

Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

January 2018



Known for spreading their wings to dry them alongside lakes and river banks, the Anhinga and Double-Crested Cormorant are most often confused for each other as they tend to be found in similar habitats. Upon closer look, ornithologists have distinguished the species from each other by bill shape (Cormorants are curved and Anhinga are straight), coloring on feathers, and even eye color. But what if we were to delve even further? In 2012 the collections team catalogued the above bone as a bird bone, specifically a tarsometatarsus with a question mark as to its genus and species. Fortunately for researchers, the variations that appear on the external bodies of the birds can also be found skeletally.

The tarsometatarsus is a bone that is unique to birds and is the combination of metatarsal bones, which in humans are spread out to help create our feet and individual toes. The two ends of the bone are very specific and while unfortunately only a portion of this bone was found intact, it is enough to determine which species it belongs to. The Double-Crested Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) has distinctive splaying of three prongs at the base of its tarsometatarsus (the part that connects to the phalanges) while the Anhinga has very little splaying of the three prongs. This extreme splaying could in fact have to do with the Cormorant's better ability to hunt underwater with its webbed feet, chasing after their prey through the water. Knowing the difference between the two species is helpful in establishing the archaeological context of a site and assessing the food gathering strategies of a population.



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March 2018

Part of the fun of archaeology is the mystery involved in finding out what each artifact actually is. Sometimes, when artifacts have been weathered over time, they are almost unrecognizable. This last month, while working on an ongoing project to inventory the vault, the THPO Collections Assistant pulled some misidentified artifacts from 2010. At first glance, they look modified, and definitely stand out against any other faunal material! Do you know what they are?



After a lot of consultation with other THPO employees, they were positively identified as armadillo! At first glance, the tiny markings and holes on the bones look intentional, as if modified. If you don't know what armadillo bones look like, it can be difficult to imagine what these artifacts could be. But, after further research, the markings are natural. The nine-banded armadillo is prevalent throughout the southern United States, and these tiny bony scutes make up the external "armor" they are so well known for. Much like turtles, these scutes are covered in keratinous plates and hidden from view.

Armadillos are also the only known reservoir for leprosy in the United States, and humans can become infected through handling or consuming armadillo meat. If you happen to be attending any armadillo races, which are popular here in the southeast, remember not to touch!



Artifact of the Month

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April 2018



Hop! Hop! This time of year most people, when they think of rabbits, are envisioning an all-white rabbit, with a rather large fluffy white tail, sometimes carrying eggs in a basket. Well, what about your average everyday rabbit? Florida is home to two different species of rabbit, the Eastern Cottontail and the Marsh Rabbit, neither of which are white in color. With the ability to blend into the vegetation of Florida, both in heavy brush and briar patches (Cottontail), and amongst the wet prairies and agricultural fields (Marsh rabbit), these rabbit species are easily hidden. While the depiction of April's Easter rabbit is usually hopping around with their bushy white tails; the Marsh rabbit, April's artifact of the month, has a small-gray brown tail and legs made for swimming rather than hopping!

Most rabbits have distinctive pelvic bones and legs that allow them to spring into the air and run at high speed away from predators. However, the Marsh Rabbit uses those leg muscles and pelvic bones to hightail it into the nearest water source in order to hide. With their short hind legs, Marsh Rabbits unfortunately are easy to capture when hunted across land unless they find water. In fact, in most cases the rabbit will stay immersed in the muddy waters with only their eyes visible. The pelvic bone of the Marsh rabbit (shown above), found on the Brighton Reservation, is thinner than what is seen in the body of the Cottontail, aiding in its ability to walk through dense vegetation near swampy areas. Known as pests in southern Florida because of their inundation of sugar cane fields, they face harrowing predators such as alligators, snakes, and owls. So the next time you're walking through the dense swampy areas of Florida just remember that the animal splashing into the water could in fact be the Marsh Rabbit running away from you.



Artifact of the Month

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May 2018



Misconceptions about deer antlers run the gamut; from calling them horns, to thinking that they stick to a certain growing schedule, to whether or not they can grow separated from the head. Deer antlers are in fact a bit complex. Another example of a common misunderstanding is this month's featured artifact. While many people would call the image above deer antlers, they are in fact a great example of deer pedicles! Deer pedicles are a part of the deer skull that begins the formation of the antler itself. Now, while antler growth is the fastest known type of tissue growth (growing up to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch per day!) it is very dependent on seasonality and the genetics of the deer. During the spring, summer and fall months, deer antler growth is usually very extensive because of the long hours of daylight. This culminates in the classic prized rack usually hunted during deer hunting season.

Around the same time that deer hunting season ends, erosion begins to take place between the pedicle and the antler, eventually causing the antler to fall off. For most deer, the antlers fall off during the winter months and start the process of regrowth again in April. However, not all deer are alike and in some instances, they have been sighted with a full set of antlers year round. Knowing the potential deer antler growth rates and having an understanding of its triggers (genetics, nutrition, and age) allows for archaeologists to pin-point a section of time and space in which deer is used for sustenance. While there are always anomalies, as explained above, it is important for archaeologists to take them in account when discussing availability and access to food resources.



