



Manual of Forensic Taphonomy

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Forensic taphonomy is the study of the postmortem changes to human remains, focusing largely on environmental effects including decomposition in soil and water and interaction with plants, insects, and other animals. While other books have focused on subsets such as forensic botany and entomology, **Manual of Forensic Taphonomy** is the first update of the entire domain in more than ten years and the first book to consider distinguishing among multiple types of taphonomic changes.

Edited by two of the most distinguished experts in the field, this volume examines taphonomic alterations to bone and related taphonomic processes common to cases of forensic interest. Specific chapters address a range of issues related to:

- Varying burial environments
- Animal scavenging and transport
- Fluvial and human transport
- Cultural modifications
- Marine environments
- Subaerial weathering
- Thermal alteration
- Recovery methods used in collecting the remains

The book discusses inherent variations in survivability of different bones, degradation of DNA in different environments, and organisms involved in soft-tissue decomposition which result in skeletonization. It also describes microscopic alterations, color changes, macroscopic physical damage of multiple types, and bone loss through dispersal away from the location of initial body deposition. The authors present methods that can be employed to determine the timing of taphonomic damage (perimortem vs. postmortem) as well as checklists for the collection of microscopic and macroscopic taphonomic data.

The ability to recognize taphonomic characteristics and discriminate between osseous alterations with similar appearances but dissimilar origins is essential to those engaged in the analysis of skeletal remains. This volume is an ideal guide for students and non-specialists as well as a reference manual for professionals.

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