

## 1) Introduction

The Center for Archaeological Research (CAR) and the Southern Texas Archaeological Association (STAA) directed excavations at Black Vulture Shelter on the Edwards Plateau in Central Texas. The shelter was used during the Terminal Late Prehistoric Toyah Interval (AD 1250-1650) and has Historic Period use. Late Prehistoric artifacts occur within a single zone surrounding a clay lined hearth. Bison are the only fauna identified. Recovered material from this zone includes several ribs, arrow points, and chipped stone. Multiple radiocarbon dates from this zone overlap and demonstrate that this primary occupation occurred between AD 1512 and 1601. The assemblage is atypical. Points are common, but beveled knives, formal end scrapers, and ceramics, often present on Toyah sites, are absent. The spatial distribution of material, including high frequencies of debitage clustered around the hearth, suggests little or no site maintenance. These patterns are consistent with short-term use of the shelter by a small group focused on a limited number of tasks in the 1600s.

# Black Vulture Shelter, a Terminal Late Prehistoric Occupation at the Edge of the Southern Plains

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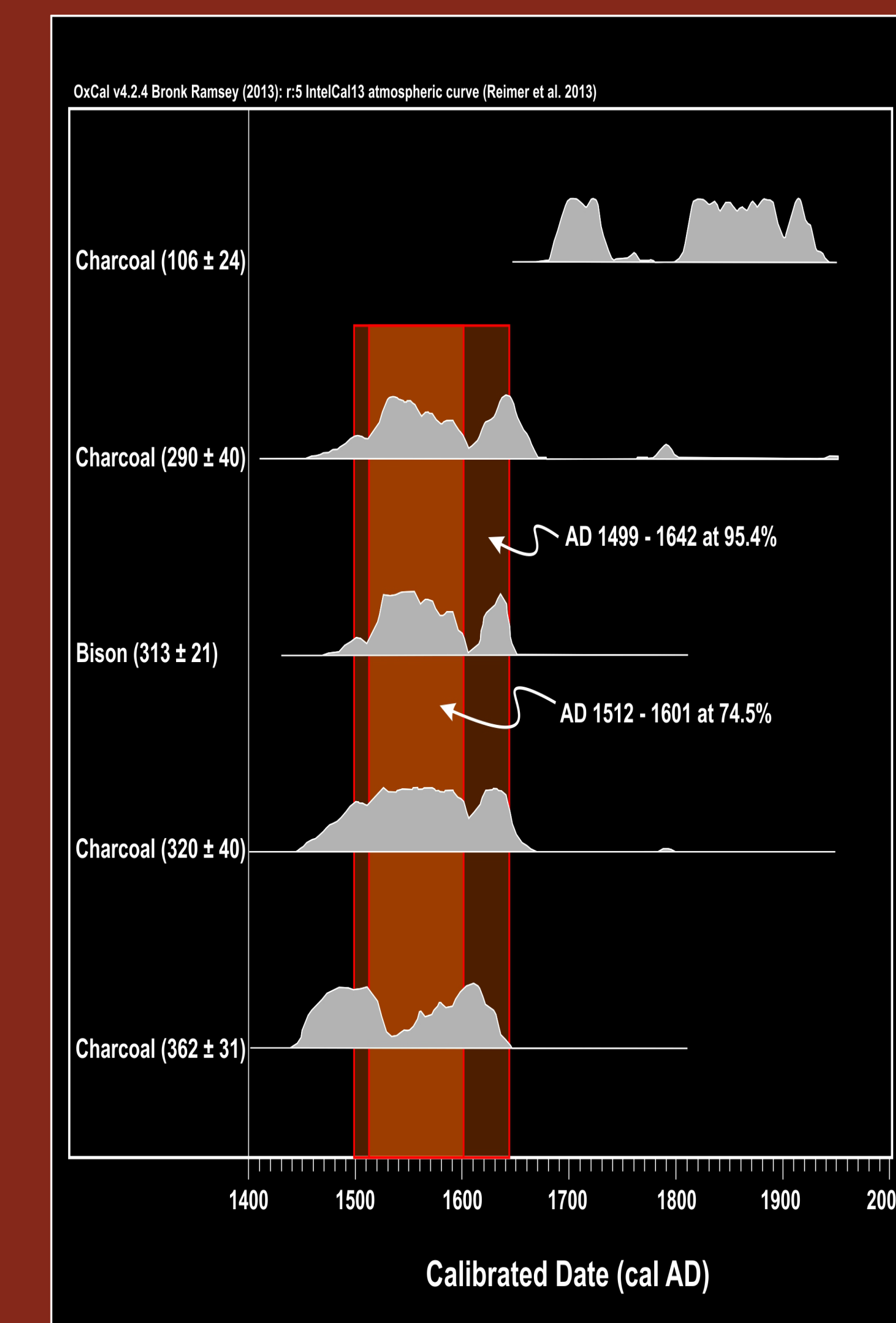
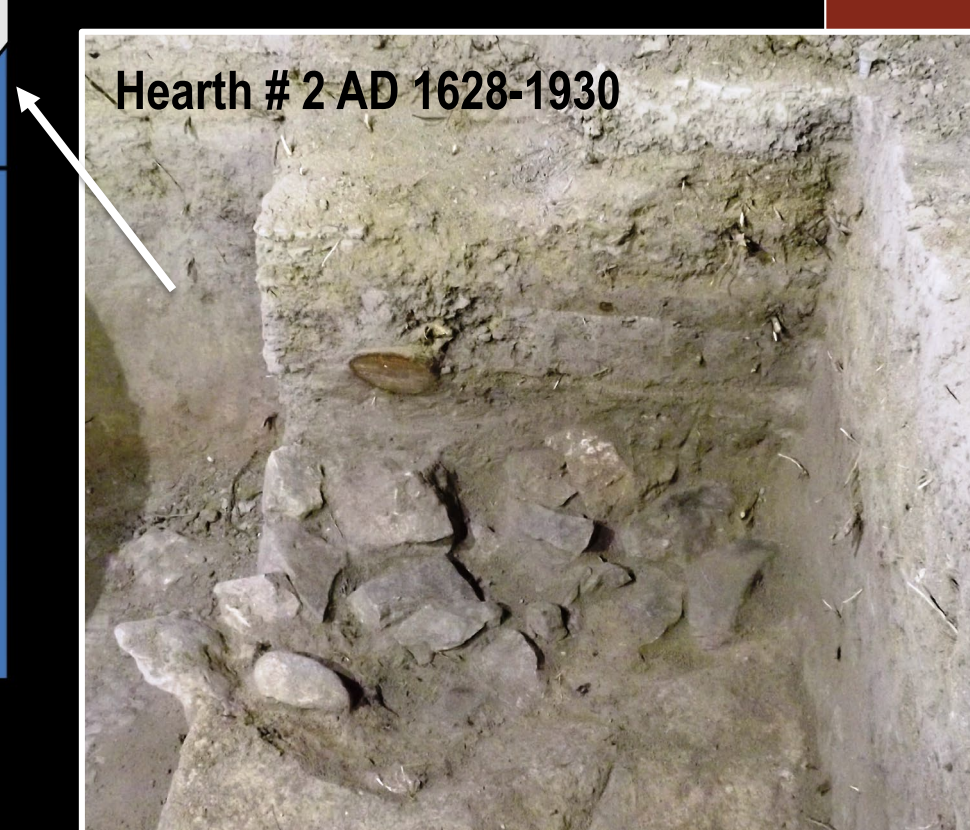
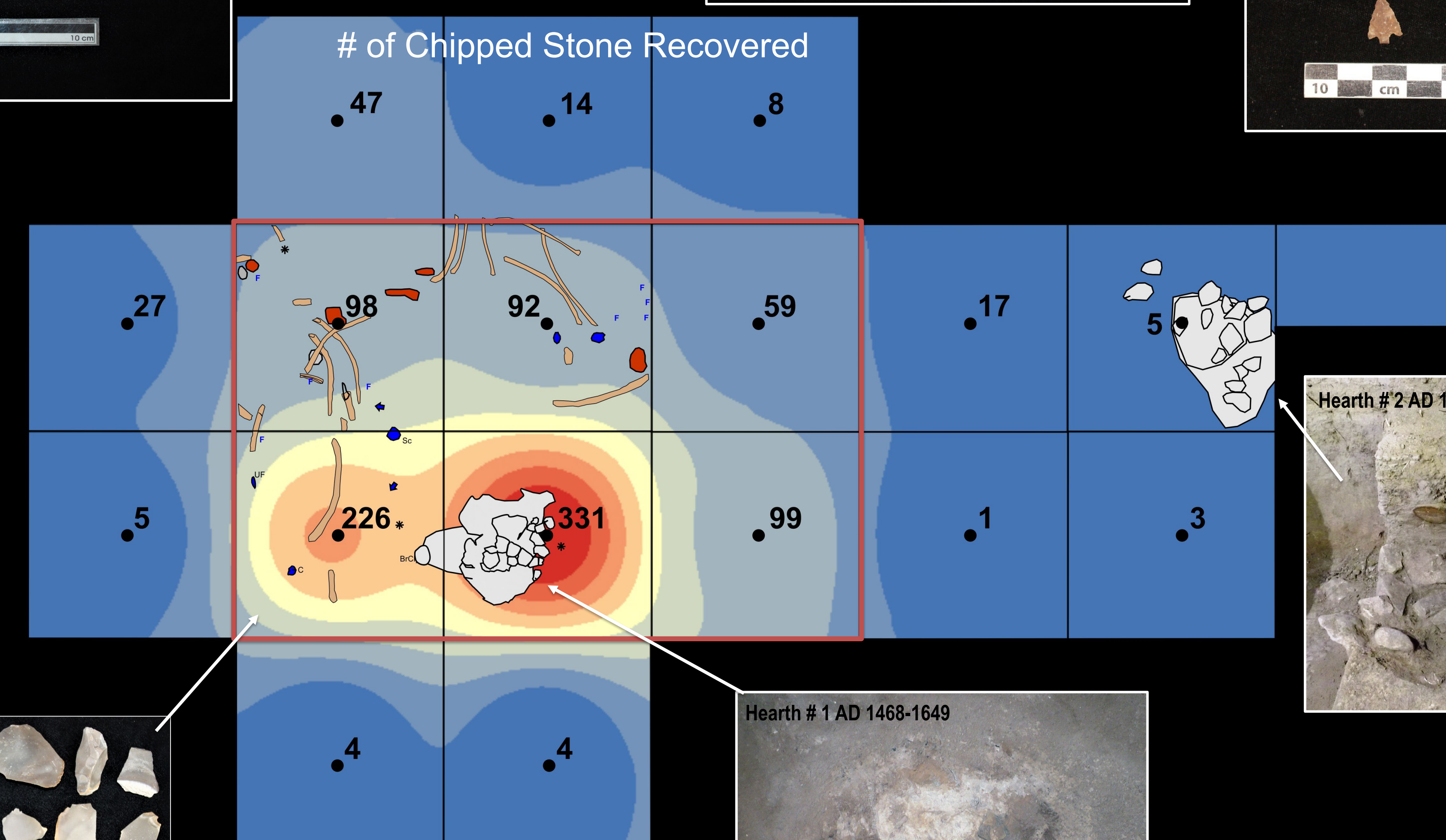
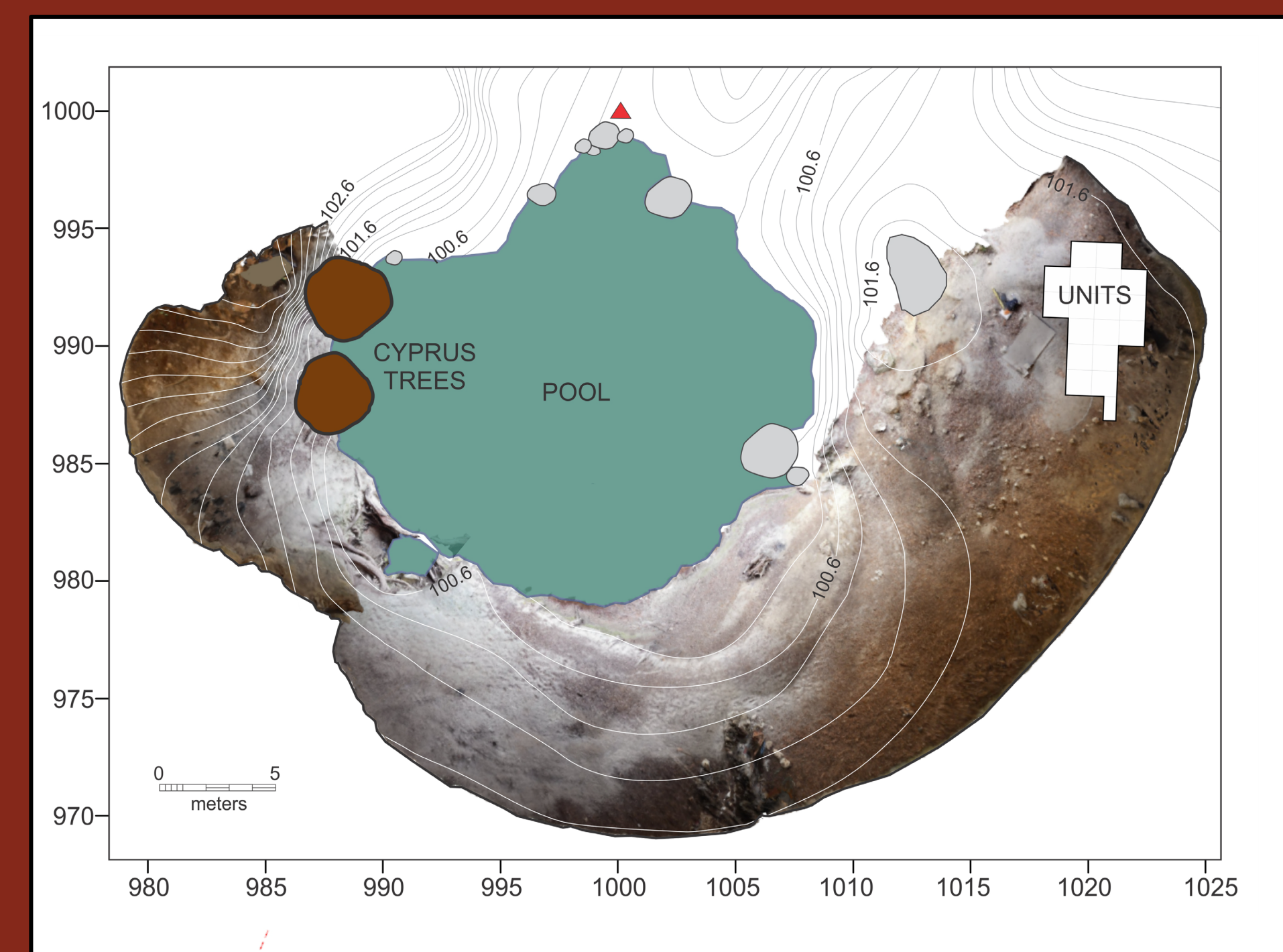
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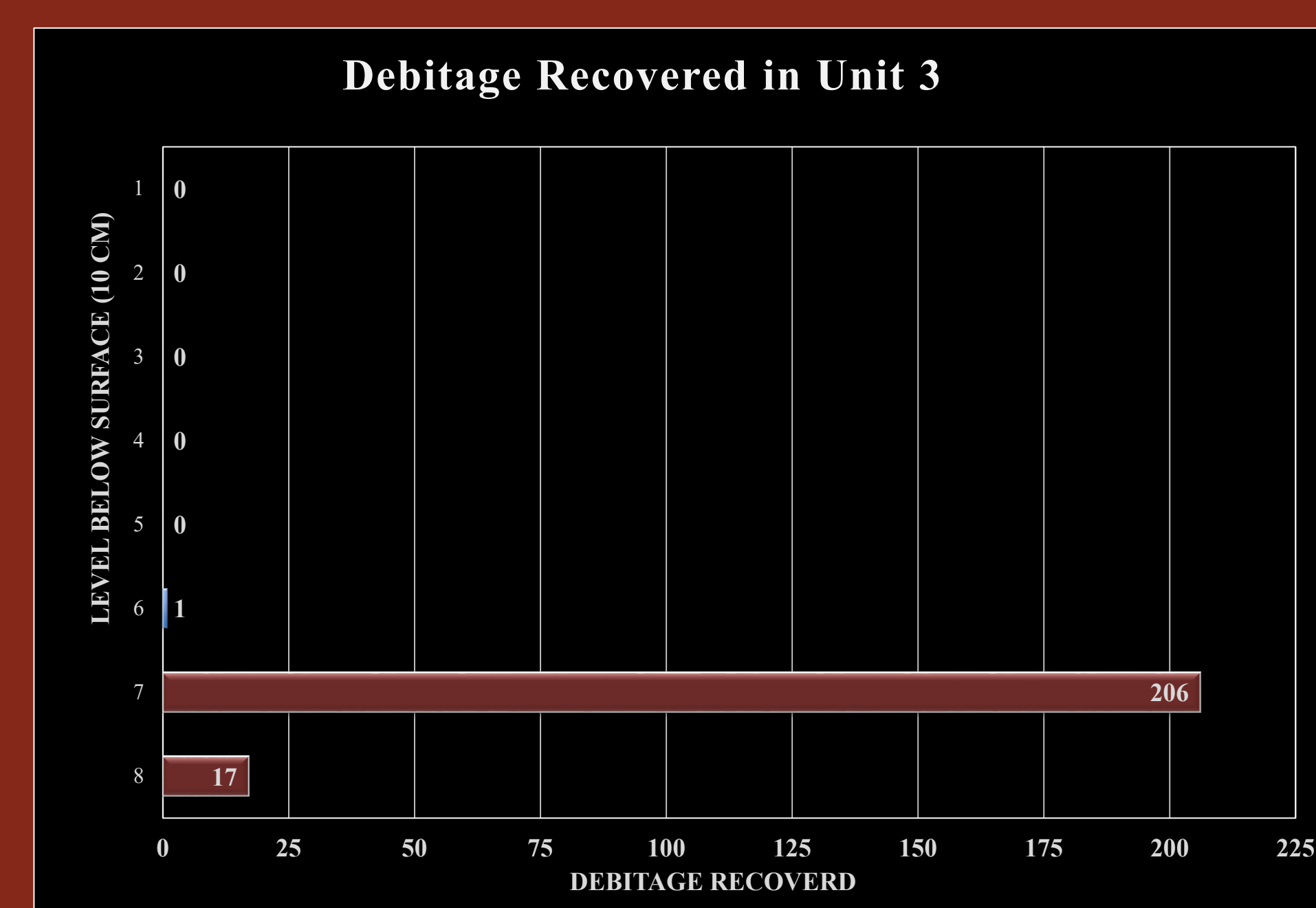
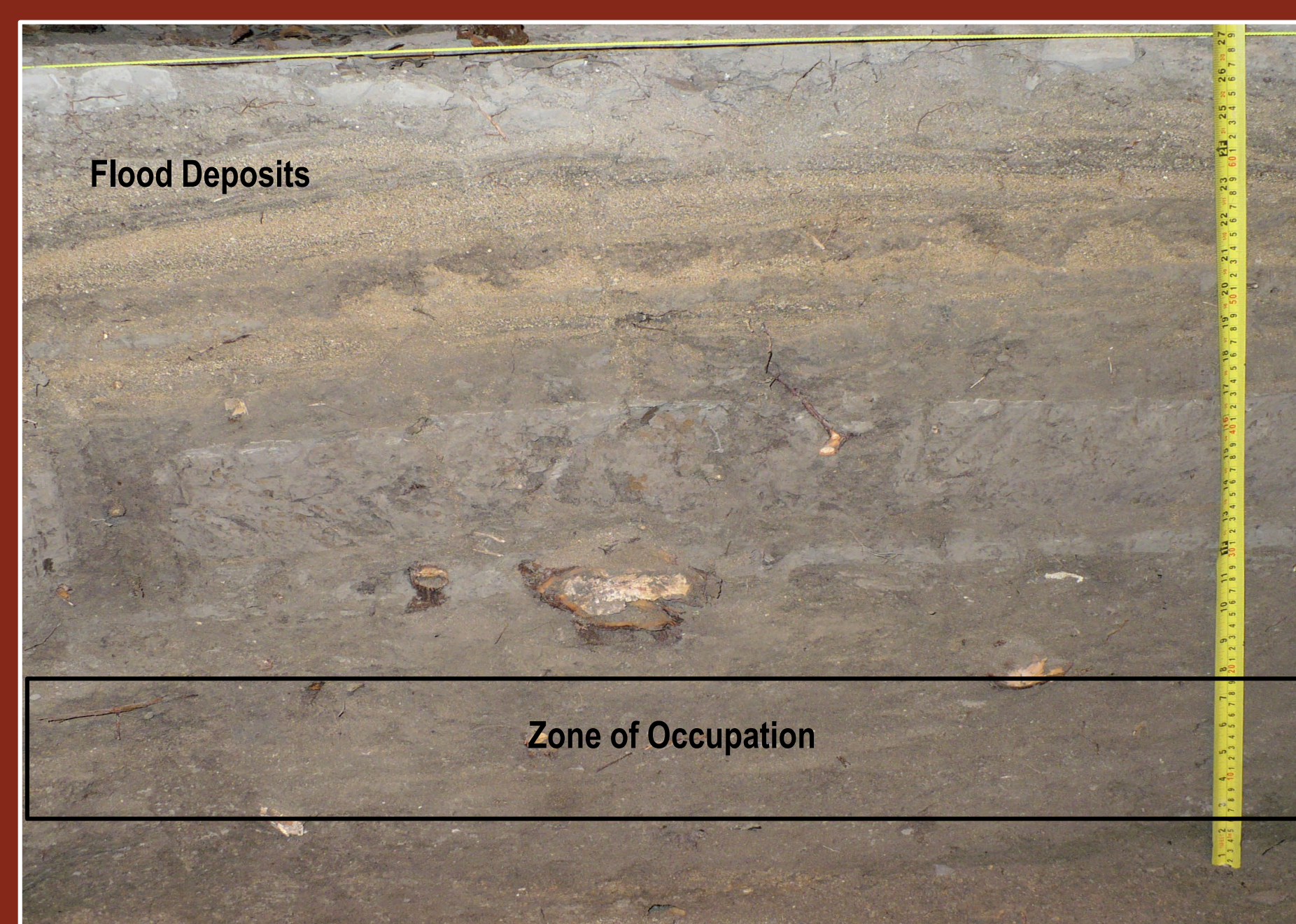
