

ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

Some think of raccoons (*Procyon lotor*) as cute critters, while others disdain them as pests. Regardless of personal opinion, these creatures are among the most widespread mammals in the U.S. and can be found in a number of environments throughout the country, from cities to wetlands (National Wildlife Federation). Therefore, it is unsurprising that raccoon remains have wound up within our collection. While teeth and jaw bones are the most frequently recovered raccoon bones, we have also found some phalanges, or finger bones.

Being such small bones, phalanges are quite uncommon for us to find. What makes this month's artifact even rarer is its condition, which you can observe by looking at the photos in Column A to the right. Next to these in Column B are photos of another raccoon phalanx from our collection. Looking at the two phalanges side by side, you might notice differences in shape between them.



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The phalanx in Column A is warped and curves to the side, rather than pointing straight like it is supposed to. The phalanx in Column B shows what it should look like when it is pointing straight. The phalanx in Column A also has a thicker, more bulbous head. Compare it to the phalanx in Column B, which has a more slender head. The deformities in phalanx A were caused by a fracture that occurred along the shaft of the phalanx when the raccoon was alive, and pressure on this fractured bone resulted in it healing improperly.

To learn more about all the incredible artifacts within our collection, please visit the THPO website at www.stofthpo.com.

Works Cited

McDaniel D. J., Rehman U. H. (2023). *Phalanx Fractures of the Hand*. StatPearls Publishing. Retrieved February 6, 2025, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK557625/>

Raccoon (Wildlife Guide). National Wildlife Federation. Retrieved February 5, 2025 from <https://www.nwf.org/Educational-Resources/Wildlife-Guide/Mammals/Raccoon>.

