



*MVAC at the University
of Wisconsin-La Crosse*

*Archaeology News
is a publication of
the Mississippi Valley
Archaeology Center*

www.wvlax.edu/mvac

*1725 State Street
La Crosse, WI 54601-3788*

Archaeology News

Volume 22 Number 4

WINTER 2005

Faunal Remains from the Highway 14/61 Excavations near downtown La Crosse

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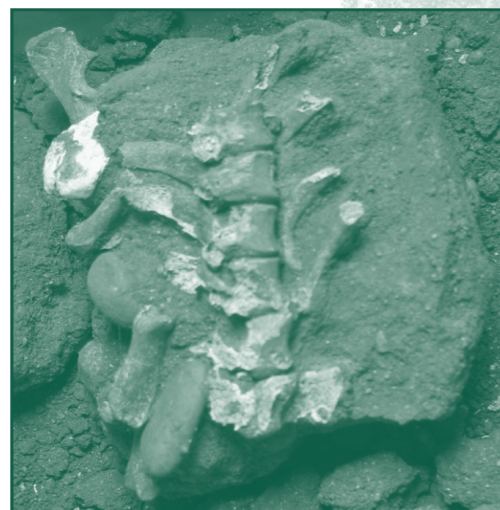
Summer excavations at the Highway 14/61 site continue to provide excellent information on Brice Prairie Phase Oneota subsistence practices. Especially productive was Feature 205, which contained several thousand animal bones. Many of the species represented are those that could be hunted or trapped near wetlands along the Mississippi River. Beaver and muskrat are the most abundant riverine mammals in the bone assemblage. Beaver were heavily utilized by the Oneota and often the large incisors were broken out of the jaws to be used as woodworking tools.

Feature 205 contains a wide variety of fish including bowfin, bullheads, catfish, drumfish (sheepshead), northern pike, crappie and largemouth bass. Many of these fish are found in the shallows near the shoreline, or spawn there during the spring. Waterfowl such as duck, geese, and small wading birds are also plentiful. Interestingly, turtle remains were found quite often, again suggesting warm weather occupations of the site.

One of the more important animals for the Oneota economy were white-tailed deer. The elk and deer remains depict heavy usage by the prehistoric populations in La Crosse. These useful animals would have provided

large packages of meat or skins for producing clothing and shelter, and bone for tools. Several tools have been recovered from the Highway 14/61 site that were produced from deer bones. They include a bone weaving or netting needle, antler projectile points, and projectile points fashioned from toe bones. Often at Oneota sites, other deer and elk remains are highly fragmented and burned suggesting that the bones were broken open to harvest the rich marrow and grease. The remains recovered from Feature 205 continue to display this pattern.

The Oneota utilized several other animals as well. Dog remains are one of the most common mammals thus far recovered, several of which contain cutmarks. One very interesting feature of dog remains at the site contained four articulated legs including the paws, placed under the complete spine (see photo). Dog remains are of considerable interest to the archaeologist studying the Oneota because we are not quite sure how they are being used as a food item. For



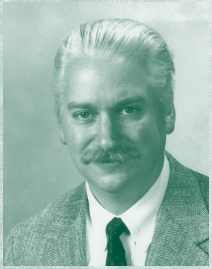
*Spinal column of a dog, recovered
from Feature 205.*

example, do they represent a feasting item or are they a starvation food? Ethnographic sources document young dogs often being given to guests of high honor at feasts. On the other hand, packs of dog were common in village life and provided an essential service by eating any garbage that was left around. In times of food shortage they may have been the only accessible package of meat and therefore could represent "storage on the paw."

Some of the animal bones found at the site may have been used in rituals or to fashion some religious paraphernalia. For example, a cranial element from a mink was recovered, and while probably not eaten, the pelts were often used to make pouches to hold special items or talismans.

