



[EXCLUSIVE: Mystery of Amelia Earhart Could Be Solved—by Dogs](#)

Expedition in Search of Earhart, to the Uninhabited Island of Nikumaroro in the South Pacific, Sets Sail with Forensic Canines Aboard

June 21, 2017

July 2, 2017 marks the 80th anniversary of the disappearance of American aviation pioneer Amelia Earhart and navigator Fred Noonan. Since their disappearance nearly 80 years ago, no one has been able to find them, despite numerous attempts.

This week, National Geographic Society's Archaeologist-in-Residence, Fred Hiebert, along with the International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery (TIGHAR), will embark on a mission to solve the mystery of what happened to Amelia Earhart. The team sets sail from Fiji on June 24.

They'll be using a team of human remains detection dogs from the [Institute for Canine Forensics](#) (ICF) to test what they call the Nikumaroro hypothesis—that Earhart and Noonan landed on the uninhabited Nikumaroro Island when they were aiming for tiny Howland Island just north of the equator. The team has devoted the last three decades to testing this theory that was developed after 13 bones were discovered on Nikumaroro Island in 1940. The remains were then shipped to Fiji, measured—and subsequently lost. The goal of the expedition is to locate the estimated 193 bones that remain unaccounted for on the island.

Hiebert and the team may be as close as ever to solving this mystery because the team of dogs they're working with from ICF. The group of four forensic canines have nosed out burial sites as deep as nine feet and as old as 1,500 years. "No other technology is more sophisticated than the dogs," says Hiebert, who is sponsoring the canines. "They have a higher rate of success identifying things than ground-penetrating radar."

If the expedition is successful, it will be the discovery of a lifetime.

Read the exclusive story [HERE](#).

[Fredrik Hiebert](#): Biography of National Geographic Society's Archaeologist-in-Residence.



The Latest Update from National Geographic:

Forensic dogs are sniffing for bones at a campsite where the pioneering pilot may have died 80 years ago.

NIKUMARORO ISLAND, PHOENIX ISLAND PROTECTED AREA, KIRIBATI

An expedition bringing bone-sniffing dogs to search for traces of Amelia Earhart has arrived on this remote, uninhabited outpost after a 1,000-mile sea voyage north from Fiji. (See the first story in this series [here](#).)

The dogs, four border collies wearing life vests, disembarked in a rough channel carved through the reef and made their careful way across slick coral to the sandy beach to get their first scent of the island. The ground temperature in the sun was 107°F.



Forensic dog Kayle sits atop a hidden grave during a test run on the island.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SUSANNE MARTIN

“This is way beyond anything we’ve ever done,” says Lynne Engelbert, who handles a human remains detection dog named Piper for the Institute for Canine Forensics (ICF).

ICF’s handlers brought the dogs ashore for a brief initial visit to see if they would find four known graves of people who colonized the island between 1938 and 1963. “We’ve never tested the dogs on a coral tropical island before,” says John Grebenkemper, ICF’s field coordinator for this project and handler to Kayle. “We weren’t sure how scent would survive.”

But all four dogs alerted on the hidden gravesites, sitting or lying down where

they sniffed human remains. "We've solved one problem," says Grebenkemper. "Scent survives in coral."

Read the full story at:

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/06/amelia-earhart-search-island-dogs/>

How it all Started

History of the Amelia Project

The search for Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan started July 1937 nearly 80 years ago. ICF did not get involved until five years ago. This started when ICF did a project with Tom King and Dawn Johnson in the Bay Area trying to locate Native American burials before they were damaged by construction. Dawn told us about what TIGHAR (The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery) had done in the past trying to locate evidence that Amelia and Fred had crashed landed on the island of Nikumaroro. It was fun to banter around ideas of how the dogs might be able to help. It was all pure fantasy.

Then a funny thing happened.

Dawn and Tom started asking serious questions about what was involved in taking the dogs to look for Amelia and Fred. Our team did research looking up information on Nikumaroro's climate, soil composition, vegetation and terrain, how we would transport the dogs to Fiji, then how we would keep then dogs on a ship. Our preliminary findings looked overwhelmingly difficult to just get the dogs to Fiji. As much as we wanted to go on the expedition of a lifetime, we felt the probability that the dogs could detect any human remains after 80 years in such a hostile environment was low, in other words the return on investment was too low.

But they did not give up. They still wanted our dogs to go because it might be the only chance to find Amelia and/or Fred. ...But what if the dogs found bones.... If you don't try, we will never know. After gaining assurances from Tom and TIGHER that they understood the probability of finding human remains on the island were slim, and that they stated that up front to our sponsor, National Geographic, we would agree to go. Tom assured us that regardless of what the dogs do or don't find, our efforts would make history.

We have to say how proud we are of what ICF has accomplished. We extensively train our dogs to be as sensitive as possible to locate the most faint scent possible of long lost human remains. This, along with two decades of project experience in historic and prehistoric human remains detection, uniquely qualify us to do this kind of work.

It has truly taken a village to make this happen. Fiji Airways had never had the opportunity to fly working dogs before, they worked around the clock to make it happen for us. They also helped us ship our donated food from Ziwipeak that came from New Zealand so it would be there when we arrived. We are grateful

for the Fiji and the Kirabi governments for supporting this project, it would never had happened with out their support.

-Adela & Barbara



The Earhart Project

The Earhart Project is testing the hypothesis that Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan landed, and eventually died, on Gardner Island, now Nikumaroro in the Republic of Kiribati.

You can also track the expedition's progress on the TIGHAR website:

<https://tighar.org/Projects/Earhart/Niku9/dailies/niku9dailies.html>



ICF Team boards Fiji Airlines before take-off to Fiji

Standing from left right: Dr.Susanne Martin, Lynne Angeloro with Berkeley
Kneeling from left to right: Lynne Englebert with Piper, Miranda Krebs with Marcy, Dr. John Grebenkemper with Kayle, Rep from Fiji Airways



Luggage Heading to Fiji.

The dogs are :Piper on top, Berkeley on the left and Marcy on the right

In the News:

Bone-Sniffing Dogs Embark on Expedition to Locate Remains of Amelia Earhart

This story has a nice video that combines the KTLA news interview of Lynne Engelbert in LAX baggage claim with footage with Amelia Earhart facts.

<http://cw39.com/2017/06/23/bone-sniffing-dogs-embark-on-expedition-to-locate-remains-of-amelia-earhart/>

Amelia Earhart Searchers Hopeful as Bone-Sniffing Dogs Deployed on Pacific Island

Has a nice video by Ric Gillespie about what TIGHAR has found on Nikumaroro.

<http://all-that-is-interesting.com/amelia-earhart-bones-dogs>

How Dogs Might Finally Find Amelia Earhart on the 80th Anniversary of Her Disappearance.

Has two videos interviews at the end. One of Fred Hiebert, National Geographic Society's Archaeologist in Residence and the other of Lynne Engelbert working her dog Piper on an ICF project in the desert.

<http://www.realclearlife.com/history/dogs-might-discover-amelia-earharts-remains-80th-anniversary-disappearance/>

You can check out past ICF newsletters on our web page.



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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.

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