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**NEW DOCUMENTARY “ICE AGE FOOTPRINTS” UNCOVERS REMARKABLE ANCIENT HUMAN FOOTPRINTS THAT COULD BE THE EARLIEST EVIDENCE OF HUMANS EVER FOUND IN NORTH AMERICA**

 *One-hour film follows a team of scientists as they date footprints found in White Sands, New Mexico to more than 21,000 years ago*

**NOVA “ICE AGE FOOTPRINTS”**

**Premieres Wednesday, May 25 at 9pm ET/8C on PBS**

[**Also Available for Streaming Online**](https://www.pbs.org/video/ice-age-footprints-preview-f7wi7a/) **and on the** [**PBS Video App**](https://www.pbs.org/pbs-video-app/)

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**Boston, MA, May 6, 2022**—The award-winning **PBS science series NOVA**, aproduction of **GBH**, will premiere the one-hour documentary **ICE AGE FOOTPRINTS** Wednesday, May 25 at 9pm ET/8C on PBS.The film, which will also be available for streaming online at [pbs.org/nova,](https://www.pbs.org/video/ice-age-footprints-preview-f7wi7a/) on [NOVA’s YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjHz5SVHeMT0AViCYZvsGDA), and via the [PBS Video app](https://www.pbs.org/pbs-video-app/), follows archaeologists as they investigate remarkable ancient footprints found in White Sands National Park, New Mexico. For the first time, scientists date the footprints, and if confirmed, their results would indicate that humans were present in North America much earlier than archaeologists previously thought.

These footprints include tracks from 13-foot-tall mammoths, huge ground sloths, packs of dire wolves, and camels. Alongside them, though, is something even rarer—footprints of humans that have been buried for thousands of years and are gradually being exposed by wind erosion. The filmuses immersive 3-D graphics tobring viewers face to face with some of the magnificent creatures that roamed North America during the last Ice Age–animals that went extinct more than 10,000 years ago–while revealing an untold story of human history on the continent.

Hosted by **Kirk Johnson**, the Sant Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, **ICE AGE FOOTPRINTS** captures the work of a team of archaeologists and other scientists led by White Sands National Park Resource Program Manager **David Bustos** as they try to unlock the secrets of these extraordinary prints before they erode to dust. Among the questions they’re trying to answer are: Who made them? How old are they? And what can they tell us about the long history of humans in North America?

**ICE AGE FOOTPRINTS** brings viewers an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at some of the astonishing stories hidden in these tracks, as footprints can reveal intimate details that no bones ever could. One fascinating set of footprints excavated by forensic footprint expert **Matthew Bennett** tells the story of an individual making a journey and then coming back later the same day. Forensic analysis of the prints shows the person was in a hurry, and—as revealed by a set of much smaller tracks at one point along the path—they were carrying a child. Later, their track is crossed by the prints of an enormous ground sloth, which appears to rear up on its hind legs—possibly to sniff the air as it detects humans—a scene that reveals just how close humans and Ice Age animals came to one another.

“The footprints are so striking because they seem so dynamic,” said **NOVA Co-Executive Producer Chris Schmidt**. “It’s so easy to reach across time and picture these people and their families moving through the land and interacting with the living world around them.”

But when were the footprints made? For several decades, the mainstream archaeology community held that humans first arrived in North America about 13,000 years ago. More recently, evidence pushed that date to around 2,000 years earlier. Many scientists argued that they could not have arrived sooner, because much of the continent was covered with massive ice sheets.

Now, the White Sands footprints could be challenging that story. The film takes viewers along on a journey of discovery as scientists **Jeff Pigati** and **Kathleen Springer** use radiocarbon dating on ancient seeds found buried between the footprints and find that the footprints were made between 21,000 and 23,000 years ago. Pigati and Springer were amazed. As host Kirk Johnson says, “This is not a subtle result!”

While the dramatic findings may be surprising for some scientists, for many Indigenous people, they are confirmation of long-held beliefs. “The tribes talk about going way back. We all talk about having been here forever,” explainsarchaeologist **Joe Watkins**,a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, in the film. “We have the evidence. It really does put our feetprints firmly into the past here in North America. These are our relatives.”

**ICE AGE FOOTPRINTS** also features **Kim Pasqual-Charlie**, Tribal Historic Preservation Board Member of the Acoma Pueblo of New Mexico, who speaks about the significance of the footprints to her community; and **Edward Jolie**, archeologist and citizen of the Muscogee Nation of Oklahoma, who together with Joe Watkins and archaeologist **Carol Ellick**, investigates some of the ancient technology that might have been used by the Ice Age inhabitants of the area to transport heavy loads, including the meat of giant mammoths.

NOVA’s cameras have been following the archaeological team’s investigations since February 2020, and in October 2021 they returned to White Sands to find out the results of the radiocarbon dating. **ICE AGE FOOTPRINTS** reveals the astonishing results that could transform experts’ understanding of the history of humans in North America.