(see **Highway 14/61**, page 2)

From The Director: Joseph A Tiffany



Joseph A. Tiffany

Hello everyone! MVAC was busy last fall. Wendy Holtz-Leith completed the last scheduled field work in the Sanford Archaeological District. Work there over the past three seasons has focused on recovery of Oneota material culture from numerous pits that were encountered in the widening and redesign of US 14/61 near Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center on the south side of La Crosse. Wendy will be very busy over the next year or so

analyzing the artifacts recovered and preparing the final report for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. Ed Swanson has a report in this newsletter on the faunal remains recovered from one of the storage pits Wendy excavated on the Highway 14/61 project. Bonnie Christensen and Connie Arzigian continue work with teachers this fall on two large education grants they received. In the electronic version of the Newsletter there is also a report on the Du Bay Boulder site in Marathon County. This is an example of an "inundated" site found along the shorelines and under the water's edge of several man-made reservoirs in the Upper Wisconsin Valley where MVAC has been working for the past two years.

As reported earlier the MVAC Board reorganized itself last year under revised bylaws. The Board has been most helpful in providing input and direction on the financial management of MVAC. We also are trying to meet at least once a year at an important archaeological site or preserve in the region to

introduce the Board to the kind of resources we examine on a regular basis and the kinds of sites we are trying to preserve to tell the story of the Upper Mississippi Valley for future generations.

Long-time board member and MVAC supporter, Bill Gresens has retired from his position with the University and from our board where he served for 15 years. Bill says he will be around to continue to help us, and we are glad to have his help! We promise to put Bill to work in a unit that actually contains artifacts!! Our Best to Bill. Maria Roswell's board term also ended this fall. She served on MVAC's board and represented MVAC with UFAH (United Fund for the Arts and Humanities) for 10 years. She will be missed.

Memberships and donations have been rolling in. I am taken back by the level of contribution from some of our members and from other units such as Dairyland Power Cooperative and the Helen Trane Hood Family Trust. Thanks so much to all of you for your help and support of MVAC's mission.

Our next public events will be Bill Gresens' talk at the Public Library on "Archaeology in Fiction" on February 23 and a presentation on Minnesota's Indian Mounds and Burial Sites on March 22. Be sure to check out the other upcoming events in the newsletter including the Artifact show on April 9 at Valley View Mall and the Public Field Survey on April 30, May 1 and May 7. Happy New Year!

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Highway 14/61 (continued from page 1)

Several black bear bones have been found in Feature 205. These remains are uncommon at archaeological sites. Some archaeologists think that this may be related to ethnographically documented rituals related to disposal of ritually charged animals such as the black bear. Other uncommon species represented in the assemblage include a possible toe bone from a Gray Wolf, and a wing bone from a Red-tailed Hawk.

The faunal remains from the Highway 14/61 site suggest that Oneota groups were very dependant upon resources that could be found within the local environment of the Mississippi River and practice a strategy that utilized a

broad spectrum of animal resources including fish, turtles, birds, and mammals. Hopefully, the analysis of the rest of the assemblage will continue to provide new insights to our understanding of Oneota subsistence and economy in the La Crosse area.

Archaeology News is published three times each year to inform MVAC members of current and upcoming events. *Archaeology News* encourages topic suggestions and comments. Send items to: Jean Dowiasch, Editor, MVAC, 1725 State Street, La Crosse, WI 54601; dowiasch.jean@uwlax.edu; (608)785-8454.



Announcements

Newsletter archives on the web

Thanks to a grant from the UW-L Foundation, fifteen issues of the *Archaeology Education Program Newsletter* have been digitized, saved as pdf files and posted to MVAC's web site. These issues will be useful to educators, parents and the public because of their content information, activities and resources.

The topics of the newly digitized newsletter include:

- historical archaeology
- cultural resource management
- plant and animal remains and
- architectural history.

The pdf files are linked from MVAC's Educators page (<http://www.uwlax.edu/mvac/Educators/Education.htm>) and also included on MVAC's News page (<http://www.uwlax.edu/mvac/NewsReviews/news.htm>).