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

June 2018



The June Artifact of the Month is an aqua Atlas E-Z Seal jar, and comes from the same location as the annual THPO Brighton Archaeological Field School. This jar was collected in near perfect condition and is a beautiful example of 19th century historic glass. This unique shade of blue is created from natural sands that are heated and used to make glass. Sands low in iron create this special hue of aqua which became popular in the early 1800s to the 1920s. This jar was likely used to preserve

food, and would have been sealed with a glass lid and metal wire. We are lucky that such a delicate find was able to withstand the elements for so many years!



Brighton Field school students learning how to map archaeological finds like this one!



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

July 2018

With an accessioned collection of over 340,000 artifacts, it is very special when we come across something that we just haven't seen before. At first glance, this tiny bead doesn't look like much, almost as if you could walk down and buy it today at a local craft store. Unfortunately, you'd have a hard time finding this particular bead, as it is made out of prehistoric marine shell. Unlike your modern craft store bead, July's artifact of the month took a significant amount of time to create and required the transportation of raw material (shell) from the coast. It represents a large time investment and artistic skill by a Seminole craftsman.



While the first observation was that the bead was crafted from animal bone, after closer inspection we were able to see the distinct layering of shell. Due to the thickness of the shell, we can tell it is non-terrestrial and the material would have been transported from the coast. The top and bottom sides are flat, while the bead itself is round with softly sloping sides. The bead was found in association with three utilized tiger shark teeth. Interestingly, tiger shark teeth were commonly used to shape and cut material, and could have been used in order to manufacture the bead along with some type of awl or drill to create the hole in the middle. Due to the harsh environment of the Florida Everglades, decorative artifacts such as this bead are not found very often and represent a unique and special aspect of the Seminole story.



Artifact of the Month

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August 2018

As we begin to approach some of the hottest days of the year it is important to remember the key things your body needs in order to stay comfortable. Staying cool during Florida summer can be considered a triumph for us humans, even with common utilities such as air conditioning and fans. So how do some of Florida's native animal species contend with the sweltering temperatures and oppressive humidity? How do they "Beat the Heat"?



Due to an alligator's ectothermic nature we can be sure to see them roaming on the side of the road, away from water sources, trying to soak up as much sun as possible during summer. Catching those sunrays is easy for an alligator as their scutes (left) are special bone plates that grow between layers of skin, and act as solar plates while the alligator is sunbathing. Alligators are most actively seeking that sun when temperatures are above 80° F, something that happens often in south Florida. The most common artifacts within our collection are reptile bones like turtle shell fragments (right) and alligator scutes (left) due to the fact they are very edible creatures. Turtles, like alligators, are ectothermic, and rely on external heat sources in order to help regulate their body temperature. In order for both of these species to survive properly, they need to be warm, making south Florida a perfect habitat. So while humans would prefer to "beat the heat", alligators and turtles are all about embracing it, especially on the hot asphalt of roadsides. Watch out while you're driving!

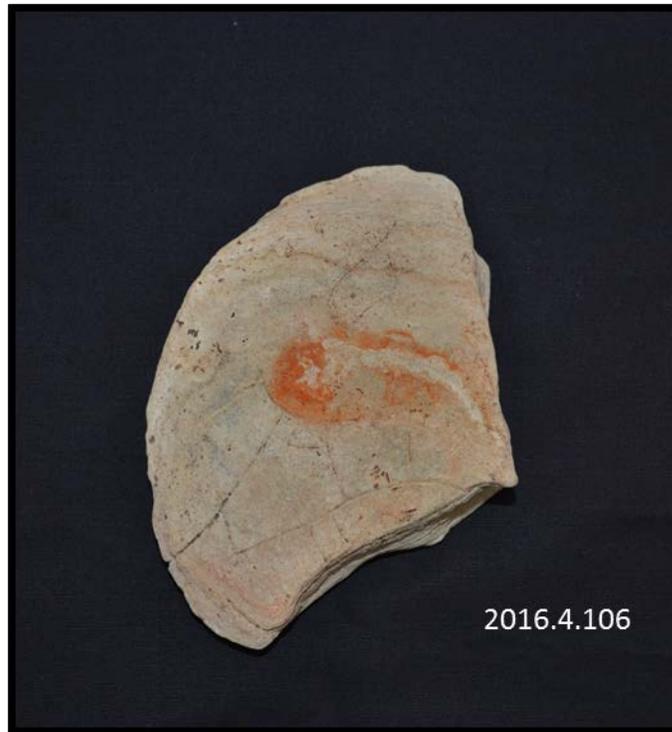


Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

September 2018

Found on the Big Cypress reservation in 1997, this sandstone scraper is a very good example of a south Florida stone tool. Chert, flint, or obsidian are popular materials that stone tools are made of, as they fracture easily and are extremely sharp. But, south Florida is unique because those materials are not at all plentiful. Due to the low number of chert sources in south Florida, high quality stone tools tend to be sparse. More often, tools are made of thick marine shell or bone. Limestone and sandstone, which are plentiful across south Florida, take a large amount of skill to craft into tools and are generally more fragile. Using a softer stone like sandstone is unconventional, and tells us the maker was resourceful when it came to selecting local materials.



