

Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

January 2019

The Seminole Tribe of Florida cattle industry was established as early as 1936 when the US Government shipped 500 head of cattle from Arizona to the Brighton Reservation. After finding the perfect sires for the climate of Florida in 1965, the STOF has cultivated both the Brangus and Beer-master breeds. However, as with any prey species, there is always a predator lurking around looking for its next meal. This ties to January's artifacts of the month: a coyote mandible and coyote teeth.

THPO 2014.9.12



Photo credit: Shawn Keyte

THPO 2014.9.13



Coyotes work together to take down prey and in Florida, that usually consists of domesticated herd animals like cows. The teeth, as you can see in the photo above, are made for shearing and tearing mechanisms. They need to be sharp in order for the coyote to rip pieces of meat and to work its way down to the bone of its prey. Many a rancher has had to make sure to set traps for coyotes that get too close to cattle grazing as seen in the photo on the right. If you would like more information about the STOF cattle industry be sure to head to the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum and check out the Are We There Yet? Exhibit, specifically A.J. Tigertail's story map on the subject.



Artifact of the Month

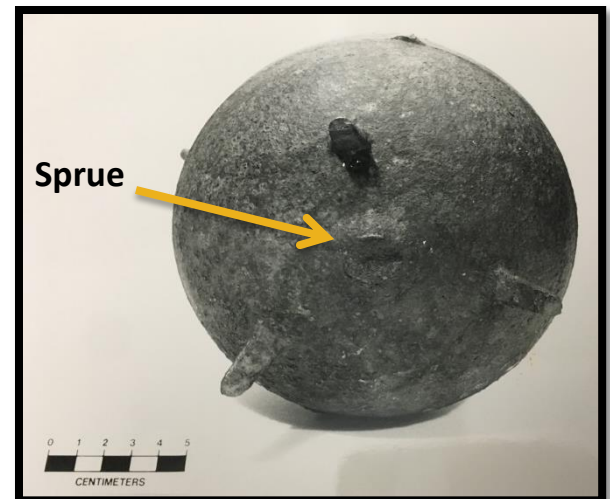
Tribal Historic Preservation Office

February 2018



Sometimes even archaeologists misplace things. When taking care of object and sites long term, it is critical to keep accurate and detailed record keeping. Paper work isn't always fun, but it is important! If proper records are not kept, information (and even artifacts) can be lost. The THPO recently acquired a collection from the mid- 1980s excavation of Powell's Town, minus some artifacts and information. Powell's Town was the village of Osceola, a very visible figure in Seminole history who was famed for his vehement resistance to the U.S. Army. This kettle, although a part of the collection when it was excavated, has gotten lost in the shuffle of time.

This three legged cast-iron kettle dates from 1750-1780. There is a "sprue" mark on the bottom of the kettle itself, where the hot iron would have been poured through a sand mold. This type of casting tells us it was most likely made by a skilled blacksmith, and the kettle would have rested over a fire when being used. Have you seen this kettle?



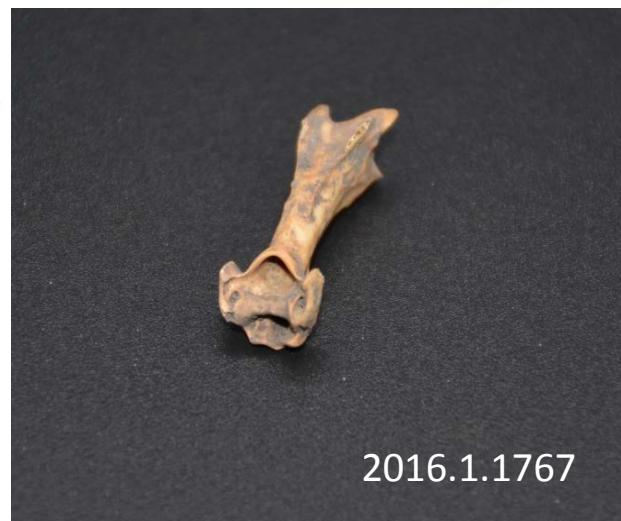
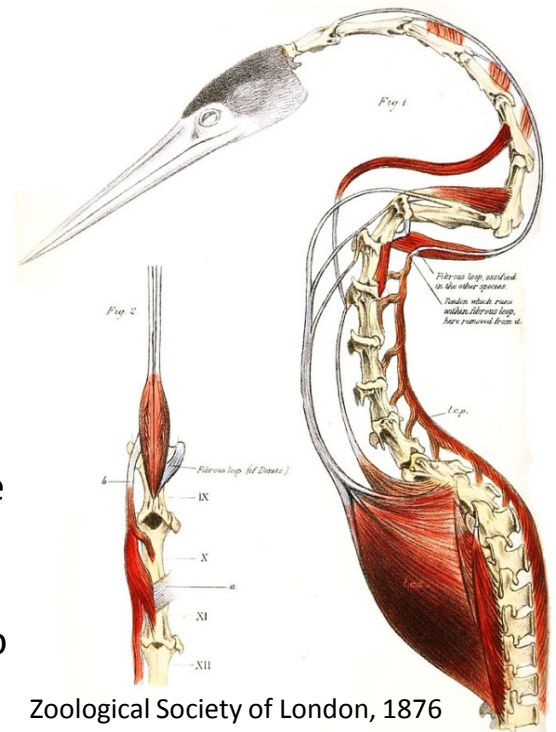
Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

