ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

Past peoples were highly resourceful; they were experts in utilizing their environments to the fullest extent, creating tools and other crafts from only the materials that were naturally available. Their craftsmanship is exemplified by the bone tools that archaeologists recover from sites, like this month's artifact. Pictured below, this bone fragment, which likely came from a large mammal, was once part of a larger tool. Based on its shape, the tool was probably used for cutting or scraping. One of the edges of this fragment is worn down, which indicates that this was the working edge.

Closeup of tool showing the working edge (THPO)

Florida has produced an impressive assemblage of bone tools, despite the unfavorable preservation conditions found in some parts. Florida soils are generally more acidic, and higher acidity has been linked to poor preservation of skeletal remains (Gordon & Buikstra, 1981). And while waterlogged remains tend to preserve well, the continuously changing Florida waterways result in the dehydrating and rehydrating of remains, and the fluctuation of moisture contributes to the degradation of bones (Emmons et al., 2022).

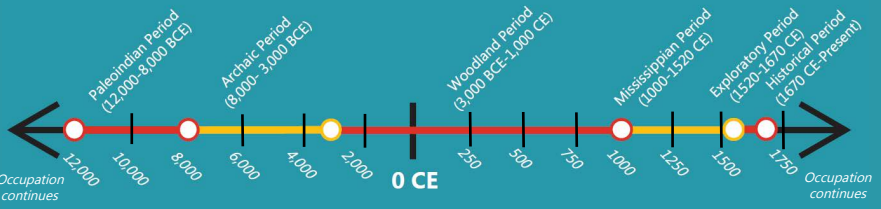
In spite of this, we have found a variety of bone tools, such as awls, decorative bone pins, and fish hooks, some of which have been featured in previous Artifact of the Month posts.

(Above) Decorated Bone Pin, Artifact of the Month May 2014

(Left) Bone Fish Hook, Artifact of the Month August 2015

Deer metapodial bone, commonly used for bone tool production

Although evidence of bone-whittling goes all the way back to what is called the Paleoindian period as early as 12,000 BCE (Byrd, 2011), the practice is not trapped in the past; people today still practice the craft, keeping this millennia-old tradition alive.



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

Works Cited

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