Comfortably shaped to fit the hand, the scraper is in fantastic shape. This tool would have been used—to process animal meat or hide, or to cut softer plant material. Can you imagine using this in place of a sharp knife?



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

October 2018

Found on the Brighton Reservation adjacent to an old military trail, October's Artifact of the Month has definitely had some fun in the Florida sun! This type of solarized glass, also known as "desert glass" or "amethyst glass" is caused by the manganese dioxide within the glass reacting to UV light. Originally, the glass was colorless, as manganese dioxide has long been used to make high quality colorless glass. In the United States, the demand for colorless glass spiked around 1880, and the majority of amethyst glass was produced between 1880 and 1915.



Manganese dioxide has a neutralizing effect on blue/green impurities that exist in natural glass materials, in effect 'cancelling out' those impurities and producing a colorless final product. When discarded and left out in the sun, the manganese dioxide reacts to the UV rays and turns a pink/purple shade. The intensity and darkness of the color depends on amount of time the glass is exposed to sunlight, as well as the amount of decolorizing agent that was used in the initial production. A glass bottle that had a lot of manganese dioxide in it, that had been out in the sun for a long time would present a deep purple shade today. These thick glass shards also have irregular bubbling and post bottom mold seams on the base, another indication of a late 19th century, early 20th century date.



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

November 2018

The month of November is a very hectic time for the Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO). Out here, on the Big Cypress Reservation, we are kicking off the month with our 21st Annual American Indian Arts Celebration (AIAC) that is co-sponsored by the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. Promoting Native American culture, traditions, and practices, AIAC strives to not only show the world who the Seminole people are but also celebrates Indigenous cultures around the globe. With musical performances by Seminole Tribal Members such as, Aye Five featuring Carradine and DC, Cornwallis, and RC North, this year's AIAC will be another great tribute to Indigenous Peoples Awareness Month.



THPO 2012.2.7



TonyJoesCollectibles, 2018. <https://www.ebay.com/itm/112829020851>

In keeping with the musical theme, November's artifact is a Harmotone Harmonica, a musical piece created between the 1940s and 1960s by the Harmonic Reed Corporation. Found on the ground's surface of the Brighton Reservation, this plastic harmonica, while probably a child's toy would still have boasted a soft mellow tone. Harmonicas are small and can be easily carried which is often why they are found at historic camps or even in pastures as cowboys used them to help pass the time during breaks from cattle-driving. This harmonica helps to further the story of music that still inspires Seminole artists today who are striving to break into a secular industry while still maintaining culture. We here in THPO Collections urge you to come out to the Big Cypress Reservation on November 2nd and 3rd to experience both Seminole and indigenous stories as they are told in multiple art-forms throughout the two days.

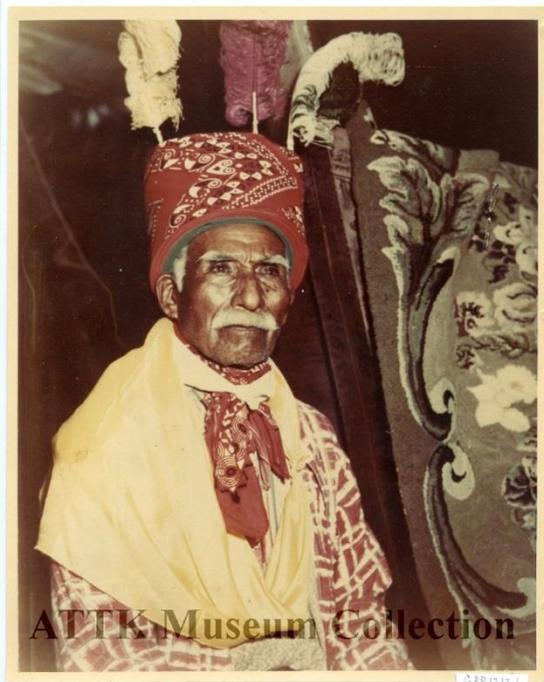


Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

December 2018

Found at Billy Bowlegs III's camp on the Brighton reservation, this hand made blue glass bead represents just a small clue into Seminole camp life. We can tell this bead is hand made due to the lack of uniformity. The shape itself is slightly irregular, with small air bubbles present in the glass. The edges are rough and not ground down. Most likely, it would have been a trade bead that was part of a piece of jewelry or decoration. What is important about this artifact specifically is the site in which it was found. Billy Bowlegs III was a very influential and recognizable tribal member in both historic photographs and stories. He was well known for his advocacy of Seminole rights and reservation lands, and was a treasured tribal elder.



This year, the Tribal Archaeology Section of the THPO completed a historic camp reconstruction project in order to recreate the camp as he occupied it, based on oral histories provided by his family. Occupied by Bowlegs during the mid-twentieth century, the reconstruction will be utilized by the community as a representation of traditional camp life.

