

BLM News

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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DATE: October 26, 2004
ELKO FIELD OFFICE: 2004-03
FOR RELEASE: October 26, 2004

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ICE AGE PALEONTOLOGY REPORT AVAILABLE

The “Paleontological Investigations at Mineral Hill Cave” technical report has been published and is available free on compact disc and via the Nevada BLM’s website.

The 175-page report or “monograph” details the findings of an 8-year excavation project in southern Pine Valley in Elko County, Nevada.

“Mineral Hill Cave turned out to be a highly significant Pleistocene (“Ice Age”) cave site,” said Bryan Hockett, BLM archaeologist in charge of the excavations and co-author of the report. “We recovered thousands of well-preserved animal bones that were left in the cave by ancient carnivores.”

Hockett continued, “Most of the bones appear to date from 30,000 to 50,000 years ago. Essentially, many of the bones are the remains of animals that were consumed in or near the cave. The carnivores included wolves, coyotes, red foxes, and brown bear. Two of the more interesting carnivores found have been extinct for at least ten thousand years – the North American Cheetah and the short-faced skunk.”

“The eaten animals or the “victims” include pronghorn antelope, bison, mountain sheep, extinct camel and llama, an extinct species of mountain deer, and two species of extinct horses. There was a wide variety of small rodents, lizards, and snakes. Lahontan cutthroat trout vertebrae and a variety of birds including an extinct eagle – the fragile eagle – were also found.”

The excavations were completed by archaeologists from BLM, the Desert Research Institute, and the Utah Geological Survey. Along with Hockett, the report is co-authored by Eric Dillingham, a former BLM employee.

Fifty copies of the compact disc are available free to the public on a first-come, first-serve basis at the BLM Elko Field Office, 3900 East Idaho Street, Elko, Nevada. Copies may also be requested from the BLM Nevada State Office in Reno at 775-861-6415. The report will be available on the internet in .pdf format by November 5, 2004, at www.nv.blm.gov/Elko/mineralhill.htm and at www.nv.blm.gov in the near future, and may be down-loaded free of charge.

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