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Author

True, D. L

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Malaga Cove: One More Comment

D. L. TRUE, Dept. of Anthropology, Univ. of California, Davis, CA 95616.

RECENT discussions by Wallace (1985:135-144, 1986:21-27), and a general dearth of information for the southerly portions of Los Angeles County in general, provide the impetus for this short comment. The data presented below from Malaga Cove (CA-LAN-138; Fig. 1) were collected by the author during the mid- to late-1930s, preceding and overlapping the Southwest Museum excavations conducted by Edwin Walker (Walker 1937:210-214, 1951:27-69).

The recovery process was no more than pot-hunting by current standards, but the provenience is known to a specific part of the site and to an identified component (Walker's Level IV). Because so little detail has been published on this component, the following descriptive statement may be of some interest.

The collection is small and includes elements already known for the time and the

area. It consists primarily of small projectile points, larger bifaces believed to have been knife-like implements, fish hook blanks, partially completed fish hook fragments, slate files, a few bone tools, and a handful of shell beads. Scraping tools are conspicuous by their absence, but several flaked stone artifacts may be drilling tools. The painted pebbles, mortars, and arrow shaft straighteners reported by Walker (1951:63-68) are not represented.¹

THE ARTIFACTS

Projectile Points

The collection includes 26 diagnostic projectile points and are sorted into four groups.

1. Leaf-shaped outlines with thin, lenticular (biconvex) cross sections (Table 1, Fig. 2a-g).

2. Elongate bipoints with ridged or angular cross sections (Table 1, Fig. 2h, i).

3. Elongate triangular forms with lenticular cross sections and concave bases. The lengths are more than twice the maximum widths and the edges tend to be straight rather than incurved or outcurved. This form was not illustrated by Walker, but it is a common artifact in this part of the Malaga IV assemblage (Table 1, Fig. 2j, k).

4. Triangular forms with lenticular cross sections and concave bases. The depth of basal concavities and side configurations may vary, but most specimens have straight sides and shallow to medium basal concavities (Table 1, Fig. 2l-n). These artifacts are similar to the Cottonwood series points commonly found on late sites in several southern California locales (Riddell 1951:14-28; Lanning 1963:252-253; Clewlow 1967:141-150).

Relative percentages of leaf-shaped versus

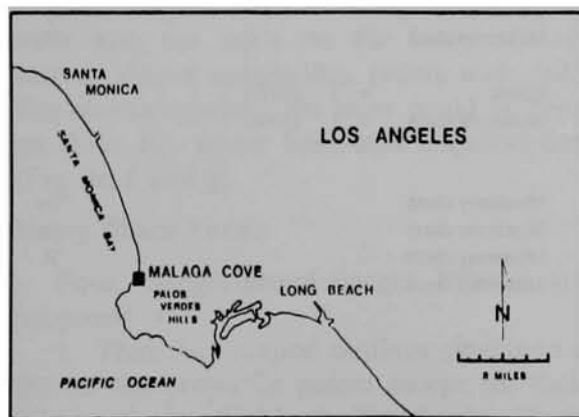


Fig. 1. Location of the Malaga Cove site.

