

RESEARCH NOTES

Anne M. Jensen, editor

UIC Science, LLC, Box 577, Barrow, AK 99723; anne.jensen@uicscience.org

CENTRAL ALASKA

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE TANANA STATE FOREST

Submitted by Charles Holmes,
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Archaeological survey and testing (sponsored by the Alaska Office of History and Archaeology) was conducted in the Tanana Valley State Forest where the 19,000-acre Gilles Creek forest fire burned in May and June 2010. Charles Holmes (UAF) and Randy Tedor (UAA) recorded three new sites. Although pedestrian navigation across the burned landscape was difficult, areas where ground vegetation was completely burned away made it easier to identify surface depressions. One of the sites contains both prehistoric and historic artifacts. Two of the sites have multiple components and may contain house pit features.

EXCAVATIONS AT SWAN POINT AND NEARBY SITES

Submitted by Charles Holmes,
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Barbara Crass (University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh) and Charles Holmes (UAF) continued to test the spatial extent of the Mead site and found that the site may be twice as large as previously believed. New areas of the site will be explored when collaborative excavations resume with Ben Potter (UAF) in 2011. A new site on private property in the middle Tanana Valley near the Gerstle River was discovered and tested by Charles Holmes (UAF) and Randy Tedor (UAA). The site has multiple components in about 2 m of stratified loess. A single test pit produced lithic artifacts of chert, rhyolite, basalt, and obsidian.

Well-preserved faunal remains are associated with artifacts in the deeper sediments. Of note are a bison maxilla fragment in Early Holocene context and numerous eggshell fragments in the oldest components.

EASTERN ALEUTIANS

AKUN ISLAND

Submitted by Jason Rogers

Excavations in 2008 and 2010 at two sites on Akun Island have produced several radiocarbon dates. Both sites consist of deeply stratified middens. One site (UNI-104) is located on a gently sloping backshore beach, while the other (UNI-103-C) is on a higher ridge or saddle overlooking the ocean. The project, conducted by Cultural Resource Consultants, LLC, also produced extensive collections of faunal material, lithics, and other artifacts. The collections are currently under analysis. Radiocarbon dates are provided in Table 1 and Figure 1.

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2004 IntCal04 Terrestrial Radiocarbon Age Calibration, 0–26 cal kyr BP. *Radiocarbon* 46:1029–1058.

Table 1: Akun Island radiocarbon dates, calibrated using INTCAL04 (Reimer et al. 2004).

Site	¹⁴ C Years BP	Calibrated Years BP	Lab Number
UNI-103-C	5050 ± 40	5910–5670	Beta-281741
UNI-103-C	4610 ± 40	5460–5380, 5330–5290	Beta-281742
UNI-103-C	4340 ± 40	5030–5010, 4980–4840	Beta-247386
UNI-104	2210 ± 40	2340–2120	Beta-249140
UNI-104	1550 ± 40	1530–1350	Beta-281744
UNI-104	1270 ± 40	1290–1080	Beta-281743
UNI-104	1010 ± 40	970–990, 860–820	Beta-249141
UNI-104	730 ± 40	720–650	Beta-258179

