



LETTER TO THE
EDITOR

Ancientness of New Mexico Human Footprints Confirmed

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One of the perennially most controversial issues in the history of archaeology concerns the age of the human settlement of the Western Hemisphere. In *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 37(1) (JSE), I described recently obtained evidence of the impressive antiquity of humans in the New World. Part of that evidence consisted of human footprints, apparently in association with prints of Pleistocene mammals, in White Sands National Park in New Mexico's Tularosa Basin. These were carbon-dated back to the Last Glacial Maximum, some 21,000 to 23,000 years ago and before iced-in Beringia would have been crossable, suggesting a littoral entry to the New World (Jett, 2023a). Shortly after my note was published, another article appeared, detailing questions recently raised in print regarding the genuineness of at least some of the prints, their association with the mammal tracks, and the dating of these phenomena; I summarized much of this in JSE 37(3) (Jett, 2023b). Now, the original authors have replied to the sceptics' objections concerning time depth (Pigati et al. 2023).

Radiocarbon dating had been accomplished based on *Ruppia cirrhosa* seeds considered to be associated with the tracks. Critics raised the possibility that the seeds carbon-dated older than they actually were, owing to the plants' absorption of old carbon in a lacustrine environment. In response, the original authors carbon-14-dated pollen grains from non-aquatic species from the site. To this, they added optically stimulated-luminescence- (OSL-) dating of associated quartz-sand grains in order to ascertain when the sand grains had been deposited. "Both methods confirm the age of the White Sands footprints as 21,000 to 23,000 years ago." Thus, this site now "may be the most convincing evidence for pre-LGM presence of *H. sapiens* in America" (Philippsen, 2021, p. 37).

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