



Dear Arrowhead Hunter

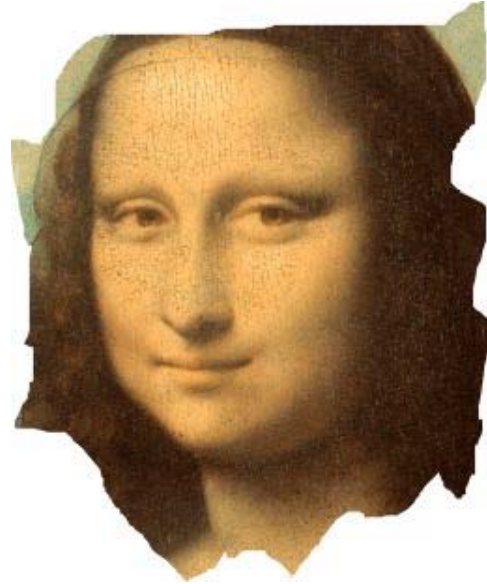
**by Tony Baker
July 1, 2008**

This letter is written to the individual who hunts and finds arrowheads. It has two purposes: first to discuss arrowhead hunting from my perspective of an arrowhead hunter/archaeologist and second to ask you to contribute some of your knowledge to the Paleoindian Database of the Americas (PIDBA). If you are a buyer/seller of arrowheads or a professional archaeologist, then don't waste your time reading further. It will only make you angry.

The Arrowhead Hunter's Collection

We all know that many professional archaeologists frown on hunting arrowheads because it depletes the archaeological record. Yet, a great deal of the Paleoindian knowledge found on the library shelves in the form of dissertations, thesis, and textbooks is the result of arrowhead hunters finding sites and sharing their information with the archaeological community. The simple reason for this is that at any given instant there are more arrowhead hunters looking at the ground than there are archaeologists. As a result, there exists this ethical dichotomy about which is better, providing information to the archaeological community or saving the on-the-ground archaeological record. However, this dichotomy is only academic since arrowhead hunters are not going to stop hunting. Acknowledging this fact, the next best thing that can happen is for the knowledge, which the arrowhead hunter has, to find its way to the archaeological community and ultimately on to the library bookshelves. This then would be a laudable outcome.

Unfortunately, the typical outcome is not laudable. Consider the local museums across the country. They are filled with arrowhead collections, without provenance, donated to them by the survivors of dead arrowhead hunters. All the knowledge of where these arrowheads were found, which ones were found together, and when they were found, died with the arrowhead hunter. These collections are similar to the head of Mona Lisa cut from her canvas and they have little value to the science of archaeology.



Each time one finds an arrowhead and tosses it into a cigar box without recording the pertinent information, one is cutting Mona Lisa's head from her canvas. It is easy for one to say; *I will record the find tomorrow when I have more time*. But, soon tomorrow becomes next week, which becomes next year, and so forth. In the year of 2008 I suspect most arrowhead hunters have a GPS. It only takes a couple minutes to put the arrowhead(s) in a sack and label the sack with the GPS coordinates and the find date. This is the minimum requirement to keep Mona Lisa's portrait intact. Additional information is desirable, but the location of the find and date are all that is really required.

The sharing of one's collection and associated information is entirely at the discretion of the arrowhead hunter. Some do not want anyone to know that they hunt and that's cool. However, when one has a properly documented collection, one eventually finds oneself wanting to share. And, when one encounters that unique individual from the archaeological community who is truly interested in one's stuff, one generally shares. Even if one dies without sharing, collections with good documentation ultimately find their way to the archaeological community. The reality is that one doesn't own one's collection if it is documented. One is just the custodian of it. Undocumented artifacts are only pieces of art and often modern forgeries. One owns these because one has enough money to buy them.

To close this first part, I beg each arrowhead hunter who reads this letter to document one's finds. I am not asking you to stop hunting because I know you will not and I would be a hypocrite if I did. Additionally, I believe if you document your finds, your efforts will ultimately be beneficial to the science of archaeology.

The PIDBA

In 1990 **The Paleoindian Database of the Americas** (PIDBA), located at <http://pidba.utk.edu>, was created by David G. Anderson who was joined by Michael K. Faught in 1994 and a number other of collaborators since. The purpose of PIDBA was to openly share paleoindian information. Prior to the webpage, an early version of which appeared in 1999, this database resided on disks and was available on request. Over the years it has slowly grown from over 9000 points in 1990, 12,791 in 2000, and today in the webpage version there are over 28,500 points. Most of the information therein has come from two sources, the published archaeological

literature and unpublished paleoindian artifact surveys. A survey in this sense is information gathered from all possible sources and usually by a single individual. Most of the time this takes the form of an archaeological graduate student or archaeologist documenting private arrowhead collections with the permission of the owner. For example, the Baker collection has been surveyed by four different graduate students and the various information it yielded has found its way into four dissertations that now sit on library selves.

