

Buried treasure: hidden footprint archives in the American Southwest

Matthew Bennett, Sally Reynolds and David Bustos

School of Life and Environmental Sciences, Bournemouth University

Discoveries at White Sands has shown how human footprints can demonstrate presence, behavior and lifeways. Their proposed age is challenging for some, but has been corroborated by multiple lines of evidence. While this debate around footprint age is important to the peopling of the Americas it misses the true value of the footprints. They provide, in the absence of more traditional cultural artifacts, evidence of human behavior – interacting with Pleistocene megafauna, transporting resources via primitive travois and moving across the landscape in different ways. Using multiple footprint sites across the American Southwest we explore this archive and its potential to contribute to the debate on the peopling of the Americas.