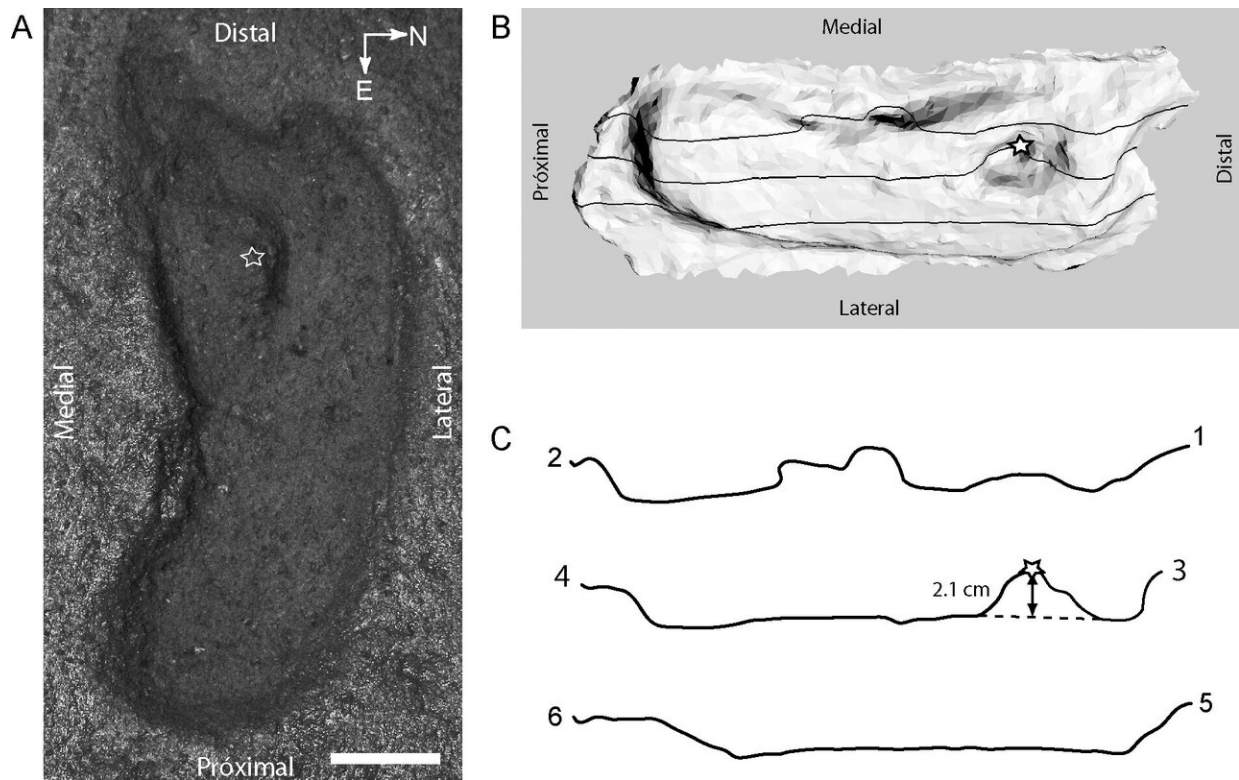


# Footprint found in Chile is 'oldest' in Americas: scientists

April 28 2019



A) Photography of the original sedimentary structure attributed to a human footprint that was excavated at the Pilauco site. A sediment lump is apparently embedded within the trackbed (star). Scale bar 5 cm. B) Three-dimensional model in dorsal view with a virtual 45° tilt toward the south to facilitate the observation of profile lines 1–2, 3–4 and 5–6 drawn on the 3D model surface (123Catch from Autodesk and trial version of Rhino4, McNeel & Associates). C) Profile lines: [1–2] crossing from the “heel”, “medial longitudinal arch” and “hallux”; [3–4] passing by the midline. Notice that the sediment lump is 2.1 cm high from the footprint base; and [5–6] line passing through the “heel”, “lateral

longitudinal arch” and “lateral digits”. Credit: *PLOS ONE* (2019). DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0213572

Scientists in Chile say they have found a footprint dating from at least 15,600 years ago, making it the earliest such sign of man's presence in the Americas.

The footprint was found at the Pilauco excavation in the city of Osorno (820 kilometers, or 500 miles, south of Santiago), where scientists have been digging since 2007.

Archeologists from the Austral University of Chile said the footprint was first spotted in 2011 next to a house. It took years for paleontologist Karen Moreno and geologist Mario Pino to reliably confirm that the print was human.

"There are other human [footprints](#) in the Americas," Pino told the Osorno newspaper *El Austral*, "but none has been dated as far back."

He said scientists were able to do so by applying radiocarbon dating techniques to organic plant material where the print was found.

Pino said the footprint appears to be that of a barefoot man weighing about 70 kilograms (155 pounds) and of the species *Hominipes modernus*, a relative of *Homo sapiens*.

The area in Chile has proven rich in fossils, including evidence of an ancestor of today's elephants and American horses, as well as of more recent human presence.

An earlier footprint found at a site south of Osorno was found to be

about 1,000 years more recent.

The newer findings were published in the latest edition of the peer-reviewed scientific journal *PLOS One*.

**More information:** Karen Moreno et al. A late Pleistocene human footprint from the Pilauco archaeological site, northern Patagonia, Chile, *PLOS ONE* (2019). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0213572](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0213572)

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Citation: Footprint found in Chile is 'oldest' in Americas: scientists (2019, April 28) retrieved 6 February 2023 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-04-footprint-chile-oldest-americas-scientists.html>

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