

Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

March 2018

Part of the fun of archaeology is the mystery involved in finding out what each artifact actually is. Sometimes, when artifacts have been weathered over time, they are almost unrecognizable. This last month, while working on an ongoing project to inventory the vault, the THPO Collections Assistant pulled some misidentified artifacts from 2010. At first glance, they look modified, and definitely stand out against any other faunal material! Do you know what they are?



After a lot of consultation with other THPO employees, they were positively identified as armadillo! At first glance, the tiny markings and holes on the bones look intentional, as if modified. If you don't know what armadillo bones look like, it can be difficult to imagine what these artifacts could be. But, after further research, the markings are natural. The nine-banded armadillo is prevalent throughout the southern United States, and these tiny bony scutes make up the external "armor" they are so well known for. Much like turtles, these scutes are covered in keratinous plates and hidden from view.

Armadillos are also the only known reservoir for leprosy in the United States, and humans can become infected through handling or consuming armadillo meat. If you happen to be attending any armadillo races, which are popular here in the southeast, remember not to touch!

