DEPARTMENT REPORTS

FAUNAL LAB

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)

Collections from CA-MRN-27, CA-MRN--254, and -365, and CA-SON-455, -1695 and -860/H were looked at for NAGPRA compliance, filtered for human remains, and assessed for eligibility to obtain a NAGPRA grant.

Joshua Tree

During field activities in Joshua Tree National Park occasional concentrations of calcined bone were identified during survey work. In several instances these concentrations were determined to likely be human, cremated remains. Some were associated with known or newly discovered archaeological sites while others were isolated finds. These remains may be of Native peoples and/or others deposited by friends or family in more recent times. This information was shared with Park officials who contacted the coroner.

Presidio

The ASC Faunal Lab was contracted by the Presidio Archaeology Lab to process a small collection of bones recovered from excavations on Mesa Street. In addition to processing and summarizing the remains, the goal was to lay the groundwork to get their interns trained for this kind of specialization and to gather a reference library for the same. All of the material has been processed, and the write-up for the collection is in process. Nearly 200 specimens were identified from two analytic units. The materials are mostly dietary, and although the sample size is relatively small a respectable variety of animals is represented. The highlight of the collection was a Sea-otter bacula that may have been worn as an adornment or used as a charm.

Cooperation with Law Enforcement

Over the course of the past year there have been several opportunities to assist the Sonoma County Sherriff’s Department in identifying various bones that were either part of a criminal case or had been found and reported. The bones are frequently presumed to be human or there is some concern that they are of human origin. Lacking the resources for this type of identification, the Department has routinely called on ASC for these types of identifications. These situations have been resolved by field visits, photographs being sent to the author via e-mail, or a personal visit by detectives with the specimen in question. None of the cases dealt with in the past year turned out to be human; they were determined to be animal remains every time.