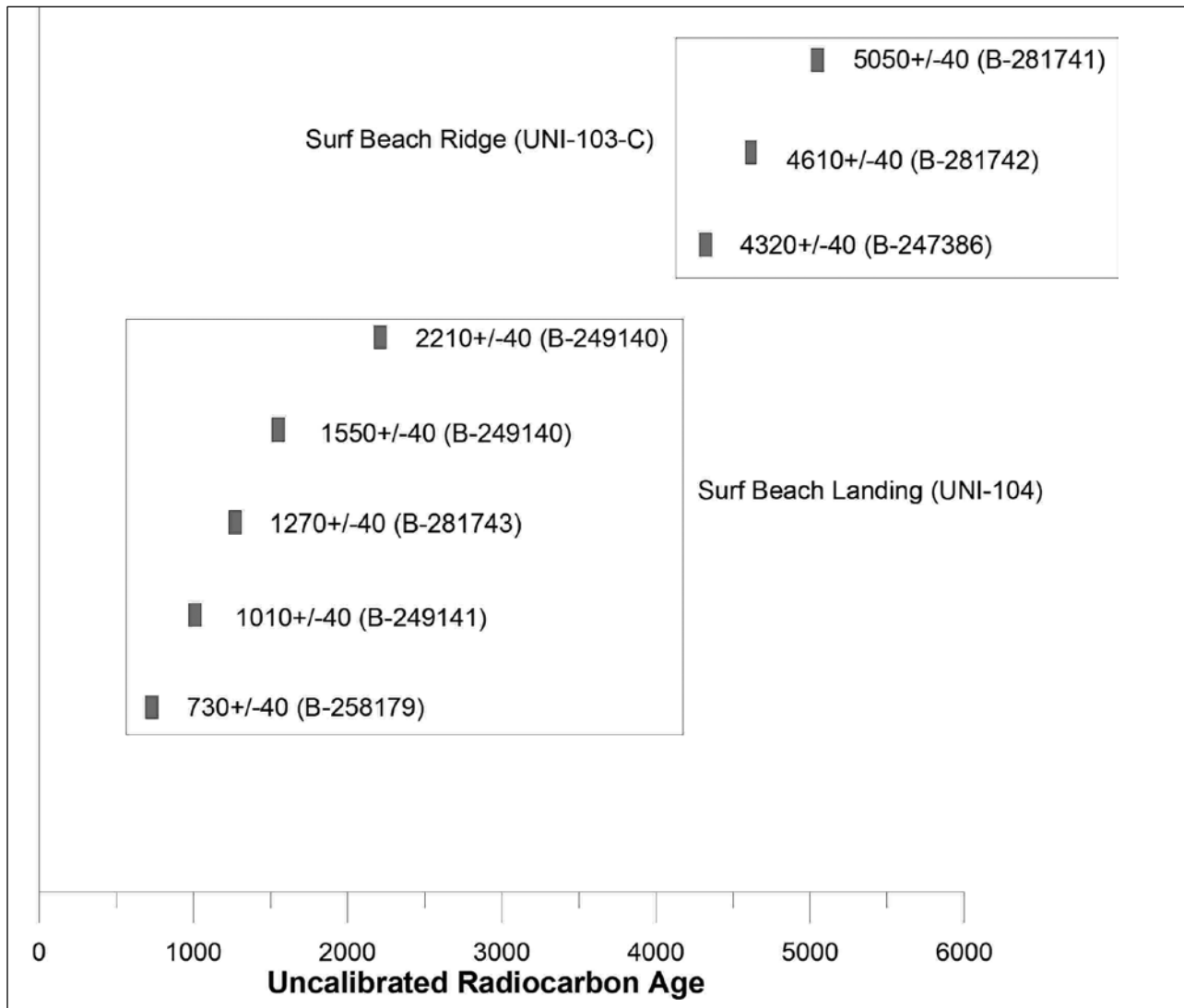


Figure 1. Akun Island radiocarbon dates

SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA

ETHNOHISTORY IN SEWARD

Submitted by Kerry D. Feldman,
University of Alaska Anchorage

Kerry Feldman is reexamining his 2007–08 ethnohistorical study, completed with the assistance of Rachel Mason at the request of the Qutekcak Native Tribe of Seward, Alaska, for its anthropologically relevant information. The study was part of Qutekcak Native Tribe's effort to secure tribal recognition under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 as applied to Alaska in 1936. Their petition is still under review, so only general comments on the nature of my current research derived from that study are given here.

This research continues the discussion of Native American identity and essentialist constructions in anthropology. Of anthropological interest is the nature of identity over time of the primarily mixed-descent Native people residing in Seward since the 1890s, most of whom had a Euro-American father, grandfather, or great-grandfather. From the time of contact with Russian fur traders up through the U.S. purchase of Alaska from Russia after 1867, the Prince William Sound region was a diverse cultural mixing area with no indigenous group dominating the region politically or culturally.

Four Native groups whose ancestral villages were located in Alaska towns and cities that today are dominated by non-Native inhabitants received recognition as indigenous "Named City Corporations" as a result of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971. With that recognition the indigenous populations in Juneau, Kenai, Kodiak, and Sitka were recognized as Native tribes. Natives in the town of Seward were not listed among these ANCSA indigenous city corporations. Why not? Seward's history as a town (incorporated in 1912) actually begins with a mixed-descent Alaska Native woman and her white fur-trader husband as early as 1884. What kinds of bonds of association did Native people residing in Seward have from the early 1900s until the enactment of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971? How did Natives in Seward maintain a Native identity when it was personally, financially, and socially dangerous to openly display such an identity and bonds? This study will examine how their Native identity was affected by the coming to Seward of the Jesse Lee Home orphanage in 1925, World War II, the 1964 Alaska earthquake and tsunami, the establishment of a tuberculosis sanitarium, and ANCSA in 1971.

