

NEWS

ANCIENT INDIAN BONE UNCOVERED AT SITE IN DAVIE

By BOB FRENCH, MICHAEL TIGHE and CAROLYN JUNG and Staff Writers
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The 2,000-year-old thigh bone of a Tequesta Indian was unearthed by archaeologists on Tuesday at Pine Island Ridge in Davie.

The bone, a rare discovery because it was intact, was found a few yards west of Pine Island Road, near the 15th green at Rolling Hills Golf Resort.

"There we go. All right!" field archaeologist Mark Duda said as he slowly brushed dirt away from the bone, which had turned brown with age. "It's in good shape.

"It's a rare find. It just doesn't happen all of the time," said Duda, associate professor of anthropology at Florida Atlantic University.

He estimated that the 18-inch bone was 1,000 to 2,000 years old.

Duda and other archaeologists also discovered a half-dollar-sized human skull fragment and four smaller pottery fragments. The skull fragment was found about 10 yards from the thigh bone, but archaeologists were not sure if it came from the same person.

Duda uncovered the thigh bone in an ancient burial mound less than two feet beneath where a 100-year-old live oak had been removed earlier in the day. The tree was replanted about 150 yards away to make way for the widening of Pine

Island Road at the entrance of Forest Ridge, a 2,000-home subdivision

Duda worked on the dig with archaeologists Bob Carr and Don Mattucci, all of the Archaeological and Historical Conservancy in Miami. Carr is Dade County's archaeologist.

The discovery marks the first human remains found on the ridge, Carr said.

Archaeologists at the dig said they usually have to be satisfied with only small fragments of bone and seldom find entire lengths of bone in one piece.

"The opportunity to record this burial ground is unusual because developers usually bulldoze over these grounds without realizing it or they don't report it to the proper authorities until it is too late," Carr said.

The archaeologists said they hope to find more of the ancient Indian's skeleton today.

While the find is rare for Broward, they are not the oldest bones unearthed in Florida.

The oldest skeletal remains, dating back 8,000 years, were found in Warm Mineral Springs in Sarasota County, and human bones as old as 5,000 to 7,000 years have been discovered in Windover in Brevard County.

Remains dating back 8,000 years have also been found in Cutler Ridge in southwest Dade County, and human remains dating back 5,000 years have been found on Peace Mound in Weston.

The first Indians settled in Florida about 12,000 to 15,000 years ago, state archaeologist Jim Miller said.

Tequesta Indians inhabited the area between 500 B.C. and 1700 A.D., then were followed by the Seminoles.

"If the remains (found Tuesday) are about 2,000 years old, they are not extremely old," Miller said. "But it may be a significant find for the local area if that is the first discovery for that particular time."

Said associate professor Wm. Jerald Kennedy: "Pine Island Ridge is a series of archaeologically-significant sites -- certainly for the Southeast United States. There is a chance to recap a lot of history and gain a lot of information to pass on to future generations. Just to be able to preserve it for future generations is wonderful."

The discovery on Tuesday began at about 7 a.m. when workers for Steve Smith and Co. began moving the 65-foot-tall oak tree using two cranes. To prepare the 20-ton tree for the move, a trench was dug around it.

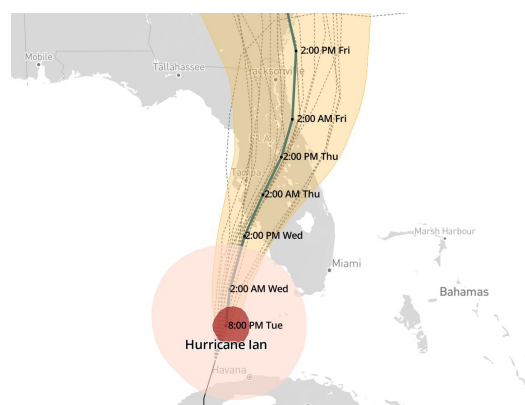
Shortly after the trench was dug, the archaeologists, who were hired by Forest Ridge, discovered the bone fragment protruding about a quarter of an inch from the trench wall.

When the tree was moved about noon, Duda and Mattucci examined the trench and determined the bone was human.

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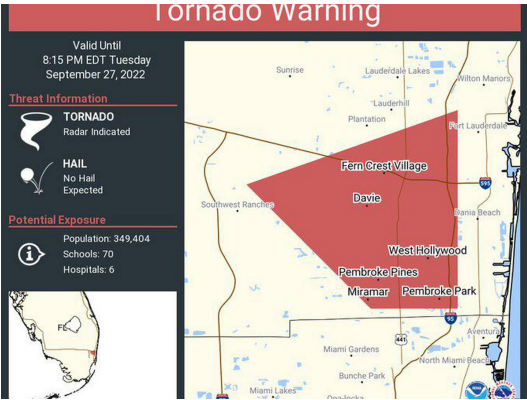
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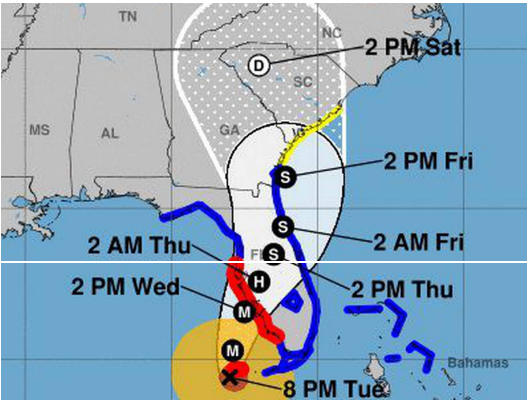
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