“One of the reasons the dating is so important,” said **NOVA Co-Executive Producer Julia Cort**, “is that it puts humans deep in North America at the very height of the Ice Age. It’s another piece of evidence pointing to the epic journeys that ancient humans made at a time when the continent looked very different than it does today.”

“Seeing the footprints of ancient humans, perfectly preserved for thousands of years, is incredibly moving,” said **Producer Bella Falk of Windfall Films.** “There are adults and children, running, hunting, and playing—it’s a remarkable window into Ice Age life. And not only are they a wonderful connection back to the distant past, but they could also provide vital new clues to help answer the great mystery about the peopling of the Americas. It was a huge privilege to be able to follow this important study, and we are excited to share the results with NOVA viewers.”

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**ICE AGE FOOTPRINTS** is a NOVA Production by Windfall Films Ltd. (part of the Argonon Group) for GBH. Producer is Bella Falk. Directors are David Dugan and Bella Falk. Editor is Sabrina Burnard. Kirk Johnson is the Host and Sant Director of the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Natural History. Executive Producer for Windfall Films is David Dugan. Executive Producers for NOVA are Julia Cort and Chris Schmidt. NOVA is a production of GBH. **ICE AGE FOOTPRINTS** is distributed internationally by [PBS International](https://pbsinternational.org/).

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**About NOVA**

[NOVA](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/?utm_source=promourl&utm_medium=direct&utm_campaign=nova_2019) is the most popular primetime science series on American television, demystifying the scientific and technological concepts that shape and define our lives, our planet, and our universe. The PBS series is also one of the most widely distributed science programs around the world, and is a multimedia, multiplatform brand reaching more than 55 million Americans every year on TV and online. NOVA’s important and inspiring stories of human ingenuity, exploration, and the quest for knowledge are regularly recognized with the industry’s most prestigious awards. As part of its mission to make the scientific enterprise accessible to all, NOVA is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in all its work, from the production process to the range of stories we tell and the voices we amplify. In addition, science educators across the country rely on NOVA for resources used in the classroom as well as in museums, libraries, and after-school programs. NOVA is a production of GBH Boston; more information can be found at [pbs.org/nova](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/?utm_source=promourl&utm_medium=direct&utm_campaign=nova_2019), or by following NOVA on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/NOVApbs/), [Twitter,](https://twitter.com/novapbs?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor) or [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/novapbs/?hl=en).

**About PBS**

[PBS](http://www.pbs.org/), with more than 330 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and digital content. Each month, PBS reaches over 120 million people through television and 26 million people online, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS’ broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry’s most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to PBS for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. Decades of research confirms that PBS’ premier children’s media service, PBS KIDS, helps children build critical literacy, math and social-emotional skills, enabling them to find success in school and life. Delivered through member stations, PBS KIDS offers high-quality educational content on TV–including a 24/7 channel, online at [pbskids.org](http://pbskids.org/), via an array of mobile apps and in communities across America. More information about PBS is available at [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org/), one of the leading dot-org websites on the internet, or by following [PBS on Twitter](https://twitter.com/pbs),[Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/pbs) or through our [apps for mobile and connected devices](http://www.pbs.org/anywhere/home/). Specific program information and updates for press are available at [pbs.org/pressroom](http://pressroom.pbs.org/) or by following [PBS Communications on Twitter.](https://twitter.com/PBS_PR)

**About GBH**

GBH is the leading multiplatform creator for public media in America. As the largest producer of content for PBS and partner to NPR and PRX, GBH delivers compelling experiences, stories and information to audiences wherever they are. GBH produces digital and broadcast programming that engages, illuminates and inspires, through drama and science, history, arts, culture and journalism. It is the creator of such signature programs as MASTERPIECE, ANTIQUES ROADSHOW, FRONTLINE, NOVA, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE, *Arthur* and *Molly of Denali,* as well as WORLD Channel and a catalog of streaming series, podcasts and on-demand video. With studios and a newsroom headquartered in Boston, GBH reaches across New England with GBH 89.7, Boston’s Local NPR®; CRB Classical 99.5; and CAI, the Cape and Islands NPR® station. Dedicated to making media accessible to and inclusive of our diverse culture, GBH is a pioneer in delivering media to those who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind and visually impaired. GBH creates curriculum-based digital content for educators nationwide with PBS LearningMedia and has been recognized with hundreds of the nation’s premier broadcast, digital and journalism awards. Find more information at [wgbh.org](https://www.wgbh.org/).

**Press Contacts:**

Jordan Lawrence

DKC Public Relations

jordan\_lawrence@dkcnews.com

212.981.5220

Jennifer Welsh

NOVA/GBH

jennifer\_welsh@wgbh.org

978.985.9835