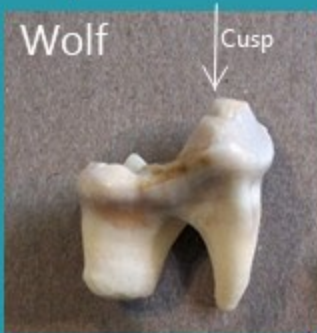


# ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

SEPTEMBER 2022



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Do you have a dog? Have you ever tried to gently look inside of its mouth? Did you notice its teeth?

Canines (canids), like dogs, coyotes, and wolves all have specialized teeth that allow them to eat food that needs to be torn and is tough to get into. These specialized teeth are called carnassials which allow the canine to both pull and twist bone, muscle, and tissue in order to feed. Situated behind this tooth, are molars which, similar to the carnassials need to have large and sharp cusps in order to help the canine chew tough meat.

Our pets no longer need to hunt for their food and tear it apart to eat it immediately in the wild. They can turn their noses up at whatever is put in front of them for something they deem more tasty. But what has this done to their teeth? After centuries of having cooked foods, table scraps, or kibble, these specialized teeth have gotten smaller, less sharp, and are more prone to infections and cavities.

In 2020, the Archaeology team found one of these molar teeth (top left) while in the field. During the cataloging phase, the Collections team realized they were going to have a hard time identifying which canine this tooth belongs to. Why? Because its size and shape sits in between two species: dog and coyote. The Collections staff know for certain that the tooth is too small for a wolf (bottom left), but was this canine the transitional animal between wild coyote and domesticated dog? That could certainly explain the size and shape of the tooth.

We recently sent this canine tooth out for testing to determine just how old it might be so check back in a couple of months for an update.

The two photos of dogs at the top are the pets of some of the staff here at the THPO. If you're interested in learning more about the artifacts we catalog and curate at the THPO, check out the THPO website at [www.stofthpo.com](http://www.stofthpo.com).

