

Looting Steals Our History – Call To Action



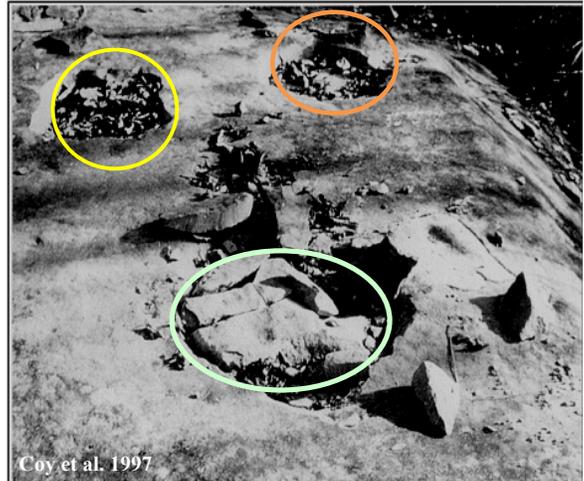
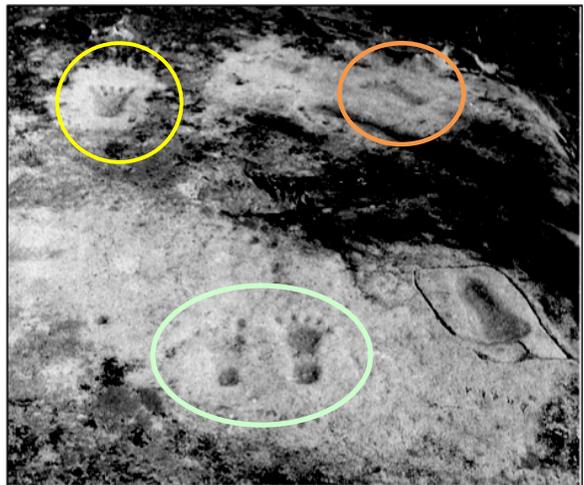
An archaeologist stands in a deep looter pit in a Red River Gorge rockshelter site.

Kentucky's **cultural heritage sites**, the important places linked to our past, are being destroyed at an alarming rate. Much of this damage is caused by development as our towns and cities expand.

Looting, the illegal or unethical destruction of cultural heritage sites, destroys places that are not threatened. Looters often target Kentucky's dry rockshelters, such as those in the Red River Gorge. They also target cemeteries, caves, and military sites.

Archaeological sites and cemeteries are nonrenewable cultural resources. Once they are destroyed, the information they hold about our past is lost forever. We must work together to preserve and protect these fragile places for future generations

Why is looting such a bad activity? Looters dig for artifacts, grave goods, and human bones. They are not concerned about where something is found. They care about how much it is worth or how pretty it looks. ♦ Looters can destroy hundreds to thousands of years of history in just a few hours. They can disturb hundreds of graves in several months. ♦ Looters keep what they find for their personal collections. Even worse, they sell the items. ♦ Looting robs all Kentuckians of the chance to learn more about our heritage and to maintain our sacred places. **Is looting archaeological sites and cemeteries illegal?** Digging into archaeological sites on state or federally owned or leased property is illegal. ♦ Disturbing someone's grave is illegal, no matter how long ago they died and were buried. ♦ Collecting and possessing human bones is illegal in Kentucky. **What can you do to help protect these fragile places?** Do you know someone who is looting an archaeological site or cemetery? If you do, report their actions to local law enforcement authorities; the land managing agency responsible for the site; Dr. Kary Stackelbeck (kary.stackelbeck@ky.gov; 502/564-7005, ext. 115) at the Kentucky Heritage Council in Frankfort; or Dr. George Crothers (gmcrot2@email.uky.edu; 859/257-1944) at the Office of State Archaeology at the University of Kentucky in Lexington. ♦ Have you discovered human remains? If so, leave the remains in place – you may have stumbled on a crime scene. Report your findings to your county coroner and local law enforcement officials. ♦ Do not buy or sell prehistoric and historic artifacts. This encourages looting. ♦ Take action to preserve and protect cultural heritage sites. Become a **steward** of archaeological sites on your land or in your community.



Before and after photographs of the Loman Hill Petroglyph Site in Rockcastle County. (Top) Designs shaped like human feet are among those native peoples carved into the bedrock. (Bottom) The rock art site after looters tried to remove the carvings. Their attempts failed. The result? The complete destruction of this one-of-a-kind site. The rock art had survived the elements for hundreds or thousands of years. It couldn't survive the looters.