

Artifact of the Month

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

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What is that you say? I'm sorry I can't hear you well. Please speak up! November's artifact of the month draws attention to the ear, specifically what most people identify as the ear canal. The petrous bone allows for the facilitation of sound. It holds three tiny bones or ossicles that allow animals to hear a variety of decibels of sound, from the mosquito buzzing in the Everglades to the sound of an approaching predator.

In 2014, during a field school conducted each year on the Brighton Reservation, a team of our archaeologists came across a strange piece of faunal bone. Upon further inspection, the Collections team realized that it is a petrous bone of a species commonly hunted *Odocoileus virginianus*, the white-tailed deer! Different from our own petrous bone, this one holds a moon-shaped groove. Even more interesting is that this petrous bone shows signs of infection. The roughened area shows signs of otitis, or an infection of the ear. Excellent at thwarting hunters, many think deer have superior hearing when in fact, they are just better at hearing sounds that do not belong in their natural habitat. Now while this deer more than likely did not die due to an ear infection, it certainly would have slowed down the deer's reaction time to the sound of predators, in the end affecting its ability to quickly escape from a predator.

