

“New Evidence—*Humans* in North America >15,000 years ago”

On Saturday, March 24, 2018 a group of more than 80 were honored to hear presentations on the latest discoveries relative to Humans in the Americas. At UCD Extension in Sacramento attendees heard presentations from three renowned archaeologists. They shared latest evidence which “nails the coffin” on Clovis First, supports the seafaring theory of migration, and pushes back the probable dates for the peopling of North America to at least 15,000 years ago.

“Children of Neptune? Human Evolution Aquatic Adaptations and Marine Dispersals” by **Dr. Jon Erlandson**, archaeologist and professor at University of Oregon. Dr. Erlandson focused on the Coastal Migration Theory of peopling of the Americas by discussing the paradigm shifts in Anthropology: 1. Hominin ancestors evolved adjacent to aquatic habitats—rather than dry African savannas—and that aquatic foods were crucial to the evolution of larger brains 2. *Homo sapiens* evolved relatively recently (~300,000 years) in Africa, followed by a rapid spread around the world after ~70-100,000 years ago, 3. Rejection of 20th century theories that seafaring, fishing, and coastal adaptations developed only in the last 10,000 years or so, and 4. Collapse of the Clovis First model for the peopling of the Americas and a transformation of the Coastal Migration Theory from marginal to mainstream. Dr. Erlandson used findings from 40 years of excavating California’s Channel Islands to support the early presence of *H. sapiens* in America. For example, Daisy Cave shows heavy use of kelp forest resources between ~11,600 and 8600 years ago and from a deep sounding inside Daisy Cave a bone bead and 2 chert flakes from charcoal-rich strata which dated to ~18,600-19,400 cal BP. As archaeologists continue their search for knowledge of the past Dr. Erlandson suggested that “Drowned Coastlines and Landscapes of the World” are their last frontier.

“2011 – 2017 Excavations at Rimrock Draw Rock Shelter” by **Dr. Pat O’Grady**, archaeologist at University of Oregon who led a tour in 2017 for SAS members at the Rimrock Draw Rockshelter site in Oregon. Dr. O’Grady discussed recent finds at this site. Evidence suggests human presence at Rimrock Draw older than 15,000 years ago. A deeply buried concentration of boulders and cobbles from an ancient collapse of the rock shelter wall was finally breached exposing sediments yielding artifacts and ecofacts consistent with those found five meters to the east, where a 15,000 year old tephra, camelid tooth enamel fragments, and an orange agate stone tool were recovered. The new finds are near the same depth and in the same stratum as the others, suggesting that the most ancient deposits at the site may have been well protected over the last 15 millennia. Excavations of this site will continue this summer.

“First People in the Western Hemisphere by **Dr. Michael B. Collins**, archaeologist and Research Associate Professor at Texas State University. Dr. Collins debunked Clovis First by reviewing older than Clovis sites in North and South America At least 60 sites in the Western Hemisphere are contemporary with, but distinct from Clovis or pre date Clovis. The highlighted sites included Milespoint, Parson’s Island, Cactus Hill, Borax Lake, Tulare Lake, On Your Knees Cave, Gault, Friedkin and Wilson Leonard. Each of these offered older than Clovis finds. Dr. Collins warned that one should be careful when you try to identify Clovis technology. It involves very specialized criteria including how fluting is terminated, length of stem, and details of overshooting.