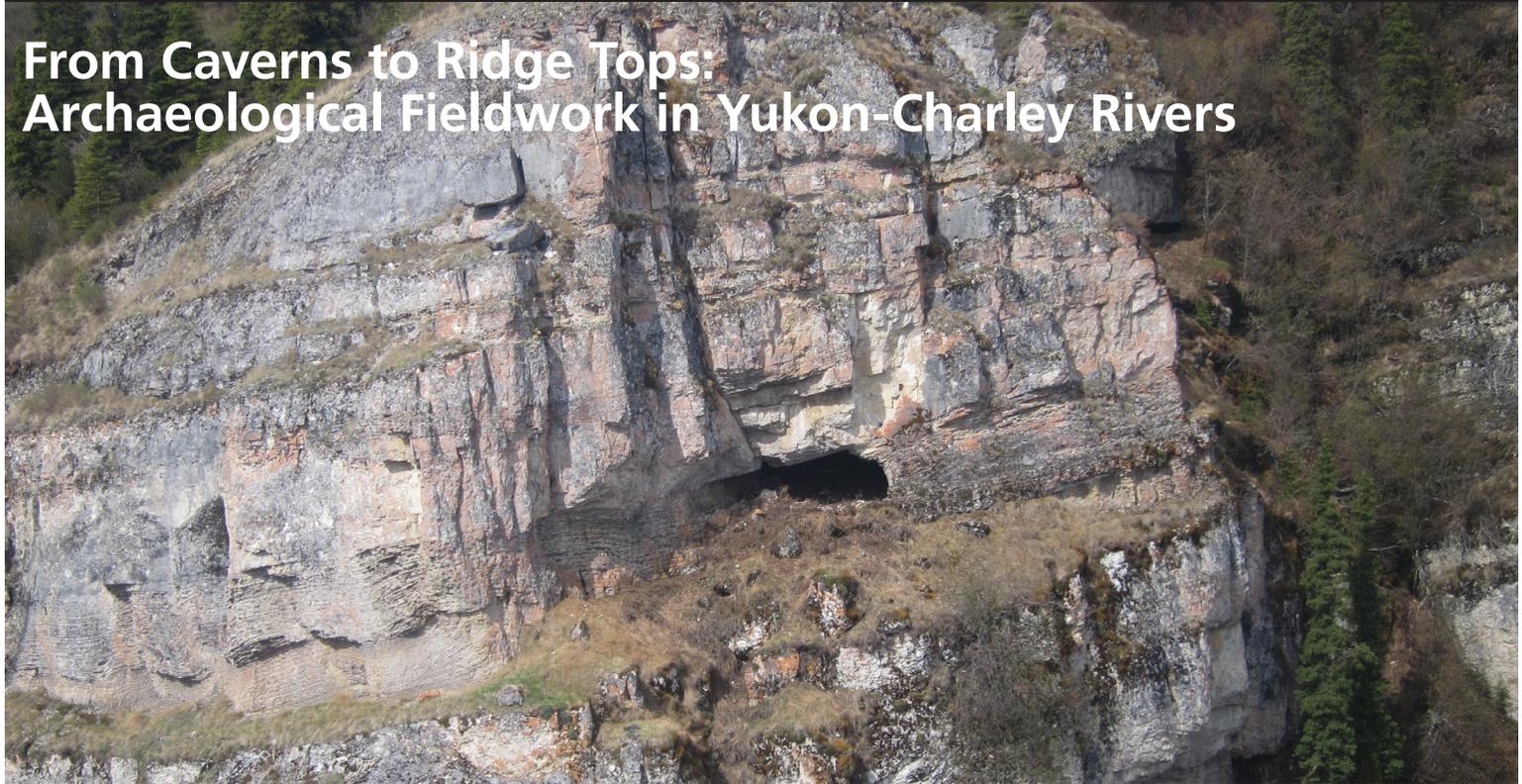




From Caverns to Ridge Tops: Archaeological Fieldwork in Yukon-Charley Rivers



NPS photo by Chris Ciancibelli

Preliminary testing demonstrates that these deposits date to at least 24,000 years ago, and can provide information about long term environmental and cultural changes in the region.

Phase one of a multi-year cave study in Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve commenced in 2013. Caves are recognized as a potential resource for archaeological, paleontological, and paleoecological data, and in recent years, dozens of limestone caves and rock shelters have been documented within the Preserve. Preliminary testing demonstrates that these deposits date to at least 24,000 years ago, and can provide information about long term environmental and cultural changes in the region. In order to assess and protect such a significant resource, five NPS archaeologists conducted a survey of potential cave sites, documented accurate cave locations, and identified resources in the caves during the 2013 field season. Additionally, the crew conducted ridge-line surveys in remote areas in search of other archaeological sites and lithic raw material sources in the Preserve.

Treasure Troves of Information

NPS archaeologists Caroline Ketron, Jillian Richie, and Joe Keeney test cave sediments inside a cave in Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve.

Approximately 9,200 acres were surveyed during this ten-day effort. A total of seven caves were visited, and the crew updated coordinates and conducted sub surface testing at each deposit. One test unit excavated beneath a rock shelter near the Seventy-mile River contained remains of prehistoric lithic tool production and was likely used as a temporary shelter from the elements. Visits to other caves revealed information about ease of accessibility, depth of deposits, and potential for paleo-environmental data. A minimum of 20 caves have been identified within the

preserve and will be explored in future field seasons.



NPS photo by Chris Ciancibelli



Surveys Result in New Discoveries

The majority of archaeological sites are lithic scatters, remains of stone tool making still visible on the modern surface.



Photo by Chris Ciancibelli

A fragmented portion of a bifacial stone tool was found during a ridge-top survey in 2013. This type of tool in its completion serves as a multi-functional knife.

Attempts to locate geological sources and open-air archaeological sites during surveys within the preserve were equally as successful. At least one source of “Seventy-mile chert,” a lithic raw material found throughout the preserve, was located, and a total of 35 archaeological sites were recorded and assessed.

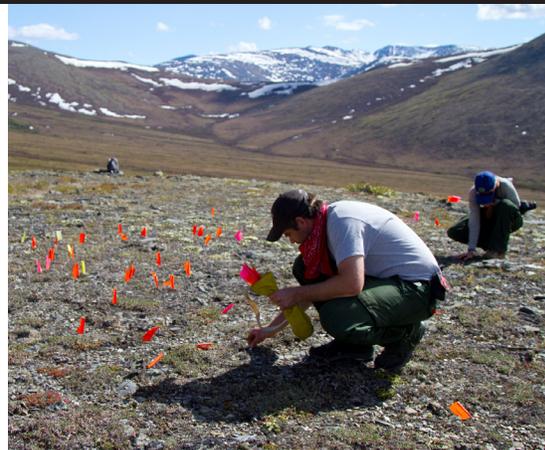


Photo by Greg Kinman

NPS Archaeologists Joe Keeney and Jillian Richie record a lithic scatter on a ridge top survey in Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve in 2013.

Twenty-six of these were newly discovered and nine had been previously recorded. The majority of archaeological sites are lithic scatters, which are remains of stone tool making still visible on the modern surface and are indicative of short-term hunting localities.

For more information about the archaeological research in Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve’s caves and ridgelines, please contact Archaeologist Chris Ciancibelli at (907) 455-0630, or email him at christopher_ciancibelli@nps.gov.

Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve

