

## Did Humans Live with Dinosaurs? Excavating “Man Tracks” along the Paluxy River

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### ABSTRACT

The alleged “man tracks” beside dinosaur tracks near Glen Rose, Texas, are among the most enduring pieces of evidence used by young-Earth creationists to reject evolution. Despite the tracks’ fame, their most persistent advocate – that is, Carl Baugh of the Creation Evidence Museum – has published neither (1) peer-reviewed papers in scientific journals about the tracks nor (2) clear, convincing, unenhanced photographs of unaltered tracks taken during an excavation. I participated in an excavation sponsored by Baugh’s Creation Evidence Museum that uncovered three “man tracks” that Baugh and his assistants verified as being made by humans. These “tracks” are presented here and are among the first clear, unenhanced photographs of freshly uncovered “man tracks” taken during a Baugh-led excavation. They look no different than any of the countless other scuffs, cracks, and erosion marks in the area.

**Key Words:** Creationism; Carl Baugh; paleontology; Paluxy “man tracks”; teaching evolution.

Every year, more than 90,000 people visit Glen Rose, Texas, to see dinosaur tracks at Dinosaur Valley State Park (DVSP). On the way to DVSP, visitors pass the Creation Evidence Museum (CEM), which advertises many alleged “man tracks” alongside dinosaur tracks excavated from Cretaceous limestone along the nearby Paluxy River. Because scientists argue that nonavian dinosaurs became extinct 65 million years before the appearance of modern humans, many young-Earth creationists claim that the Glen Rose “man tracks” verify their claims that humans lived with dinosaurs and, thus, invalidate evolution (Cole & Godfrey, 1985; Creation Evidence Museum, 2013).

Dinosaur tracks near Glen Rose – among the best in the world – were made famous by Roland Bird, who began excavating tracks there in 1939; you can see a large section of the Paluxy tracks that Bird excavated under and behind *Apatosaurus* in the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Although Bird knew that “it [is] ridiculous to think that [the alleged ‘man tracks’] were human footprints” (Bird, 1939), the tracks became icons of young-Earth creationism when they were promoted by the Bible-Science

Association and were featured in Stanley Taylor’s film *Footprints in Stone* (1973) and the monumental *The Genesis Flood* (Whitcomb & Morris, 1961), the book that began the modern creationism movement. Subsequently, antievolution organizations such as the Institute for Creation Research (ICR) began promoting the Paluxy “man tracks” as evidence against evolution (Morris, 1980; Kuban, 1986; Moore et al., 2010).

Since the mid-1980s, the person most closely associated with the Paluxy “man tracks” is Carl Baugh, a former Baptist preacher who owns and operates CEM. Baugh, who claims to have excavated more than 80 such tracks from the Paluxy riverbed, displays several “man tracks” at CEM (Moore, 2009a, b). “Man tracks” are also a prominent feature at his website and elsewhere (Moore, 2009a; Creation Evidence Museum, 2013).

After studying some of the alleged “man tracks,” several creationists and scientists rejected Baugh’s claim that the tracks were made by humans (Kuban, 1986, and references therein). This research prompted ICR’s John Morris to cautiously admit that he might have misinterpreted his original findings (Jones, 1986) and that it may be improper for creationists to continue to use the Paluxy data as

evidence against evolution (Morris, 1986; also see Mitchell, 2012). Nevertheless, “ICR holds rigorously to the view that dinosaurs lived at the same time as man” and that the Paluxy tracks “just might be coming into their own as good evidence for Flood catastrophism” (Morris, 2013, p. 14). None of the young-Earth creationism organizations have outright refuted the “man tracks,” and ICR continues to promote misinformation and alleged “mysteries” about the tracks, while also selling books that cite the Paluxy “man tracks” as evidence

against evolution (e.g., Whitcomb & Morris, 1961; see discussion in Kuban, 2006).

Despite tepid disclaimers by ICR and others (ICR has yet to completely renounce the prints), the Paluxy “man tracks” remain a popular argument against evolution. Indeed, the tracks are an easily understandable example of young-Earth creationism, as well

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as a rare example of field research done by young-Earth creationists (i.e., research not done in libraries or on the Internet; see Hastings, 1988). This is why the tracks continue to be included in numerous young-Earth creationist books, presentations, and museums (Baugh, 1987; Baugh & Wilson, 1994; Judkins, 2009; Moore, 2010).

