

Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

August 2021

When a lot of people visit Florida, one of the first things they notice (besides the weather) are the little tiny lizards roaming around practically everywhere. Often, the rustling we hear in the leaves and grass out in the field is due to these tiny lizards, skittering away as we approach. But sometimes, if we are closer to water, it's a much different creature that quickly dodges away in order to avoid our boots trampling through the woods.

Salamanders are not lizards but instead, amphibians and Florida is host to many of these species as well. Represented in our lab space by tiny vertebrae fragments, these amphibians make up a large portion of our collection and often found in shovel tests alongside snake vertebrae and turtle shell fragments. Usually the best we can do for an identification is to say that the vertebrae belongs to a salamander, but recently we've been able to narrow it down a bit further.

In Florida, we have two species of *Amphiuma*, the one-toed (*pholeter*) and the two-toed (*means*). The two-toed salamander is considered to be one of Florida's Giant salamanders and while it can grow to be 3 feet or more in length its hard to reconcile this fact when the vertebrae we see in the lab, are so small. What do you think? Would you rather see one of these or a tiny lizard running around?

