

Discovering 'ghost footprints': Did humans come to North America tens of thousands of years earlier than we thought?

Recent discoveries of [mammoth bones](#) and "ghost" footprints left behind by ancient peoples are adding fuel to a scientific debate over whether the first humans to reach North America may have come much earlier than previously thought.

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On July 26, the Cornell Chronicle announced that a Cornell researcher has found 88 preserved "ghost" footprints in the salt flats of the U.S. Air Force's Utah Testing and Training Range. The markings, dated to around 12,000 years ago, are called "ghost" footprints because they become visible when the ground is wet enough but disappear when the earth dries again.

This discovery mirrors an [earlier ghost footprint finding in New Mexico's White Sands National Park](#) that was dated to 21,000 years ago, though its dating is disputed by scientists.

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It will likely take more evidence, though, to convince most scientists to push back the timeline of human arrival in North America, something that Spencer Lucas, the curator of paleontology at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science, bemoans.

"The research looks very thorough," said [paleontologist Spencer] Lucas in an interview with NBC News. "At what point will the archaeological community wake up and smell the coffee? There's so much evidence," he said.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here**](#)