There are several possible explanations for the fact that scientists and others who have visited DVSP have failed to find “man tracks” comparable to those found by Baugh beside dinosaur tracks near Glen Rose. Flooding and erosion have removed many of the tracks in DVSP (e.g., those on the cover of Jasinski, 2008), and most of the remaining tracks are found outside of DVSP on private property, some of which cannot be easily accessed. Moreover, tracks along the Paluxy are often covered by silt and debris, which can make some of the tracks difficult to find. Even if the alleged “man tracks” could be found in the riverbed, they cannot be chiseled out for study and preservation without permission of DVSP and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Although some skeptics have examined the “man tracks” within a few days of their excavation, Baugh claims that these “tracks” erode and/or dry out within an hour or so after being uncovered and, in doing so, become invisible (see discussion in Cole & Godfrey, 1985); if this is true, then anyone wanting photographs of the “man tracks” must be present when the tracks are uncovered (i.e., not days later, as usually occurs). Practically speaking, this has made it difficult for most others to find or photograph freshly uncovered “man tracks” uncovered by CEM (Cole & Godfrey, 1985). Mainstream scientists have not participated in CEM-sponsored excavations, which has led Baugh to claim that scientists “don’t endorse [the ‘man tracks’] because they haven’t participated directly.” Finally, Baugh has seldom accompanied searches for “man tracks” (Kuban, 1986); this enables him to claim that others have not found the best tracks because they did not know where to look.

To address these claims, and to document the location of “man tracks” for others to examine in situ, I joined a CEM-sponsored excavation organized and led by Baugh along the Paluxy River. I hoped to see and photograph tracks that Baugh himself would identify as “man tracks” immediately after they were uncovered.

## ○ Methods

I participated in a 5-day excavation of dinosaur tracks and “man tracks” sponsored by the Creation Evidence Museum during 1–5 July, 2013. The excavation, which did not promise any discoveries of “man tracks,” occurred on the property of R. C. McFall at the so-called “McFall #1 Site”; this site is 0.9 miles west of the intersection of Park Road 59 and Farm Road 205 (i.e., the intersection at which “Dinosaur World” is located, just west of Glen Rose). McFall’s property, which is outside of DVSP, is a few hundred meters upstream from the famed “Taylor Site” featured in *Footprints in Stone* (1973).

Each day’s excavation was directed by Baugh, who claims to have discovered “more than 80 human footprints in Cretaceous limestone” around Glen Rose (Creation Evidence Museum, 2013). Most of the work involved using chisels to remove

overlying rock, and large brooms and brushes to remove silt and debris. Approximately 30 people participated in the excavation each day. Some of our work involved cleaning earlier excavations of dinosaur tracks at the McFall site, and other work involved excavating new areas along the riverbank at the McFall site.

## ○ Results

During the excavation, Baugh and his assistants found three “man tracks” that were confirmed as “man tracks” and recorded by the group’s “technical documentarian.” All three of these tracks, which were several meters west of the steps leading to the riverbank, were excavated only with large brooms and brushes; no chisels, picks, hammers, or heavy equipment were used to uncover these tracks. I did not see anyone chiseling anywhere near these tracks, nor did I see anyone attempt to alter the tracks. I photographed these just-uncovered tracks (Figures 1–3) immediately, from directly overhead, with natural lighting. The marks identified as human tracks were each 15–20 cm long and 4–7 cm wide. Unlike several previously published photos of “man tracks” that have used water, oil, and other substances to help viewers imagine the outline of a human footprint (see discussions in Farlow, 1987a, b; Kuban, 1986, 1995–2010), I did not do or add anything to the tracks, nor did I use photographic filters to enhance or diminish the images. The location of each track was documented with a GPS system accurate to  $\pm 7$  m. All of the tracks were within a few feet of dinosaur tracks found at the site.

All of the “man tracks” that were discovered were examined immediately by Baugh and his assistants, who noted that (1) all were made by humans and (2) all were “excellent” tracks. None of the tracks showed distinctive human shapes or toes; nor were they in a striding sequence. Baugh referred to the tracks as “Beverly” tracks because



**Figure 1.** These alleged “man tracks” were uncovered in July, 2013, during a CEM-sponsored excavation along the Paluxy River just west of Glen Rose, Texas. The GPS coordinates for these tracks are N32°14.230, W097°49.507.