March 2018

Can you identify what this is? It may look a little alien, but it's actually a bird vertebra! The Anhinga, also known as a snake-bird or American darter is primarily a water bird. While swimming, only the head of the anhinga can be seen above the water, resembling a snake. The saddle shaped vertebra fit together in such a way that the neck can be expanded and stretched out, allowing for more energy to be transferred as they strike.

Anhinga can be seen most predominantly near waterways, and are very prolific in the US Southeast. Often, they can be seen "splaying" with their wings outstretched while resting in a tree or on a rock. This is done to dry the wing feathers of water, and absorb heat. Unlike some other water birds, anhinga do not have waterproof feathers and have difficulty flying immediately after being in the water. Vertebra like these are typical artifacts that we often see at the THPO, and like this one, can occasionally take some time and effort to identify. We work hard to maintain and continuously add to our faunal comparative collection, in order to identify these faunal remains to the best of our ability. Birds like this one are particularly tricky, as they can be very delicate and often highly fragmented. Being able to accurately identify different species can have large implications for the context of an archaeological site, and give insight into past dietary and subsistence trends. Much like with any mystery, in archaeology you never know what might be an important 'clue' to the puzzle – even this anhinga vertebra!



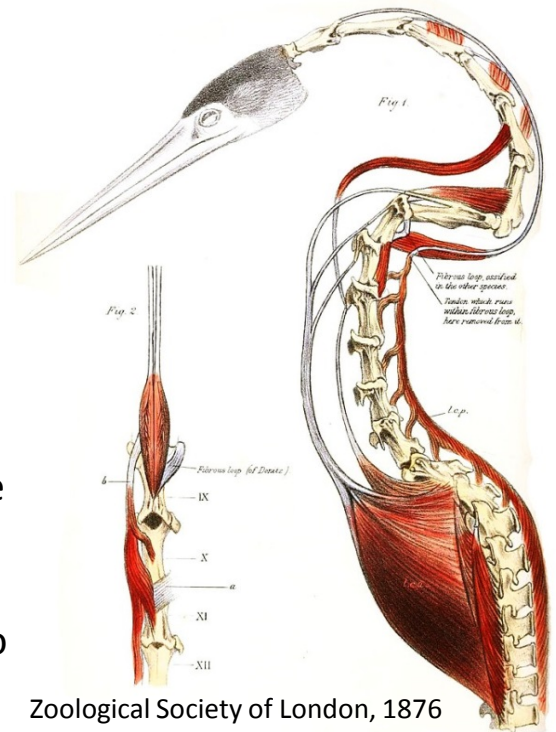
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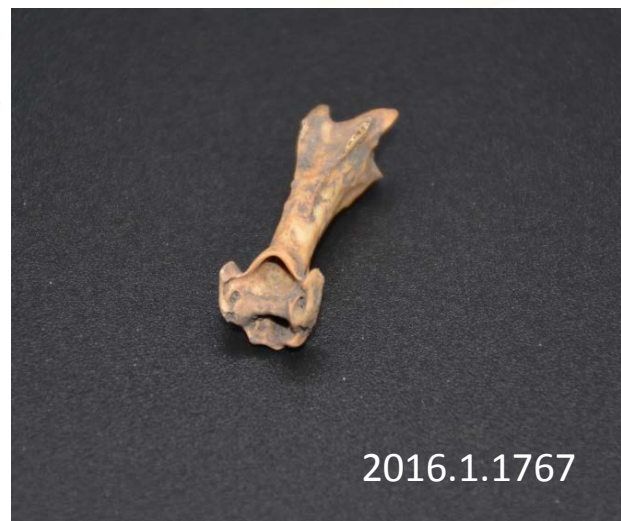
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Zoological Society of London, 1876



2016.1.1767



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April 2018

Found on the Big Cypress reservation, this square nail remnant is one of the few remaining artifacts from Fort Shackelford. Built in 1855, Fort Shackelford was a US Army fort that was occupied for only three months before being abandoned and burned down by Seminoles. Square cut nails like these ones are hand-cut, and easily identifiable. Today, Fort Shackelford is being excavated with the help of on-reservation students at an annual field school. Through test unit excavation and metal detection, we have collected a number of square cut nails, although many are not in good condition.

