

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

April 2024

In the tropical to subtropical climate of Florida, frogs are not an uncommon sight. To some people, frogs are just another cute animal, while to others they are disgusting creatures. This month the THPO's Collections team will be highlighting this bullfrog vertebra (Figure 1).

This vertebra was found along with several other types of animal bones such as fish, deer, turtle and salamander. It can often be difficult to distinguish frog vertebrae from other amphibian vertebrae like salamander. However, the body of the salamander vertebrae are triangular in shape and they have shorter transverse processes. The bottom illustrations highlight the length of a bullfrog's transverse processes as compared to those of a salamander. Some of the bones that were found with this bullfrog vertebra were burned, evidence of cooking. Putting all of this together, it can be suggested that this frog was probably part of a meal, which is not too different from the bullfrog's use today; with some people from the Southern US eating frog legs as part of their normal diet.

Bullfrog bones are not the only frog remains that Collections have accrued. Several other smaller frog species have been found across many sites. This makes sense considering that there are 27 native species of frog in Florida (Johnson, 2020). Bullfrogs have many features that can distinguish them from other species. The biggest indicator is their size. They are the largest native species of frog, not only in Florida but in North America, reaching a maximum size of 8 inches long, although usually they are around 3 to 6 inches long (wec.ifas.ufl.edu)(Johnson, 2020).



Figure 1



Figure 2

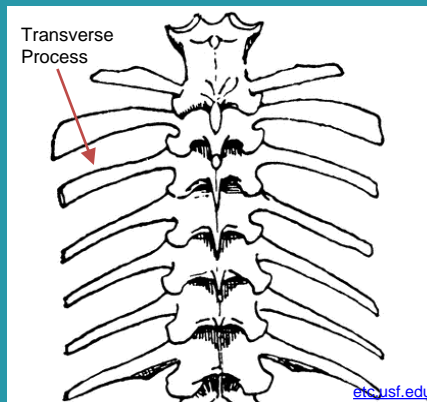


Figure 3 Bullfrog Vertebrae

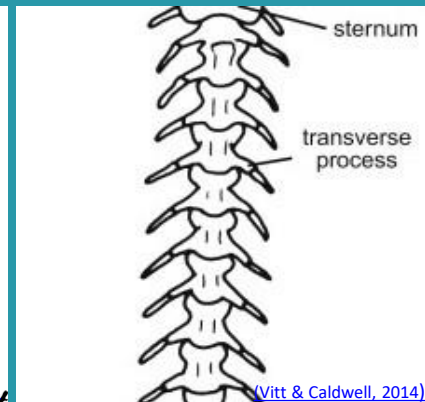


Figure 4 Salamander Vertebrae

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https://www.sdherps.org/species/rana_catesbeiana

Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation. (n.d.). Bullfrog *Rana catesbeiana*. wec.ifas.ufl.edu.

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Johnson, S. A. (2020, January 13). Florida's Frogs. ufwildlife.ifas.ufl.edu.

<https://ufwildlife.ifas.ufl.edu/frogs/florida.shtml#:~:text=Florida%20is%20home%20to%202027,breed%20in%20small%2C%20isolated%20wetlands.>

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