NORTHERN ALASKA

HOMESTEADING IN NORTHERN ALASKA

Submitted by Robert King, Bureau of Land Management, Anchorage

Robert King continues his research on the privatization of certain federal lands to individuals in northern Alaska, including cases on the Seward Peninsula and a few locales in the Brooks Range and on the North Slope. The rationale was to find examples of the Homestead Laws and related Alaska land conveyance laws in the Far North. This research is connected to King's overarching interest in the history of homesteading in the United States, due in part to the upcoming 150th anniversary in 2012 of President Lincoln's signature of the 1862 Homestead Act. The BLM will mark that anniversary with a website, for which King is researching homesteading in Alaska, including the question of how homesteading could occur north of the Arctic Circle.

CAPE ESPENBERG THULE ORIGINS PROJECT

Submitted by John F. Hoffecker and Owen K. Mason,
Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research (INSTAAR),
University of Colorado at Boulder

The second field season of a three-year research project at Cape Espenberg on the northern shore of the Seward Peninsula (within Bering Land Bridge National Preserve) was completed June–August 2010. The project is funded by NSF and is focused on human responses to climate change during the critical period ~1000–500 years ago at a crucial locale in Northwest Alaska. The principal investigators are John F. Hoffecker and Owen K. Mason. During 2010, John Darwent (University of California Davis [UCD]) employed a total station to complete a high-resolution map of cultural features on the ten most recent dune ridges at Cape Espenberg, from the easternmost storm surge channel for ~2 km to the cape. With the exception of the youngest ridge (E-1), all the dunes contain evidence of settlement associated with eight newly recorded (KTZ-313–320) and two previously recorded sites (KTZ-101, 171), with more than forty house and cache pit features. In early August, Nancy Bigelow (University of Alaska Fairbanks) cored ponds and peat deposits for paleoclimatic proxy data to reconstruct local environmental history. During June through August 2010, three house features (21, 33, 68) were excavated in three sites on

successive dune ridges at Cape Espenberg, under the direction of Christyann Darwent (UCD), who was assisted by six UCD field school students, five NPS-mentored students, and two graduate students from the University of Paris. In total, 87 m² were uncovered to a depth of about 1 m. Excavations produced 4,300 artifacts, 47,200 faunal remains and more than 700 macrofossil and wood samples. Five newly run ¹⁴C samples on caribou bone supplement the chronology for the three sites.

Feature 21, on Ridge E-6 in KTZ-304, represents the earliest phase of Inupiaq settlement at Cape Espenberg, with a date between AD 1270 and 1400 based on two caribou bone collagen samples (680 ± 40 BP, Beta-286168; 640 ± 40 BP, Beta-286169). Feature 21 was excavated by Jeremy Foin (UCD), assisted by Hans Lange (Greenland National Museum). In early August, human remains were encountered within the house floor, apparently marked by a whale bone; work was subsequently suspended, pending NAGPRA consultations with local communities. The entire 30 m² excavated in Feature 21 yielded 1,352 artifacts, more than 18,700 faunal remains, 670 pottery fragments, one ceramic lamp, ten amber beads, five antler arrow points, four leister prongs, an ivory fish lure, a walrus scapula shovel, two mattocks, two ivory sealing harpoons, a wound pin, twelve slate ulu blades, seven chert bifaces, two microblades, and 365 fragments of chert debitage. Exotic materials included nephrite, obsidian, iron pyrite, and five mammoth ivory fragments. Four whale bones, including two mandible fragments, were also recovered from Feature 21.

On Ridge E-5a, Chris Darwent directed the excavation within 26 m² of a multiroom house with an entry more than five meters long (Feature 68), part of the large site, KTZ-087. Feature 68 was occupied between AD 1440 and 1640, based on two caribou bone assays (250 ± 40 BP, Beta-286171; 360 ± 40 BP, Beta-286172). Feature 68 yielded 1,890 artifacts and about 14,000 faunal remains. Although the overwhelming number of artifacts were either chert debitage (n = 986) or potsherds (n = 479), diagnostic objects include a copper needle, six amber beads, four slate knives, four ulu blades, five sealing harpoons, nine antler arrow points, two knife handles of bone/antler, one piece of slat armor, three wrist guards, six awls (bone and ivory), a labret, and a substantial number of wooden artifacts (toy bow, arrow point, bowls, shafts, rods), including roughly 1,000 pieces of wood flaking debris. The

copper needle and slat armor are especially significant. In addition to whale bone elements from within Feature 68, which included a mandible and two vertebrae, seventeen pieces of baleen were found in the former house.