Table 1
PROJECTILE POINTS FROM MALAGA COVE - LEVEL 4

Artifact	Length ^a	Width	Thickness	Weight	Material	Comment	Figure
Type 1							
374-1	23	15	4	1.4	Monterey chert		—
374-2	21	10	4	0.9	Monterey chert	Needle nose	2g
374-3	26 ^b	15	4	—	Monterey chert		—
374-4	22	10	4	1.25	Monterey chert		—
374-5	25 ^b	14	4	—	Monterey chert		—
374-6	25	12	4	1.5	Monterey chert		2a
374-8	21 ^b	13	3	—	Monterey chert	Non-diagnostic fragment	—
374-10	28	12	4	1.6	Basalt		2c
374-11	22	11	3	0.95	Monterey chert		—
374-12	18	14	4	1.1	Monterey chert		—
374-13	27	16	5	2.4	Monterey chert		—
374-14	31	11	3	1.2	Monterey chert		2d
374-15	27	14	5	1.5	Monterey chert	Needle nose	2e
374-16	23	13	5	1.65	Monterey chert		—
374-17	26	12	3	1.3	Monterey chert		2b
374-18	24	11	4	1.2	Monterey chert	Needle nose	2f
374-19	19	11	3	1.0	Monterey chert		—
374-20	—	14	4	—	Monterey chert		—
374-29	—	12	4	—	Monterey chert		—
374-45	—	8	4	—	Monterey chert		—
Mean	24.0	12.4	3.9				
S.D.	3.49	2.0	0.64		Monterey chert	= 19 (95%)	
Var.	12.92	4.0	0.41		Basalt	= 1 (5%)	
Range	18-31	8-16	3-5		Total	= 20 (100%)	
Type 2							
374-27	28	7	3	1.2	Monterey chert		2h
374-28	23	7	3	0.7	Monterey chert		2i
Mean	25.5	7	3	0.95	Monterey chert	= 2 (100%)	
S.D.	12.5			0.35			
Var.	12.5			0.125			
Range	23-28			0.7-1.2			
Type 3							
374-22	37	15	5	—	Basalt		2j
374-25	38	15	4	—	Monterey chert		2k
Mean	37.5	15	4.5				
S.D.	0.70	0.70			Basalt	= 1 (50%)	
Var.	0.50	0.50			Monterey chert	= 1 (50%)	
Type 4							
374-21	22	14	4	1.4	Monterey chert		2m
374-23	18	11	5	1.1	Monterey chert		2n
374-24	21	14	4	1.0	Monterey chert		2l
Mean	20.3	13.0	4.33	1.16	Monterey chert	= 3 (100%)	
S.D.	2.8	1.7	0.57	0.2			
Var.	4.3	3.0	0.33	0.04			
Range	18-22	11-14	4-5	1.0-1.4			

^a Measurements in millimeters; weight in grams.

^b Reconstructed dimension.

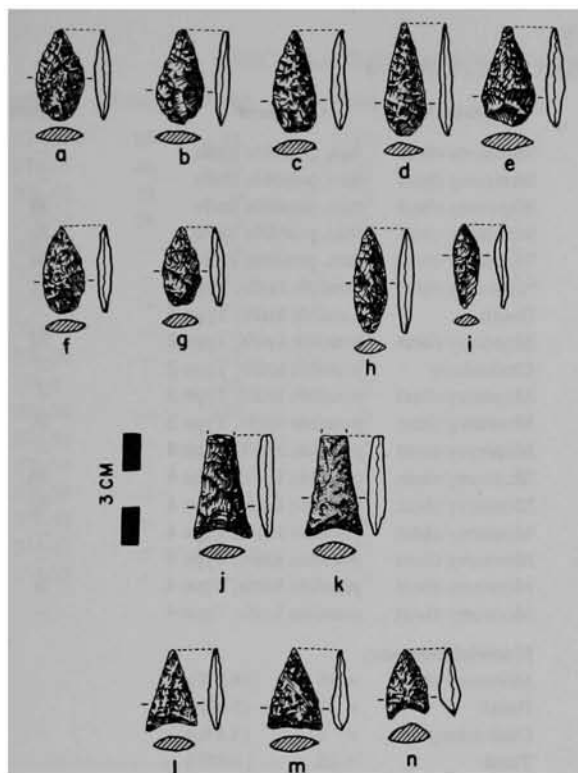


Fig. 2. Projectile point forms, Level 4.

triangular forms approximate those proposed by Walker (1951:63), with about 80% of the points being leaf-shaped. No stemmed points were recovered as part of this investigation. The possibility of a variant form within the leaf-shaped category is noted for two specimens with widths that are from 60% to 75% of their length. Five leaf-shaped specimens were also set aside on the basis of narrowed, almost needle-like, points with drill-like characteristics. No wear could be seen on these tips under hand-lens magnification (Fig. 2e, f, and g).

Heavy Biface Forms

Four categories of larger bifaces are proposed.

1. Thin, leaf-shaped outlines similar to a few of the projectile points except for their increased size (Table 2, Fig. 3a-c). Three specimens in this category tend to be very

thin and broad. Two specimens have thicker cross sections.

2. Heavy, broad implements with biconvex (lenticular) cross sections. Reconstructed lengths and widths suggest lengths of up to 100 mm. (Table 2, Fig. 3d and e).

3. Long, narrow straight-sided biface forms with lenticular cross sections. Two fragments are represented and a reasonable estimated reconstructed length would be in excess of 90 mm. (Table 2, Fig. 3f).

