

Return of the Late Prehistoric: Reporting on Recent Fieldwork at Meeting House Field

By Anna Semon

The American Museum of Natural History returned to St. Catherines Island this May, with a crew of sixteen for three weeks of archaeological fieldwork. We concentrated efforts on continued excavations and a large-scale remote sensing survey at Meeting House Field, an important Indian village occupied 500 - 800 years ago.

Meeting House Field is situated on the western side of the island and just south of the animal enclosures. The site, named for the antebellum field that runs through it, is huge, covering more than 100 football fields (approximately 600 x 700 meters). The most visible features at the site are shell middens (trash piles), roughly 13 along the marsh edge and more than 30 in the plowed field.

The site was first recorded in 1959 by Lewis Larson (long-time State Archaeologist). Larson identified two sites: the first dating to A.D. 660-1150 (near the old sawdust pile) and the sec-

ond dating to A.D. 1300-1580. Over the years other archaeologists, namely Joseph Caldwell (University of Georgia) and teams from the American Museum of Natural History (including Rebecca Saunders, working on her doctoral dissertation at the University of Flor-

Aerial photo of Meeting House Field



Photo shows Samantha Porter excavating pieces of a ceramic vessel from Meeting House Field. Photograph by Matt Sanger.

ida) have worked here. In 2008, we returned to the Meeting House site because of our growing interest in Late Prehistoric settlement and subsistence. Last year we created a GPS map of the entire site, established a site grid, identified boundaries of additional middens, establishing critical parameters for the dissertation work planned by Elliot Blair (University of California) and Anna Semon (University of North Carolina). We also recovered non-human food bones from the site that are essential elements for Sarah Bergh's dissertation work at the University of Georgia.

This May, our goals consisted of recovering more faunal remains and recovering additional ceramics for a pilot phytolith project that will discover the plant remains cooked in these pots. We also collected additional remote sensing data from a large portion of the site. Although it rained for half the trip, we tested 8 middens and recovered hundreds of plain and decorated ceramics, faunal remains, lithics, shell beads, and whelk tools. This summer, we have 17 interns helping the St. Catherines Island archaeological team analyzing these artifacts in the New York lab.

Sea Turtle Season Begins

By Dr. Gale Bishop

The St. Catherines Island Sea Turtle Program is about 1/3 into the 2009 nesting season. We have 40 nests on the beaches (compared with 49 on this date (6/18/09) last year). The nesting is down about 30% across the coast of Georgia, so we are right in line with the other islands. By this time next week (6/25/09) we should have slightly over half our nests deposited and be moving toward our first emergence of hatchlings on July 20 (more or less). During July 14-22, we will host 16 K-12 Teacher-Interns supported (~ 60%) by the Georgia Improving Teacher Quality Program. We have another great teacher cohort this year, with excellent credentials.

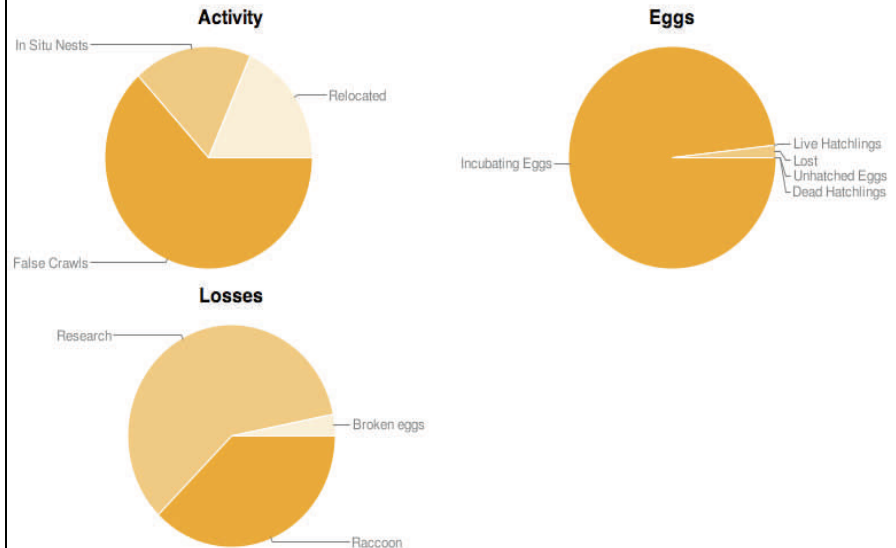
The top news for the season so far is the posting of data online for the world to see. The GaDNR has established a reporting system allowing Georgia sea turtle programs to post their daily results on an online database at <www.seaturtle.org/nestdb/>. The data on all non-nesting crawlways and nests will accumulate and be downloadable onto a spreadsheet at the end of the season. A daily summary is presented for each Island's program summarizing nesting activity, status of all eggs, nest relocation information, losses of eggs and hatch success, emergence success, average clutch size, and currency of information.



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False Crawls: 48
Nests: 28 (3 lost)
Relocated: 14 (50%)
Estimated Eggs to Date: 1801
Eggs Lost: 33 (1.8%)
Hatch Success: %
Emergence Success: %
Mean Clutch Size: 127.4 eggs
Last Updated: 2009-06-12 20:21:42 (1 minute ago)



Portuguese Man-of-War is a jelly-like, floating, compound pelagic marine animal found in warm regions of all oceans. They move by being blown about by the winds and pushed around by currents. This sea creature is not a jellyfish but is actually four different types of polyps (individual, tubular water animals), known as zooids, each of which performs a different function. One of the zooids is the pneumatophore that forms the gas-filled, long float (8-10 inches) that is iridescent blue, often with a pink crest. Below the float hangs the food-catching, feeding, and reproductive zooids. The floats of each individual is either right or left-sided, which causes the man-of-war to drift 45 degrees to the right or left of the wind direction. This adaptation allows the species to disperse throughout the world's oceans, and also prevents an entire populations from floating with currents which could beach them, or towards predators (as half would float in an opposite direction). The food-catching zooids form tentacles that may be more than 40 feet (12 m) long with stinging parts that paralyze or kill most fish and other prey on contact. Once the prey is trapped, men-of-war can contract their tentacles to bring the prey into contact with zooids that secrete digestive enzymes to liquefy their catch. Loggerhead sea turtles and leatherback sea turtles are known to feed on man-of-wars. This is of environmental importance when it comes to proper disposal of plastic. Plastic bags look like man-of-war or jellyfish and will be ingested by turtles, which cannot digest the plastic which will cause illness and death. Commensal relationships with several fish species have been described. The fish avoid the tentacles with their speed and agility, and failing that, having a much stronger resistance to the toxins. The fish receives protection and the tentacles; which are regenerative; serve as a food source, as well as leftover bits from man-of-war meals. The reproductive parts are either male or female, and gametes are formed by the gonozooids and shed into the water. They also reproduce by asexual, mitotic division or budding. As they are generally pelagic creatures we only see them washed occasionally up on St. Catherines Island Beaches.

