue to research to see if he can find names for the soldiers.

- Adela



Kayle alerting on rock mound



Jasper alerting on second rock mound

Working Conditions

As dog handlers the most common things we track are air and ground temperatures, soil conditions and what the ground surface looks like.

Historical HRD dogs work with their noses close to the ground to locate the scent of burials. If there is heavy ground cover in the area the dogs



Billy the Kid

In October this year we stopped at Billy's grave to see if he was really there. Killed by the sheriff in 1881 at Fort Sumner Texas. Just thought you would like to know at least someone is buried in his grave.



Now you know why Billy the Kid's grave is in a locked cage. Jasper could just squeeze through the bars so he could get to the location where he wanted to alert.

may miss burials or have a more difficult time pinpointing. Scattered plants and short green grasses are fine, and actually they can be beneficial as they hold the scent in place.

Foxtails are one of the biggest dangers to the dogs. The name foxtail is really a generic name given to several kinds of weeds and grass seeds.

Mother Nature deserves credit for the creative ways she spreads her seeds. Many of the "foxtail" seeds have barbs on them so they only go one way. This helps them get attached to modes of transportation (animals and humans) and when they find soil they work themselves into the ground with their one-way barbs.

Because the dogs must have their noses close to the ground surface to be the most effective they are in danger of sniffing up foxtails into their nose. As the dog struggle to get it out, the barbs continue to move it forward on its one-way mission. They can enter the body any place but the most common is the nose, ears and feet. As soon as the dog gets a foxtail in their nose, the party is over. It is an immediate and expensive trip to the vet to remove it.

Puncture Vine also called Goat's Head looks innocent when its green. But it's far from innocent when its dry. The seed heads can even puncture bike tires, leather gloves, etc. Other plants like stinging nettles, star thistle, hitch hikers (also called field lice) and milk weed make searching some areas unreachable or very uncomfortable for both the dog and handler.

Another dreaded plant is poison oak. Dogs do not react to it but the oil on the leaves gets on the dog's fur and then is transferred to clothing or human skin.

After the first rains, the grasses start sprouting, and depending on the amount of rain, the grasses will mature and dry as early as April (in California). Usually by the Fall they have been trampled down and are not as much of a problem.

If the grasses are cut or disked before the seed heads mature this eliminates the problem for dogs. But if the grasses are cut after the seed heads form, they will continue to dry and be laying in wait for a host.

- Adela



Anubis

Egyptian god of graves, and embalming. Duties also included mummification and ushering souls into the afterlife. He attended the weighing of the heart to determine whether a soul would be allowed to enter the realm of the dead.

Anubis is the ICF logo.



Berkeley

Not the caped crusader! Working in the southern California desert in July requires special gear. A reflective vest to help keep the dogs cool in hot weather and booties to protect their feet from cactus.

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

www.HHRDD.org

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