## 3) Results

STAA and CAR recovered 1,040 chipped stone items, most (n= 905) in a 10 to 15 cm zone in a 3 x 2 m area surrounding a clay capped hearth (Hearth #1). A second hearth at the southern end of the excavation is higher and dates to the Historic Period. The 6 m<sup>2</sup> Late Prehistoric area includes several bison ribs and rib fragments to the east of Hearth 1. A sample of debitage from the area shows a high frequency of non-cortical flakes (49%). The debitage may reflect, in part, local chert gravels. Lithic refits are present within this central area, and larger flakes are common on the occupation floor. The only formal tools were arrow points, often made on material different from the recovered debitage, and frequently broken. Four overlapping radiocarbon dates from this zone, including dates on Hearth #1 and a rib fragment, were obtained. The proximity of the discarded ribs, the high density of larger debitage surrounding the hearth, clustered dates, and a lack of tool diversity combine to suggest short term, episodic use of the shelter by a small group.

## 2) Black Vulture Shelter



Located on private land, the limestone shelter is wet, and flooded several times during our work. As evidenced by the deposition of ca. 60+ cm of laminated flood deposits over the dated levels, inundation was frequent over the last 400 years. Shovel and auger tests throughout the shelter suggest occupation was limited to one location that currently is about 80 cm higher than the frequently flooded shelter center. The usable floor space in this section is roughly 75 m<sup>2</sup>.



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