

# Archaeological Survey of Rainey's Point South on Eleuthera, Bahamas

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## Introduction

Not much is known about the Lucayans, the people who inhabited the Bahamas when Columbus arrived. Their ancestors migrated from Venezuela through Puerto Rico to the Bahamas. They left no written accounts of their daily life because they had an oral history. Today, all that is known about the Lucayans derives from Spanish accounts, which could be biased or incorrect, and archaeological surveys.

Previous archaeology done on Eleuthera has been on a small scale. Archaeologist Sean Sullivan located fifteen Lucayan sites on Eleuthera while completing his Master's thesis, and past semesters at The Island School have performed a total of seven surface surveys in South Eleuthera, locating seven sites in total.

The purpose of the Spring 2010 project was to determine if Lucayans utilized Rainey's Point and the surrounding area. This area has a high dune ridge separated from the mainland by a tidal creek and is within walking distance of freshwater sinkholes. These factors provide protection from the elements, a back door entrance that was accessible by canoe, and access to important resources. We hypothesized that Lucayans used this area as a ceremonial site due to the close proximity to a blue hole. Blue holes, and caves in general, played an important role in the Lucayan creation myth and were sometimes used as burial sites because they were seen as portals to the otherworld.

## Methodology: Subsurface Survey

For the subsurface survey, several test pits were excavated in order to confirm the results of the surface survey. Artifacts found underground are far less likely to have been disturbed and therefore present a more accurate view of the site. A grid with its y-axis going north to south was placed onto the area, and a marker was placed on the grid every ten meters. Circular holes fifty centimeters in diameter were dug in ten-centimeter increments (Fig. 5) and the soil was sifted through a one-quarter inch screen. All materials were removed from the site because digging them up made the location of the artifacts in test pits obsolete.

### Materials found include:

15 diagnostic sherds palmetto ware, including 2 rim pieces that fit together; many ecofacts, including 28 shell fragments and 4 coral fragments; a thick "cultural layer" of fertile soil from about 40-60 cm (Fig. 5); 286 pieces fire-cracked rock, including 250 in test pit where hearth was discovered (Fig. 6).



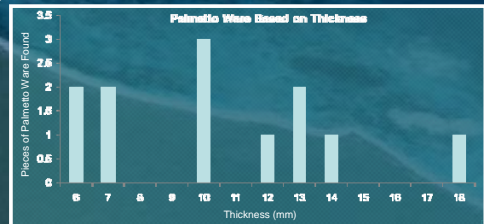
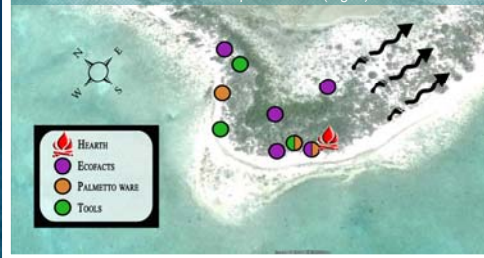
## Methodology: Surface Survey

The primary method utilized was a standard phase I surface survey. Archaeologists were spaced roughly five meters apart (Fig. 1) and moved in a line parallel to the shore while avoiding obstacles and scanning the ground for materials in a meandering transect. All materials found were recorded and replaced in their original position.



### Materials found include:

various shells and shell fragments; 9 sherds Palmetto Ware including 3 that fit together (Fig. 2); net weight in intertidal zone (Fig. 3); large coral feature in the middle of the dune ridge; fire-cracked rock in hearth in uprooted tree (Fig. 4)

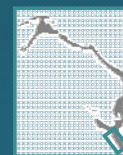


Material	Surface Survey	Subsurface Survey
Palmetto ware	9	15
Hearths	1	1
Other features	1	0

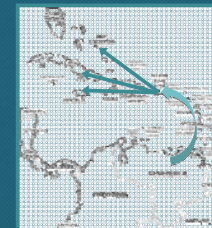
## Discussion

Our results did not support our hypothesis. At a ceremonial site, we would expect to find more ornate Palmetto ware and far fewer ecofacts. Too few ecofacts were found for this site to have been inhabited permanently, but there was probable temporary human habitation evidenced by the thick cultural layer. This site was most likely used as a resource procurement area with activities such as tool making, agriculture, or fishing. The hearths, human-altered coral, a net weight used for fishing, and Palmetto ware found both above and below the surface, supported this. As seen in the chart, the subsurface results nearly matched the surface survey, meaning that our surface survey was highly accurate in this area.

The most limiting factor in this project was time. If further research were done on this site, we would recommend extending the survey towards John Miller's Creek and digging more test pits in different areas.

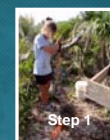


The island of Eleuthera.  
Area of interest in box.



The arrow shows the path the ancestors of the Lucayans took from Venezuela to Puerto Rico to the Bahamas.

## Subsurface Survey Diagram



The hole was dug using shovels, trowels, or hands.



Displaced dirt was sifted through a 1/4 inch screen.



The screen was searched for artifacts and ecofacts.



A finished hole, with markers showing the cultural layer.

## Literature Cited

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Maps courtesy of Google Earth