

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

August 2024

At THPO's Collections, we try to keep things as organized as possible. We usually have a definitive classification for any artifact we find. For example, if TAS finds a turtle shell fragment in the field, we classify it as "Turtle". However, anyone at the THPO's Collections can tell you that sometimes the work throws you some curveballs. The world is messy, and artifacts don't always fit into perfect boxes. This snake bone stuck to a snail shell is a perfect example of this concept.

These artifacts are stuck together by a concretion. Concretions are formed as minerals within a sediment precipitate, and are found in sedimentary rock or soil ([Canada Department of Agriculture, 1976](https://www.priweb.org))([priweb.org, 1976](https://www.priweb.org)). There are different types of concretions based on the mineral that creates them. For example, iron-oxide concretions are formed from precipitation in iron rich soils. These concretions are often mistaken for meteorites ([Korotev, n.d.](https://www.wustl.edu)). Practically speaking, concretions are just rocks. Unless there is an artifact attached to them, TAS does not intentionally collect them, although sometimes they are collected by accident.

What about the two artifacts? The snail shell is a *Polygyra*, which is a type of land snail. These are very common in Florida. If you ever played in the dirt as a kid, you have likely come across at least one. Its current state was probably not a result of human interaction. More likely it was just a snail that died in the right place at the right time. The snake bone is a vertebra and is more likely to have been the result of human interaction, such as food processing. What would you label it? Would you classify it as the most relevant artifact? Would you classify it as both? This might seem like a relatively trivial decision, but it can give you an idea of the choices made by TAS and Collections.

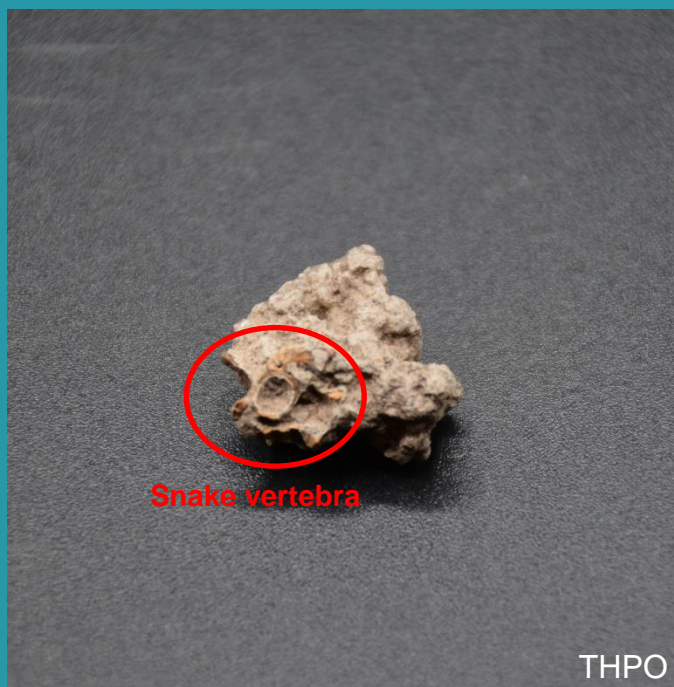


Figure 2



Figure 2

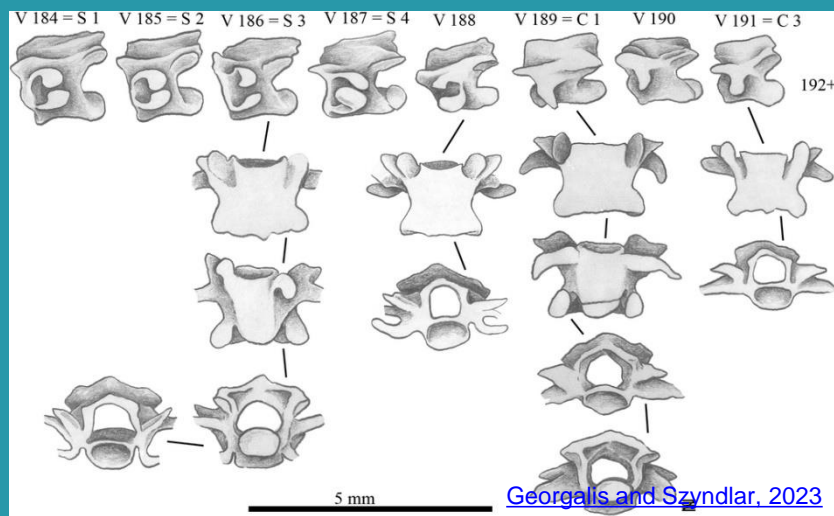


Figure 1: Example of snake vertebrae

Glossary of Terms in Soil Science. (1976). Canada Department of Agriculture.
https://sis.agr.gc.ca/cansis/publications/manuals/1976-glossary/pub1459_report.pdf

Paleontological Research Institution. (2022). *Concretions*. priweb.org.
<https://www.priweb.org/blog-post/concretions>

Korotev, R. L. (n.d.). *Iron-oxide concretions and nodules 1*. wustl.edu.
<https://sites.wustl.edu/meteoritesite/items/concretions/>

