

Digging in the Dark: How Submerged Paleoindian Sites in the Aucilla River of Florida Are Illuminating First Americans Studies

Speaker: Dr. Jessi Halligan, Assistant Professor of Archaeology at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse

Host Department: Museum of Anthropology

Date: 11/20/2014

Time: 12:00 PM

Location: Room 2009 Ruthven Museums Building

Description:

For as long as there have been American archaeologists, some of us have been concerned with the initial peopling of the Americas. Although much research has focused on this specific topic for more than 80 years, we still have many questions about the earliest Paleoindians, including who they were, where they came from, how they arrived, and how they lived. Research conducted during the past five years, however, has begun to provide some significant new insights, in large part to refinements in organic materials research, especially ancient DNA and radiocarbon dating. In Florida, collectors, archaeologists, and paleontologists have been recovering organic remnants of the terminal Pleistocene from the Aucilla River for many years. Archaeological evidence has consisted largely of surface finds of diagnostic Paleoindian bifaces and osseous artifacts manufactured from extinct mammals, but formal excavations have revealed some artifacts buried in dateable sediments in potentially-intact contexts on sinkhole margins as well. In collaboration with the Center for the Study of the First Americans, I have been conducting geoarchaeological investigations at numerous Paleoindian sites in Florida since 2008. Due to the excellent preservation found in Florida's underwater contexts, we have been able to clarify archaeological context of several sites, make predictions about preserved Paleoindian site locations in this area, provide some tantalizing hints about the colonization of the Americas, and make some comments on the lifestyle of Florida's early Paleoindians.