

Wildlife Forensics Morphology Standards



WHAT IS AN AAFS STANDARD FACTSHEET?

The AAFS produces clear, concise, and easy-to-understand factsheets to summarize the contents of technical and professional forensic science standards on the OSAC Registry. They are not intended to provide an interpretation for any portion of a published standard.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STANDARD?

The purpose of this standard is to aid wildlife forensic practitioners in developing protocols and procedures that utilize best practices in the field of morphology.

Morphology is the study of form. Wildlife forensic morphologists use the physical comparison of characters shared by a group of animals to identify wildlife parts and products typically to taxonomic order, family, genus, and, when possible, species.

This standard describes general processes of morphological examination of wildlife remains using macroscopic and microscopic comparison techniques.

WHY IS THIS STANDARD IMPORTANT? WHAT ARE ITS BENEFITS?

Morphological analysis is an important tool in wildlife forensic science, which applies a range of disciplines to legal cases involving non-human biological evidence.

This standard provides minimum requirements related to the examination of evidence by wildlife forensic morphologists to help enhance its application in wildlife crime investigations.



HOW IS THIS STANDARD USED, AND WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS?

This standard is used as a guide for wildlife forensic morphologists and provides several key elements to be considered when undertaking a morphological examination of evidence. Key terms and definitions are provided.

General requirements for morphological examination are covered and include the necessary components to compare evidence to relevant specimens of known species sources, ensure proper instrument calibration, and consider the diagnostic value of morphological characters as well as inter- and intra-specific character variability. Requirements for bench notes documentation are also delineated.

Requirements relate to the macroscopic examination of external and osteological remains, documentation of taphonomic condition, and anthropogenic alterations, as well as microscopic structures.