**Figure 2.** More “man tracks.” GPS coordinates: N32°14.231, W097°49.507.



**Figure 3.** More “man tracks.” GPS coordinates: N32°14.226, W097°49.518.

they had narrow heels and resembled footprints of females (after a woman placed her foot in one of the tracks, they were described by one of Baugh’s assistants as “women’s size 9”).

The excavations were supplemented by evening lectures at CEM about topics such as “Survival of the Fakest” (e.g., Haeckel’s embryos and other frauds), “What’s Wrong with Evolution, Anyway?” (i.e., the ongoing conspiracy among scientists to ignore evidence that refutes evolution), and “Who’s Your Daddy?” (i.e., the fallacy of human evolution). The sessions began and ended with prayers, including one asking God to forgive people who accept evolution. The day after the excavation, CEM dedicated a 1:20 scale model of Noah’s Ark on a day that Glen Rose mayor Dennis Moore (no relation) declared “Creation Evidence Museum of Texas Day.” Baugh anticipated that more than 1000 people would attend the dedication.

## ○ Discussion

Although Figures 1–3 are not the first data to refute the validity of the “man tracks” near Glen Rose, they *are* the first clear, unaltered, unenhanced photographs of Carl Baugh–certified “man tracks” taken within minutes after being uncovered during a CEM-sponsored excavation along the Paluxy River. The freshly uncovered “man tracks” that were confirmed by Baugh as being made by humans (Figures 1–3) had no more semblance to human footprints than to any of the countless other shallow marks in the riverbed.

Contrary to the claims of Baugh, extensive work by Kuban (2006) and others has shown that the alleged “man tracks” are a variety of misidentified phenomena, including largely in-filled metatarsal (i.e., heel-walking) dinosaur tracks (e.g., at the Taylor Site), erosional and random marks that were selectively highlighted or manipulated (e.g., at the McFall sites and State Park Shelf), and, in some cases, outright carvings (e.g., the Burdick Print and the Delk Print; see discussions in Kuban, 2006, 1995–2010, and references therein). Indeed, it is likely that the common occurrence of metatarsal dinosaur tracks in the Paluxy River, and their superficial resemblance to human tracks when their digits are subdued by in-filling or other events, is what started the “man track” claims in the first place.

Although some young-Earth organizations have tepidly questioned (but have not rejected) the validity of Baugh’s claims about the Paluxy “man tracks,” others continue to promote the tracks as a discovery that refutes evolution and validates their young-Earth beliefs. Indeed, the “Alvis Delk Cretaceous Footprint” (allegedly excavated from an area near the McFall site), featuring a track of *Acrocanthosaurus* intruding on a 11-inch-long human footprint of “*Homo bauanthropus*” in Cretaceous rock, is displayed and advertised prominently at CEM and other creation museums (Moore, 2010). Numerous books continue to promote the Paluxy “man tracks” (Baugh, 1987; Baugh & Wilson, 1996; Judkins, 2009). As Charles Darwin (1872, p. 471) lamented

in the final edition of *On the Origin of Species*, “Great is the power of steady misrepresentation.”

As Branch and Scott (2013, p. 2) noted recently, “the most durable creationist legend about human evolution... is the existence of human and dinosaur tracks together.” Regardless of the data presented here and elsewhere (Kuban, 1996–2013, and references therein) refuting the Paluxy “man tracks,” I am certain that Baugh’s CEM and others will continue to promote the tracks as evidence against evolution. Indeed, Baugh’s “man tracks” underlie CEM’s claims that “artifacts relating to the presence of man have been discovered through the [geologic column] from top to bottom” (because the geologic column was deposited in a worldwide flood), that “Man did not evolve from an ape-like creature... or any other ‘lower life form,’” that “Darwinian evolution is a bankrupt religious system that worships natural

forces – propped up by artificial supports,” and that “our human slaves have been set free; but a generation of students is enslaved to Darwinian evolution.” Baugh also claims that people can change radioactive decay with their minds; that eggs cannot hatch outside of Earth’s magnetic field; that he has found chlorophyll on a tooth of *T. rex*; and that a 30-foot-tall tomato plant that he grew under light allegedly simulating pre-Flood conditions produced 5000 tomatoes (see discussion in Kuban, 1996). More information about CEM is provided elsewhere (Moore, 2009a, b).

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