The reason I have become involved with PIDBA is that I want to believe the distribution of fluted and other paleoindian points, as represented by PIDBA, is incorrect. In 2000 Anderson and Faught (510) wrote, “over 70% of the total fluted point sample (PIDBA) occurs in states east of the Mississippi River.” Being from the Southwest I have always believed that the earliest people in the New World were in the West. I have no justification for this belief other than my own patriotism. The distribution of paleoindian points in PIDBA is challenging this belief. A challenge that assumes the origin of fluting technology is located where most of the fluted points have been found. In reality there is no logical reason why this assumption should be true, but it is still stronger than any argument I can make for my belief at this time.

In an effort to better understand this strong easterly distribution of paleoindian points I created the maps in Figures 1A & 1B from the current information in PIDBA and Wikipedia. As one can see in the Figure 1A, the density of paleoindian points per 1000 square miles is in fact significantly higher in the states east of the Mississippi River. My first reaction to this map was since the creators of the PIDBA were located in the center of the states with the highest point density, then there might be a connection. Was it possible that they had more connections to the paleoindian community (arrowhead hunters and archaeologists) in their home region and therefore obtained more data from their region? In different words, was this collector bias.

Figure 1A

Number of Points
per 1000 sq. miles

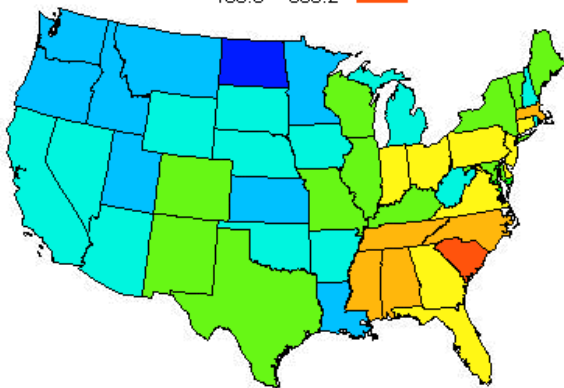
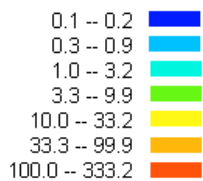
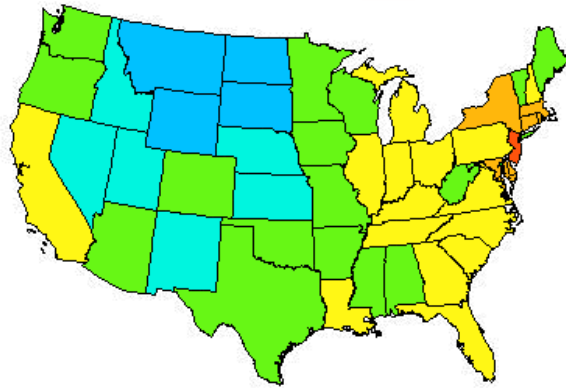
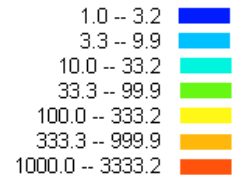