The most recent feature excavated in 2010 was located on Ridge E-4, where Frédéric Dussault (Laval University) excavated 31 m² of a north-facing two-room house with a long entry (Feature 33) that may date between either AD 1670 and 1780 or between 1790 and 1960 (120 ± 40 BP, Beta-286170). Feature 33 yielded substantial evidence of fishing in addition to bones of seal, caribou, walrus, and whale. Feature 33 produced about 14,500 faunal remains, 1,000 wood fragments, and about 1,000 artifacts, with over half either lithic debitage or potsherds. Other artifacts included one amber bead, four chert bifaces, four chert scrapers, two slate blades, an ulu blade, forty-two net sinkers, two antler arrow points, four sealing harpoons, one fishing harpoon, two knife handles, a marlin spike, two mesh gauges, one ceramic lamp, a fish lure, a labret, and two leister prongs. Wooden artifacts included four points, a rod, four shafts and five shaft fragments, and one wick trimmer.

The role of whaling in the Cape Espenberg economy, which is a major research focus of the project, remains problematic and subject to taphonomic studies by Chris Darwent. Another focus is wood, and during 2010, Claire Alix (UAF/University of Paris) conducted beach surveys and recorded archaeological features to examine the driftwood supply and its uses in architecture and in technology at Cape Espenberg. In early August, Scott Elias (Royal Holloway University of London) collected sediment samples to obtain beetle remains for paleoecological analysis and ¹⁴C dating. In addition to participation of students from UCD and the University of Paris, high-school students from local communities assisted with the research during late July under the Student Mentorship Program of the National Park Service, managed by Becky Saleeby. Village elders from Shishmaref, including informant Clifford Weyiouanna, visited Cape Espenberg in late July, in association with Josh Wisniewski (UAF), postdoctoral researcher and cultural anthropologist. The research team will return in 2011 for the third and final season of the project.

NUVUK ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT, BARROW

Submitted by Anne Jensen, UIC Science LLC

The Nuvuk Archaeological Project, funded by NSF and the Department of Education ECHO program, completed the sixth large-scale field season in July 2010 at the eroding site at Point Barrow. Once again, the crew was composed largely of North Slope high school students, thirteen in all, with Anne Jensen as principal investigator, assisted by Laura Thomas (UIC) and Ron Mancil, a graduate student at University of Alaska Fairbanks. In 2010, the Nuvuk Project uncovered an additional seven graves, yielding a total of eighty graves from the Nuvuk cemetery, excavated since 2000. Physical anthropological observations on the human remains were completed by Shawn Miller of the University of Utah and the remains await reburial. To reconstruct the regional trends of Inupiaq genetic history, Dennis O'Rourke, as well as postdoctoral researcher Jennifer Raff and graduate student Justin Tackney, also from University of Utah, continue analyses on the aDNA samples obtained from burials within the Nuvuk cemetery, with a number of ^{14}C samples in preparation for submission. For the remaining Nuvuk mortuary collections, cataloging and analysis is proceeding apace under the direction of Anne Jensen.

NAUTICAL SURVEY IN ST. MICHAEL AND STEBBINS

Submitted by Kate Worthington, Institute of Nautical Archaeology, Texas A&M University

Kate Worthington, M.A. candidate at Texas A&M's Nautical Archaeology program, and John Bean, Department of Geomatics, University of Alaska Anchorage, traveled to St. Michael in summer 2010 to complete an initial assessment and archaeological survey of abandoned Gold Rush-era Yukon River sternwheel steamers. This involved a week of surveying the steamer remains, which lie mostly in the intertidal zone; collecting total station and laser scan data; filming video records; describing and recording each wreck; and of course, enjoying the brilliant sunshine. Great thanks are owed to the villages of St. Michael and Stebbins for enabling survey of the historical steamboat wrecks. We hope to come back next summer, survey for additional wrecks, gather supplemental comparative data on the wrecks already recorded, and assess changes in the site formation processes.