May 2005: Wisconsin Historic Preservation and Archaeology Month

Wisconsin's Historic Preservation and Archaeology Month offers many opportunities to celebrate your community's history and heritage. For a complete list of events planned throughout the state check out the Events Calendar on the Wisconsin Historical Society's web site at www.wisconsinhistory.org

MVAC Archaeology Month Activities: Field Survey. Volunteer with MVAC for Wisconsin Historic Preservation and Archaeology Month. Begin your day with an introduction at the UW-L Archaeology Center and Laboratories, followed by a survey at a local field, and washing artifacts back at the lab.

Saturday, April 30; Sunday, May 1;
and/or Saturday, May 7, 2005
8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Advanced registration is required at
(608) 785-8454 or
dowiasch.jean@uwlax.edu.

Read More In Our Digital Newsletters

There will be a link to the digital newsletters on the MVAC Home Page at www.uwlax.edu/mvac

Look for the following information in the Winter 2005 Digital Newsletter:

*Hidden below the surface - archaeology on the Northern Wisconsin reservoirs

In the Education Newsletter:

Our theme for 2004-2005 is Native American use of the Mississippi River. Information and lesson plans are available on the MVAC web site.

Estate Planning

Successful estate planning is a valuable way to continue your support for MVAC into the future. By giving a gift in your will or estate plan, you are providing for future programs in archaeological research, public education and site stewardship. Please consider MVAC when planning for trusts, gifts and bequests. Contact Marcee H. Peplinski, Development Director at the MVAC office for more information, (608)785-8463.

MVAC MEMBERSHIP FORM

Consider becoming a member of MVAC

MVAC's innovative public education program brings the excitement of archaeology to children and adults throughout the area. Become a member of MVAC and receive our newsletters, which report on programs, current research, upcoming events, and volunteer opportunities. Also, as a member, you will receive reminders of special "members only" events. Please remember that your contribution is tax-deductible.

☐ Yes! I want to support the Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center Programs!

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Membership Categories

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Please make checks payable to UW-L Foundation, Inc. for MVAC and send to MVAC, 1725 State St., La Crosse, WI 54601. Gifts to the UW-L Foundation for MVAC qualify as charitable tax deductions to the full extent of the law as applied to the individual circumstances of each donor. You can increase your gift's value if your employer has a matching gift plan. Check with your human resources office.



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Upcoming Events

Unless otherwise noted, events are free and open to the public. Contact MVAC at (608) 785-8454 for more information or visit our web site:

www.uwlax.edu/mvac

Archaeology in Fiction: an unscientific, highly biased look at my favorite sub-genre in fiction

Wednesday, February 23, 2005

7 p.m.

La Crosse Public Library, Main Branch

More than 15 years ago **Bill Gresens** gave a presentation to the old La Crosse Area Archaeological Society on "Archaeology in Fiction: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly." The number (and quality) of novels using archaeology as a backdrop or central focus has increased dramatically in the last 15+ years. Bill's talk will feature mysteries, thrillers and horror novels. The audience should walk away with a few titles that might help them while away some long, cold winter nights.

Minnesota's Indian Mounds and Burial Sites

Tuesday, March 22, 2005

7 p.m.

Port O'Call, Cartwright Center, UW-La Crosse

Only a small fraction of Minnesota's 11,000 reported mounds still survive. A number of mounds in the state were excavated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but until a recent study was undertaken, archaeologists didn't have answers to even such basic questions as "how many mounds have burials?" or "where in the mounds are the burials placed?" A five year project was undertaken by speakers **Connie Arzigian** and **Kathy Stevenson** to examine all the records of known excavations of Indian mounds and burial sites in Minnesota. A summary of their findings will be presented.

Artifact Show

Saturday, April 9, 2005

10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Valley View Mall



Call MVAC at (608) 785-8454 if you would like to display your artifacts at the 2005 Artifact Show.