4. Heavy, leaf-shaped forms (Table 2, Fig. 3g-i).

Drills

Three drill categories are proposed.

1. Irregular, thick artifacts with narrowed tips suggestive of a drilling function (Table 3, Fig. 3j and k). These specimens resemble microliths illustrated by Walker (1951:Fig. 6), but his were from Level 1.

2. Narrow bifacially flaked artifact with a thick cross section. One specimen (374-59, Table 3, Fig. 3m) was taken from the Level 4 component; another (374-41, Table 3, Fig. 3l) was collected from the surface. Original affiliations or associations are unknown.

3. A thin bifacial fragment with a narrowed drill-like tip (Table 3).

Possible Files

Two small elongate ground stone items are identified as files. Both are made of a slate-like material and have smooth rather than abrasive surfaces (Table 4, Fig. 4n, o). Walker (1951:62, Fig. 14b) illustrated two similar forms taken from his Level 3.

Bone Artifacts

Six specimens are included in this category (Table 4, Fig. 4i-m). Two artifacts (374-67, 374-68) probably represent parts of compound fish hooks, but either could have functioned as a gorge. Two tip fragments (374-66, 374-69) have flat or spatulate cross

Table 2
BIFACES FROM MALAGA COVE - LEVEL 4

Artifact	Length ^a	Width	Thickness	Weight	Material	Comment	Figure
374-7	30	17	5	2.5	Monterey chert	thin, possible knife	—
374-9	—	16	6	—	Monterey chert	thin, possible knife	—
374-26	36 ^b	19	5	—	Monterey chert	thin, possible knife	3b
374-30	—	16	6	2.4	Monterey chert	thin, possible knife	3c
374-48	—	18	4	—	Monterey chert	thin, possible knife	3a
374-36	—	29	8	—	Monterey chert	possible knife, Type 2	3e
374-42	—	—	8	—	Basalt	possible knife, Type 2	—
374-44	—	—	8	—	Monterey chert	possible knife, Type 2	3d
374-49	—	—	5	—	Chalcedony	possible knife, Type 2	—
374-50	—	24	8	—	Monterey chert	possible knife, Type 3	—
374-55	—	—	10	—	Monterey chert	possible knife, Type 3	3f
374-35	—	—	8	—	Monterey chert	possible knife, Type 4	—
374-38	42	21	10	6.2	Monterey chert	possible knife, Type 4	3h
374-46	49	20	8	7.25	Monterey chert	possible knife, Type 4	3g
374-51	—	—	7	—	Monterey chert	possible knife, Type 4	—
374-52	36	20	9	6.25	Monterey chert	possible knife, Type 4	—
374-56	45	19	7	5.4	Monterey chert	possible knife, Type 4	3i
374-37	—	—	6	—	Monterey chert	possible knife, Type 4	—
Mean	38.2	19.9	7.11		Material Summary		
S.D.	7.3	3.8	1.7		Monterey chert	= 16 (88.8%)	
Var.	53.57	14.49	3.04		Basalt	= 1 (5.6%)	
Range	30-49	16-29	4-10		Chalcedony	= 1 (5.6%)	
					Total	= 18 (100%)	

^a Measurements in millimeters; weight in grams. ^b Reconstructed dimension.

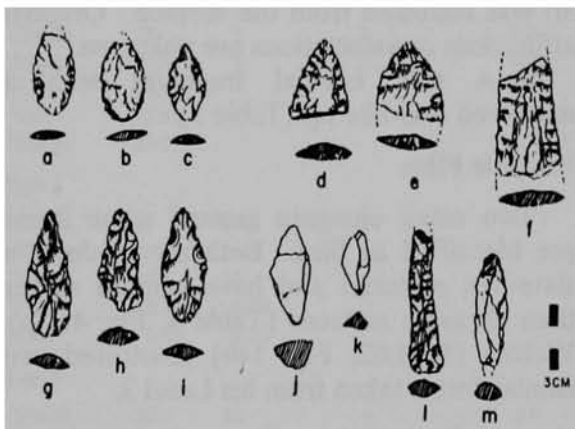


Fig. 3. Biface and drill forms, Level 4.

sections and probably represent awls. Another tip fragment (374-67) has a round section and highly polished surface suggestive of use as a heavy needle-like punch. The last piece (374-65) was probably a flaking tool of some kind.

