The Mystery of the Mounds

Hundreds of these low, earthen mounds are along waterways in Oregon’s Willamette Valley. We still have much to learn about why and how pre-contact people created these mound sites. Many of the mounds have a low profile, were disturbed during the historic period, or are overgrown, making identification difficult using traditional field methods.

Tribal sources, ethnographic accounts, and limited archaeological evidence indicate that these are culturally sensitive sites.

Archaeology at the Landscape Level

The first step in understanding and protecting the mounds is identifying where they are. Portland State University has partnered with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde to create a predictive model to locate these features across the landscape using LiDAR data. LiDAR uses aircraft-mounted lasers to scan the surface to create 3-D models.

This method has the potential to change how archaeology is conducted in the Pacific Northwest, where dense forests, uneven terrain, and access are major obstacles to identifying sites.

Oregon Archaeology Month October 2018

Check out [www.oregonheritage.org](http://www.oregonheritage.org) for events throughout Oregon.