ARTIFACT OF THE MONTH

November 2026



Figure 1. Top view of beads

These beads are made from animal long bone shafts. The ends of the artifacts are mostly fragmented by nature, but some of the ends are smooth, showing where the maker sectioned off a piece of bone to make the bead. The center of the bone is cleaned out leaving it smooth on the inside so that string could be looped through. Seminole women wore necklaces made of heavy coiled beads weighing up to ten to fifteen pounds or more as part of the traditional Seminole dress. Seminole men also wore beads woven into traditional clothing like belts and garters with colorful patterns and designs (Skinner 1913).

Beads come in a variety of other shapes and sizes. They can be spherical, disc-shaped or whatever the maker desires. One example are the spheroid or discoid stone "seed" beads also found in Florida which come in sizes well under a millimeter in diameter (Glowacki 2012). How beads are made is up to the maker's intention. They can also be colored and additionally shaped with more intricate decoration, though the artifacts in this case show no outside design. The choice in material may give us clues of the intentions of the maker. Bone is a common material used to make a variety of other pieces of jewelry like pendants and rings. Bone can even be used to make tools. Other beads have been made using materials like wood, stone, shell, glass, ceramic, and metal.

Interestingly, beads are found in archaeological sites throughout the world. They are also widely exchanged as a trade good- further increasing their mobility and use. These artifacts tell us a lot about cultures because they carry special meaning dealing with ideas like luxury, wealth and concepts of beauty. Beads can be used for personal adornment or in tapestries and other decorative works. They are as versatile as they are beautiful.

In the past, like December 2018, beads have been the spotlight of the THPO's artifact of the month. This month's artifact was chosen because the source material makes it stand out. We believe that these artifacts are a set of five beads made from bone, though there is no way to be sure. It's possible that this was the standard bead before European contact. Today bone is a material we find less commonly.



Figure 2. Sideview showing the smooth ends of the beads



Figure 3. Image (left) "Bone beads"- Bone beads from Fountain of Youth Site in St. Augustine dated 1000-1550 period (FMNH 2026).



Figure 4. Image (right) "Glass beads"- Glass beads from Fountain of Youth site in St. Augustine but dated 1560-1570 period (FMNH 2026).

"Bone beads, Timucua". Florida Museum of Natural History Historical Archaeology Program, Gainesville. https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/histarch/blog/artifact/097-bone-beads/

"Glass beads". Florida Museum of Natural History Historical Archaeology Program, Gainesville. https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/histarch/blog/artifact/101-glass-beads/

Glowacki, Mary. "The First Florida "Bling": Paleolithic Beads". *The Florida Anthropologist*, vol. 65, no. 1-2, 2012, pp. 47-50.

Skinner, Alanson. "Notes on the Florida Seminole." *American Anthropologist*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1913, pp. 63–77.

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