Shell Artifacts

Two categories of shell artifacts are represented. The first consists of four abalone shell fish hook blanks and four abalone fish hook fragments in various stages of manufacture (Table 4, Fig. 4a-h). The second category includes a number of beads (ca. 27). In the 50 years since these beads were collected, however, the labels on the vials have faded so that it is no longer certain that all of the specimens came from the Level 4 component. Rather than confuse the record, comments here are limited to the fact that all of the beads appear to have been made from the walls of *Olivella* shells (none are of the spire-ground forms), and all are burned or calcined. The beads are not illustrated.

Table 3
MISCELLANEOUS CHIPPED STONE FROM MALAGA COVE - LEVEL 4

Artifact	Length ^a	Width	Thickness	Weight	Material	Comment	Figure
374-57	29	13	10	3.3	Monterey chert	core drill, Type 1	3k
374-58	46	20	15	—	Monterey chert	core drill, Type 1	—
374-61	13	6	5	—	Monterey chert	core drill, Type 1	—
374-62	28	13	13	14.2	Monterey chert	core drill, Type 1	3j
374-41	—	16	8	0.6	Monterey chert	drill, Type 2	3i
374-59	—	14	8	5.0	Monterey chert	drill, Type 2	3m
374-32	—	—	6	—	Monterey chert	drill, Type 3	—
374-40	—	—	6	—	Slate	biface midsection ?	—
374-54	—	15	6	—	Monterey chert	biface midsection ?	—
374-8	—	13	3	—	Monterey chert	point reject	—
374-31	—	14	5	—	Monterey chert	point reject	—
374-33	—	—	4	—	Monterey chert	biface tip	—
374-34	—	12	4	—	Monterey chert	point reject	—
374-39	—	—	4	—	Monterey chert	point tip	—
374-43	—	—	4	—	Monterey chert	point tip	—
374-47	—	10	4	—	Fused shale	point base	—
374-53	—	—	4	—	Monterey chert	biface tip	—
Material Summary							
					Monterey chert	= 15 (88.2%)	
					Slate	= 1 (5.9%)	
					Fused shale	= 1 (5.9%)	
					Total	= 17 (100%)	

^a Measurements in millimeters; weight in grams.

Table 4
MISCELLANEOUS ARTIFACTS FROM MALAGA COVE - LEVEL 4

Artifact	Length ^a	Width	Thickness	Material	Comment	Figure
374-64	30	11	6	Slate	file ?	4n
374-64	39	12	5	Slate	file ?	4o
374-65	—	10	7	Bone/Antler	flaker fragment	—
374-66	—	7	3	Bone	awl tip, flat	4j
374-67	—	4	3	Bone	needle tip ? round	4m
374-68	46	5	3	Bone	gorge ?	4i
374-69	—	—	3	Bone	awl fragment	4k
374-70	—	5	5	Bone	needle/punch tip	4l
374-73	25	18	5	<i>Haliotis</i>	fish hook blank	4c
374-74	19	18	3	<i>Haliotis</i>	fish hook blank	4d
374-75	20	17	5	<i>Haliotis</i>	fish hook blank	4a
374-76	25	20	5	<i>Haliotis</i>	fish hook blank	4b
374-77	19	19	4	<i>Haliotis</i>	shell fragment	—
374-78	—	—	2	Shell	fish hook fragment	4e
374-79	—	—	3	Shell	fish hook fragment	4f
374-80	—	—	3	Shell	fish hook fragment	4h
374-81	—	—	3	Shell	fish hook fragment	4g

^a Measurements in millimeters.

