

# Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

August 2018

As we begin to approach some of the hottest days of the year it is important to remember the key things your body needs in order to stay comfortable. Staying cool during Florida summer can be considered a triumph for us humans, even with common utilities such as air conditioning and fans. So how do some of Florida's native animal species contend with the sweltering temperatures and oppressive humidity? How do they "Beat the Heat"?



Due to an alligator's ectothermic nature we can be sure to see them roaming on the side of the road, away from water sources, trying to soak up as much sun as possible during summer. Catching those sunrays is easy for an alligator as their scutes (left) are special bone plates that grow between layers of skin, and act as solar plates while the alligator is sunbathing. Alligators are most actively seeking that sun when temperatures are above 80° F, something that happens often in south Florida. The most common artifacts within our collection are reptile bones like turtle shell fragments (right) and alligator scutes (left) due to the fact they are very edible creatures. Turtles, like alligators, are ectothermic, and rely on external heat sources in order to help regulate their body temperature. In order for both of these species to survive properly, they need to be warm, making south Florida a perfect habitat. So while humans would prefer to "beat the heat", alligators and turtles are all about embracing it, especially on the hot asphalt of roadsides. Watch out while you're driving!