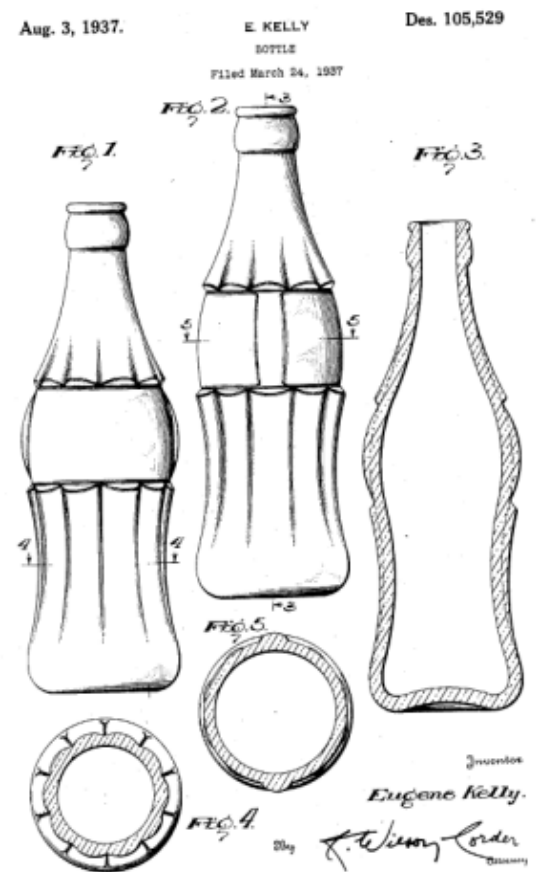


In situations like these, conservation is the next step. Conservation is the stabilization and restoration of artifacts for the future. For these nails, we are removing the iron bloom and stabilizing the iron with tannic acid, in order to ensure that the nails do not degrade further. With the help of Robin Croskery Howard, the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum Conservator on staff, the THPO will be able to make sure these nails stay in good condition, so they can continue to help tell the Seminole story. Stay tuned to see what the nail looks like at the end of the process!



May 2018

A clear glass bottle of Coca-Cola with the classic contour shape. The label is embossed and shows the Coca-Cola script logo, "TRADE MARK REGISTERED", and "BOTTLED AT THE BOTTLE". The bottle is shown against a plain white background.



1937 Patent for this type of hobble skirt Coke bottle.

Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

June 2019

June is Aquarium and National Zoo Month so to follow this trend we have decided to highlight an animal that can be found throughout North America in both zoos and in the wild. The North American River Otter is most often associated with water environments yet they also create sophisticated burrows near the water's edge in order to quickly hide from predators. Prime access to water allows for them to subsist on a diet of fish, turtles, and amphibians. Due to their need to be around water, otters are highly susceptible to environmental changes, making it easier for most people to view them at their local zoo. Most otter enclosures often feature a slide for the otters to utilize which contributes to the idea that they are a playful, fun, and cute animal.

On the Big Cypress Reservation, the Billie Swamp Safari has an otter enclosure! Here you can see otters in a space that resembles their natural habitat in the wild. If you don't spot one right away, remember that an otter can hold its breath for up to eight minutes underwater. When you visit the Big Cypress Reservation, check out the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum boardwalk where you can see the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Otter Clan featured in an outdoor exhibit of the eight clans. Depicted below are a river otter cranium from our comparative collection (left) and a photograph of a Seminole man in traditional clothing, holding an otter (right).



North American River Otter. THPO Comparative Collection



2012.3.12. Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum Collection.



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

July 2019

Very rarely do we come across an artifact that we have never seen before. However this month, we found an artifact that was uncovered from a test unit in 2017. After some debate and research we finally discovered what this sharp and cool looking artifact belonged to. At first we considered a crustacean, noting that there isn't a species that is so incredibly small. But what about an insect?

A Wheel Bug (*Arilus cristatus*) is one of the largest terrestrial bugs within North America. The main characteristic (as you can see below) is the wheel-shaped pronotal armor (that looks like a mohawk) made out of keratin (like our fingernails). It only finally develops in the adult stage following its final molt. As part of the assassin insect family, the wheel bug is a predator of caterpillars, beetles, and worms which makes them excellent insects to have in a garden. A cousin to the stink bug, this insect has two scent glands (red-orange) that can be ejected from its abdomen in reaction to being disturbed. While they are most active in daylight they do engage in predatory behaviors at night in areas that are illuminated by light, however, due to their armored forewings and membranous hindwings, they can also fly! This allows them to hide and escape from humans. If you should come across one, they can be handled but only with care and with gloves. The bite from a wheel bug has been known to be 10 times worse than a bee sting, more on the level of a wasp sting, with both a painful wound and numbness that can last for days.