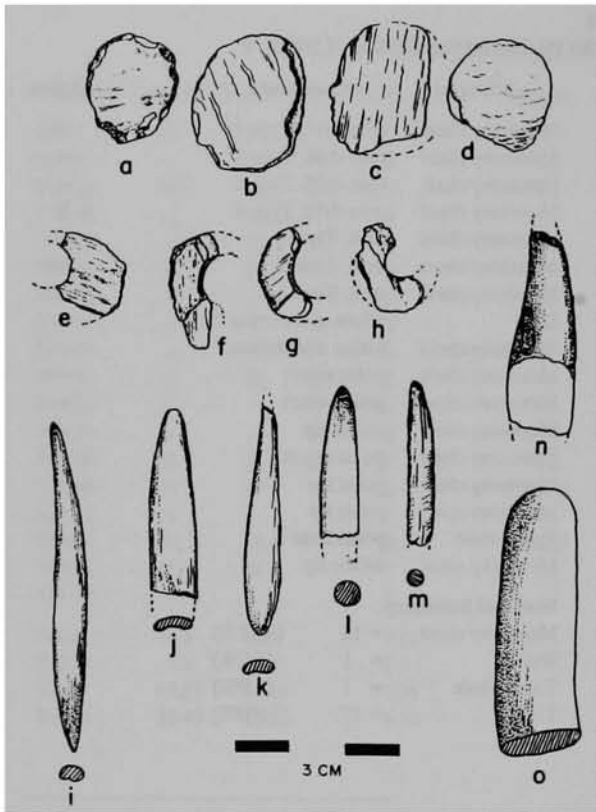


Fig. 4. Slate files, shell fish hooks, and bone tools, Level 4.

THE SITE

The exact boundaries of CA-LAN-138 were never defined and it is impossible to do more than estimate the extent and distribution of Walker's four components. Based on surface scatters, exposures along the seaward side of the site and 50-year-old memories, it is proposed that Walker's Level 4 was confined primarily to the top of the dunes and that it extended northward from the highest dune for 100 meters or more.

The collection described here (Table 5) was taken from a small flat area (almost a swale) between the larger dunes to the south and several small dunes extending downslope to the north (Fig. 5). There was a ridge-like feature along the southeasterly edge of this swale, and hillocks of sand at succes-

sively lower elevations to the north. This location corresponds in general to the three southernmost dune features proposed on the Van Valkenburgh map (Wallace 1986:24). Walker (1951:63) described Level 4 as consisting of about 15 feet of loose grey sand.

The general nature of the late deposit was confirmed in part by the excavation of trenches 1 and 2 during a 1955 salvage operation, which revealed from 60 to 72 inches (152-181 cm.) of loose greyish-brown sand containing "bits of charcoal, miscellaneous rock, food remains, chert flakes and a sprinkling of artifacts" (Wallace 1985:137).

It may be of interest that the matrix from which the collection described here was taken had somewhat different characteristics than the deposit described by Walker (1951:63) or Wallace (1985:137-142). In the 1930s, collectors excavating in the above-mentioned swale area dug irregular pits into what appeared to be sterile blow sand. At depths ranging from 18 to 30 inches (45 to 76 cm.) very thin streaks of discoloration, often difficult to see, and containing cultural materials, were encountered. The sand above and below was typically sterile. These subtle lenses of discoloration were seldom more than one centimeter thick, and large rocks or heavy artifacts were absent. When such a layer was located, the procedure was to follow it laterally into the side of the dune until it disappeared or until the excavation caved in. When this occurred, the excavator moved over a few feet and opened a new pit. Most excavation time was spent moving sterile sand and the key to significant artifact recovery was the discovery of some small area that had not yet been screened or disturbed.

In contrast to the low rate of artifact recovery reported by Wallace (1985:138), in 1937 a pit was considered good only if one or more artifacts were recovered from *each* small hand-held screen, and a good "streak"

Table 5
SUMMARY OF ARTIFACTS FROM MALAGA COVE

Total Chipped Stone Artifacts	=	62	
Total Ground Stone Artifacts (files)	=	2	
Total Bone and Shell Artifacts	=	15	
Total Artifacts in Collection	=	79	
Projectile Points			
Type 1	=	20	Monterey chert 19; basalt 1
Type 2	=	2	Monterey chert 2
Type 3	=	2	Monterey chert 1; basalt 1
Type 4	=	3	Monterey chert 3
Non-diagnostic	=	6	Monterey chert 5; fused shale 1
Total	=	33	
Bifaces			
Type 1	=	5	Monterey chert 5
Type 2	=	4	Monterey chert 3; basalt 1
Type 3	=	2	Monterey chert 2
Type 4	=	7	Monterey chert 7
Non-diagnostic frag.	=	4	Monterey chert 3; slate 1
Total	=	22	
Drills			
Type 1	=	4	Monterey chert 4
Type 2	=	2	Monterey chert 2
Type 3	=	1	Monterey chert 1
Total	=	7	
Shell Artifacts			
Fish hook blanks	=	4	
Fish hook fragments	=	4	
Other	=	1	
Total	=	9	
Bone/Antler Artifacts			
Awl fragments	=	2	
Needle fragments	=	2	
Gorge	=	1	
Flaker	=	1	
Total	=	6	
Chipped Stone Material Distribution			
Monterey chert	=	57	(91.9%)
Basalt	=	3	(4.8%)
Fused shale	=	1	(1.6%)
Slate	=	1	(1.6%)
Total	=	62	(99.9%)

would produce several artifacts for each 15 or 20 shovels full of sand.