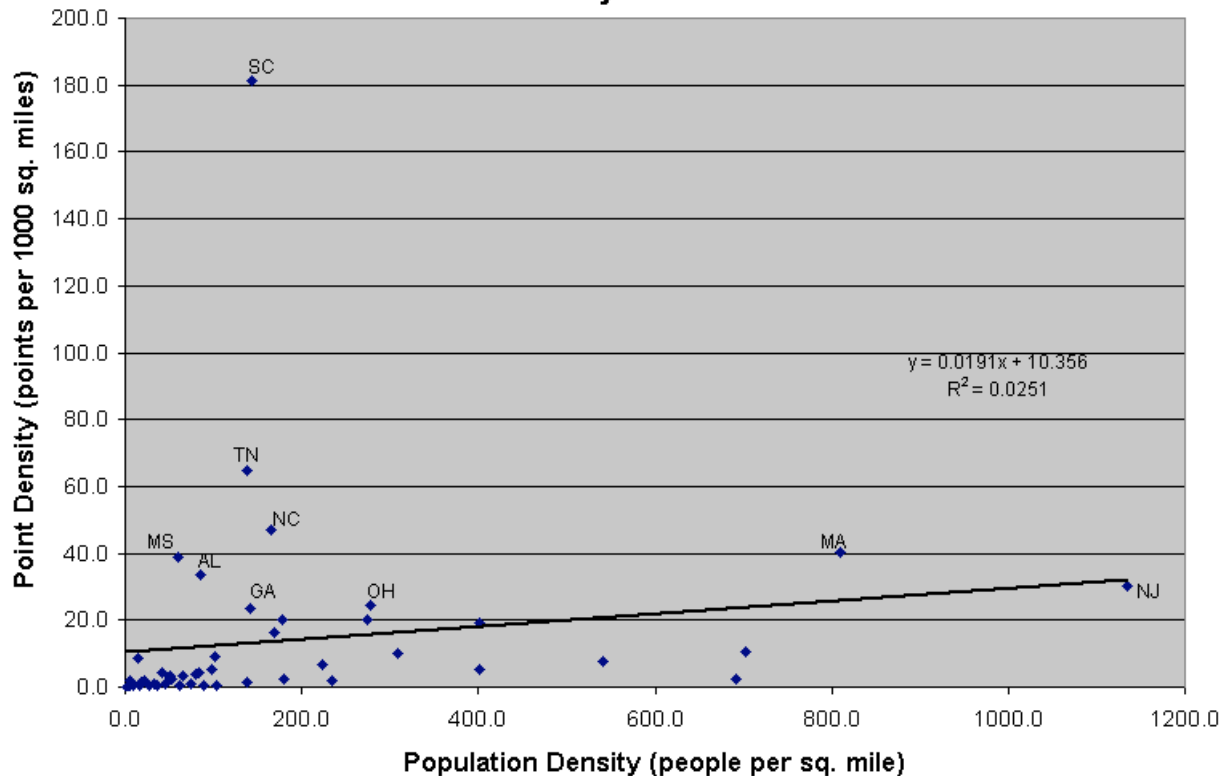
Figure 1B

Number of People
per sq. mile



A different form of collector bias could be related to a higher population density. Assuming that states with higher populations have more arrowhead hunters or "boots on the ground", more points will be found in states with higher population density than in states with lower population density. As the reader can see, this explanation appears to be supported in Figure 1B, which depicts the population densities of the states. However, on closer inspection the highest density of people east of the Mississippi is in the NE portion while the highest density of paleoindian points is in the SE. So maybe this explanation is not correct. In order to further examine this "more boots on the ground" explanation I created Figure 2, which is a plot of the arrowhead density vs. the population density for the states. The line in Figure 2 is the linear regression line through the data, which has an R^2 value of 0.025 or the line explains 2.5% of the variation in the data. Obviously, there is no correlation and this explanation must be rejected.

Figure 2
Relationship Between Point and People Densities
by States



The rejection of the "boots on the ground" explanation for the distribution in PIDBA leaves only two obvious explanations. These are that PIDBA is correct, or that data from states outside the southeast are simply not included. To shed more light on this discrepancy, more data is needed in PIDBA. This is the reason I wrote this letter. I am asking the arrowhead hunters across the country to step up to the plate and contribute your knowledge to PIDBA.

Contributing to PIDBA

The keepers of PIDBA and I know that many arrowhead hunters do not want to share their knowledge with strangers for a variety of reasons. Therefore, we have tried to minimize the uneasiness associated with sharing if you should want to. Your name will not be listed as an owner of a specific artifact on the PIDBA webpage, although the site tries to acknowledge all those who provide information. Your acknowledgement is your decision. For those of you who want to communicate only with me, I will withhold your name for the other keepers at your request and only pass along your information. If you have other concerns please raise them and I/we will try like hell to entertain them.

The most important thing we want is information on points and point fragments that you personally found or you were present when they were found. We are not interested in any purchased artifacts, or artifacts that your neighbor's father might have found in the 1950s. It is imperative that you personally witnessed the finding.

The minimal information we can use is county and state where the point was found and a photograph or digital image. It would be great if you can include a scale/ruler in the image. A Submittal Form with our wish list of items is attached for your use. Complete as many of the optional items as you choose. Then email the form to me at tabaker@ele.net or snail mail it to me at PO Box 102492, Denver, CO 80250. If you would like to visit with me by phone, please email me your phone number and time to call and I will give you a call.

Very truly yours,
Tony Baker

References

Anderson, David G., and Michael K. Faught
2000 Paleoindian Artifact Distributions: Evidence and Implications. *Antiquity* 74:507-513.

**The Paleoindian Data Base of the Americans (PIDBA)
Projectile Submittal Form**

Personal Information

Name (required) _____

Email address (required) _____

Snail mail address (optional) _____

Phone Number (optional) _____

I **DO** or **DO NOT** want my name used on the PIDBA webpage. (required, circle one)

I **DO** or **DO NOT** want my name shared with other people. (required, circle one)

Projectile Information

Identification/Catalog Number (optional) _____

Type/Culture (optional) _____

Whole, base, midsection, or tip (optional) _____

Lithic material (optional) _____

Maximum length (optional) _____

Maximum width (optional) _____

Maximum thickness (optional) _____

Find Information

County (required) _____

State (required) _____

Longitude (optional) _____

Latitude (optional) _____

Date found (optional) _____

I, _____, pledge that I
witnessed the finding of this point. (required, typed signature is OK)

Don't forget to include a photo (required) with a scale/ruler (optional) in the image.

Email completed form and image to tabaker@ele.net
Or, snail mail to Tony Baker, PO Box 102492, Denver, Co 80250