THPO Collection 2014.13.889



http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/trees/wheel_bug.htm



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

August 2019

What is your favorite snack? Have you ever thought about how it is packaged, and what might be left behind after? Found on the Brighton Reservation at the Billy Bowlegs Camp, remnant can pieces like this key wind opener are often found in historic camp sites. Key wind openers are most associated with canned sardines, meat and coffee. They can date back to as far as 1866, although this one is probably not as old. The key wind open was an easy open can type that was popularized in the late 1890s. Part of this can coil is still attached, and it looks almost exactly like it would have been when it was dumped – plus a little bit of rust! Cans like these can be very useful when dating different components of a site. Much like historic glass, how these cans were manufactured and the preservation technologies used can narrow down a date significantly. This key wind opener most likely dates to around the early to mid 20th century.



Artifact of the Month

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September 2019

Rattlesnakes, am I right? They are tough reptiles that scare the life out of most people and unfortunately, they are all over Florida. Whether its an Eastern Diamondback or a Pygmy, rattlesnakes pack a venomous bite that we here at the THPO actively try to avoid. But how can we understand its skeletal structure without getting up close and personal? Luckily, last year, the THPO received a donation of a recently deceased Eastern Diamondback rattlesnake which we proceeded to bury outside in order for it to decompose. While the rattlesnake turned out to be a great specimen for our comparative collection, the real treat was what we found while cleaning the bones.

While combing through the many rattlesnake vertebrae and ribs (basically all that makes up a snake) we found a couple of tiny bones that did not belong. As you can see in the photo below, one of these bones doesn't look like the normal elements you'd find with a snake skeleton. Instead, it seems, that our rattlesnake had a small rodent snack before being killed. While not all of the bones of the small rodent are present, there is one that definitely doesn't belong to a snake; a calcaneus or heel bone.



THPO Comparative Collection Small Rodent Calcaneus



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

October 2019

What is better than an October mystery? THPO Collections has been hard at work going through a mountain of backlog projects the last couple months. A lot of the time, these projects have been set aside for years due to the sheer amount of material, and time constraints in the lab. This month's Artifact of the Month is from one of those long running backlog projects, and it is a very intriguing little sherd of pottery! It was found at Waxy Hadjo's Landing on Big Cypress, a very unique site with a wide range of artifacts and a long history of occupation. This sherd has turned out to be very hard to type, it looks like something we haven't ever seen before! A mix of punctuates and incised lines, this sherd's temper 'feels' like Belle Glade, a type well known in South Florida pottery. But, the decoration style is a mix of a couple typologies, and we have not seen them together like this before. So far, we have been stumped here at THPO Collections to type this pottery sherd within the known typologies of South Florida. Do you know what it is?



Artifact of the Month

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November 2019

The weasel is often depicted in cartoons as being an antagonist, a character that is often trying to thwart the protagonist or hero. While this theme seems to be ongoing, the notion of the “bad” weasel comes from the definition of the word and not the behavior of the animal. Weasels, are considered more of a shy creature compared to species that are similar in size such as the ferret. However, if you were to back a weasel into a corner, like any animal it would become aggressive. Its first instinct however, is to hide.

The weasel is often confused as being part of the Rodentia family due to its small stature and tiny features, however, it is in fact part of the Mustelidae family which includes badgers, otters, and wolverines. The weasel’s carnivorous diet makes it more closely related to a dog or cat rather than a rat or mouse. Its prey actually consists of small rodents, including rabbits, and gophers, and sometimes small birds as well. Below is a photograph of the only weasel specimen in our collection! This mandible belongs to a Long-Tailed weasel which finds its habitat throughout most of North America. The molars (depicted below) sit towards the back of the mouth while the weasel uses its canines to crush the skulls of its prey.



THPO Collections 2009.7.69



Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

December 2019

While working through our backlog projects this summer, we accessioned this large busycon ladle. Made of marine shell, it is broken and open on one side. What kind of thing might you use a ladle like this for? Sometimes, with odd shaped or delicate objects like this, we have to very careful how we store them in our vault, as it is our job to protect and take care of the collection as much as we can. In cases like this, we will make custom housing for the object. In the case of this shell ladle, a supportive core was carved out of ethafoam. It was then covered in Tyvek, to protect both the housing and the object. A custom box was built to house the object, from flat blue board. All of the materials that we use archival quality, in order to ensure they're long lasting and acid free. Housing like this can take a while to make, but it is important to take care of the objects to the best of our ability!