Relative to the conditions and circumstances noted above, three points seem worth additional comment: 1) the nature of the deposit in comparison with the published descriptions; 2) the conditions or circum-

stances that might produce such a deposit; and 3) the artifact assemblage described here in comparison to both the Walker and Wallace inventories (Walker 1951:63-68; Wallace 1985:138-140, Table 1).

First, the most obvious observation seems to be the difference between the grey or

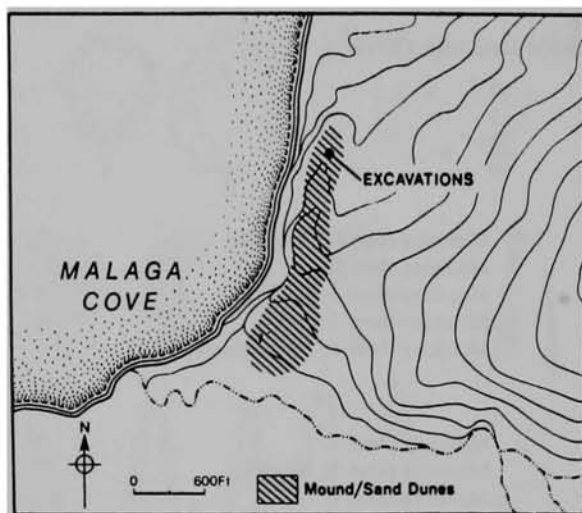


Fig. 5. Approximate provenience of collection, 1937-1941.

grey-brown sand described by Walker and Wallace and the nearly sterile dune sand from which this collection was taken. The streaks of discoloration that contained the artifacts were observed many times and in several different parts of the described swale area, so that the phenomenon should not be considered a one-time accident.

Second, attempts to account for the thin and fragile artifact-bearing layers have been unsuccessful. The layers do not appear to be the remains of cremations, and given the sand dune matrix, it is hard to image an accumulation of campsite refuse (living floors) with such fragile characteristics. This possibility is particularly remote when the numbers and kinds of artifacts recovered from such layers is considered. Palmer (1905:22-23), looking at site formation processes in a generic sense for southern California, proposed that sand was typically carried onto a site to improve the drainage and heat retention qualities of the campsite base, as well as for what he called sanitary advantages. According to Palmer, fresh sand was brought in to cover the camp refuse surrounding a dwelling, and this resulted in

the alternate layers of sand, shellfish remains, and camp refuse often seen in shellmound situations. In a more specific application, he proposed that this developmental process accounted, in part, for the nature of the mound at Malaga Cove.

The possibility that sand was carried onto sites for the purposes described should not be discarded without some consideration, and it is tempting to interpret the dune sand layers described above in this way. Closer examination, however, suggests that Palmer's explanation does not fit at least two aspects of the Malaga Cove circumstances. He described camp refuse, including shellfish and other subsistence remains, as covered. Shell refuse and other meaningful evidence of subsistence activity was absent in the discolored streaks, and it is hard to visualize a situation where hundreds, or even thousands of undamaged projectile points and finely worked bifaces, would be discarded in the camp refuse. Finished and undamaged artifacts might well have been lost in a soft sandy living floor situation, but this probably would not place them in the kind of fragile layered context described above.

Third, several other considerations should be stressed. The relative differences in the number of artifacts recovered in the three different contexts should be noted (Walker's 1936-37 excavations, Wallace's 1955 salvage investigations, and the collections described in the present paper). In spite of the thin and fragile nature of the discolored streaks from which the collection described here was taken, the number of artifacts recovered at that time was impressive.

Although unfortunately no counts are available and most of the artifacts are by now scattered in undocumented private collections, it is possible to propose, based on direct observation during a five-year period from 1937 to 1941, that thousands of small artifacts were recovered from the swale area

alone. With few variations, these artifacts were generally similar to those described above. This contrasts with the recovery of artifacts from trenches 1 and 2 in 1955, where Wallace (1985:137) reported a "sprinkling of artifacts." Walker (1951:63) noted that large numbers of points were taken from the site from time to time and there is reason to believe that, in part, he was referring to the same collecting activities reported above. In addition, Walker cited Palmer and Barbieri as reporting the recovery of large numbers of artifacts. In comparison, the Southwest Museum excavations found only "different forms scattered through the level . . . no great concentration of points was encountered" (Walker 1951:63). In summation, Walker's results were essentially similar to those reported by Wallace, and it is evident that two different kinds of artifact-bearing contextual situations are represented; both of these are clearly part of the Level 4 occupation.

An additional consideration relates to the kinds of artifacts in the collection described above. As noted, no basket mortar bases, arrow shaft straighteners, painted pebbles, or significant food remains were recovered. Shell fish hook blanks and fragments, drill-like implements, and occasional otoliths from sea bass were present. Walker (1951:65) reported that fish hooks were present in the Level 4 inventory (1951:65), but he illustrated this artifact from Level 3 only. Although the sample described here is small, it seems to support Wallace's contention that levels 3 and 4 may represent parts of the same general occupation (Wallace 1985:142-143). The presence of blanks and partially completed fish hooks in the thin laminated deposits also suggests manufacturing activities at the site, and supports the idea that these depositions were not part of some esoteric ceremonial activities. On the other hand, an apparent dearth of chipping waste

and other cultural debris indicates that other household or manufacturing activities took place elsewhere on the site.

No really convincing explanation for the matrix or the artifacts is possible at the present time. It does seem clear, however, that whatever activity occurred in the upper levels of parts of the northerly slopes of the dune was different from the activities responsible for the deposits described by Walker and Wallace.

This brief note serves primarily to provide additional descriptive data to a poorly known archaeological situation and adds still another level of confusion to the interpretation of the Level 4 deposit. These data tend to confirm Wallace's assessment of the local site development process and emphasize the patchy nature of the several, as yet mostly unknown, components.

The site itself is gone, and as noted by Wallace (1986:26-27), whatever additional information is to be gained will have to be teased from the artifacts and notes presently in storage at the Southwest Museum and the Los Angeles County Museum. Unfortunately, however, these data are unlikely to contribute to a more detailed understanding of the site development process or the stratigraphy, both of which are critical elements in the site interpretation.

NOTE

1. The artifact assemblage described here represents only a small part of the artifacts collected during the period 1936 through 1941. Through the years, specimens have been loaned out for museum displays and classroom use, and some have simply disappeared. The primary loss was the very finely made projectile points. With this exception, it is safe to suggest that the surviving collection is approximately representative of the original, but it does not provide a sense of the quantity of material being removed by collectors at the time. The artifacts discussed above are housed at Department of Anthropology, University of California, Davis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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A Bear-shaped Crescentic from Northern San Diego County, California

HENRY C. KOERPER, Cypress College,
Cypress, CA 90630.

MALCOLM F. FARMER, Whittier College,
Whittier, CA 90608.

THE diversity of functions proposed for chipped stone crescentics is mirrored by the variety of their shapes. Some crescentics are simply of lunate design (e.g., Tadlock 1966), while others (often called "eccentric crescentics") incorporate notches, "spurs," "legs," and tangs onto an underlying crescent form (Rogers 1966; Jertberg 1978, 1986). Malcolm Rogers (1929) believed that crescentics of San Dieguito age served as hunting amulets. Other suggested functions include lateral bird bunts, surgical instruments, skinning or slicing tools, ornaments, specialized scrapers, waterfowl points capable of glancing off water, and tools for peeling and stripping (Davis and Panlaqui 1978:61). Crescentics are generally thought to be of early Holocene age (Wallace 1955; Tadlock 1966; Warren 1968).

Certain crescentic specimens suggest animal effigies (Nelson 1936:206), a view supported by the recent recovery of an artifact (Fig. 1) that appears to represent a bear.

The object was found at the Allan O. Kelly site (CA-SDI-9649; Fig. 2) and extends the known range of morphological variation