

Newsletter



Volume 53, Number 3

July 2018

A Case (and Probably Two) of Mistaken Identity

by Evan Peacock,
Mississippi State University

Taxonomic identification of freshwater mussels from archaeological sites has greatly increased in recent years, a welcome state of affairs that is allowing wide-scale biogeographic mapping of species ranges as they existed prior to modern environmental impacts. Researchers in Mississippi have been leaders in this regard, with state-wide range maps produced from archaeological shell data (Peacock et al. 2011). Much of those data were produced by analysis of previously unanalyzed shell assemblages, however, in some cases previously reported data were used. While those data mostly were produced by biologists, and should therefore be reliable, some suspect identifications were noted in Peacock et al. (2011). An example is the two reported archaeological cases of *Obovaria retusa*, the "ring pink." This species was reported from the Palusha Creek #2 site (22LF649 – Brown and Athens 1994) in Leflore County and the Lake George site (22YZ557) in Yazoo County (Barber 1983). To say that these identifications were unusual is putting it mildly. The species never has been reported in Mississippi historically (Jones et al. 2005), and its presence in the Yazoo and Sunflower River drainages would represent a major south/southwestward extension of its known range in the Tennessee, Cumberland, and Ohio river systems (e.g., Parmalee and Bogan 1998). As stated in Peacock et al. (2011:40), "These identifications should be considered suspect, as the ring pink was not present in any of the large [archaeological] Delta collections analyzed...in recent years, and as its presence there would mean a major range extension for the species..."

Just because a species has not previously been reported in a state or drainage does not mean it never existed there, however, and it is precisely this fact that gives zooarchaeological data its applied value. At least two other species have only been reported in Mississippi via zooarchaeological specimens (*Cyprogenia aberti* and *Quadrula fragosa* – Bogan 1987; Mitchell 2018; Peacock et al. 2011; Peacock et al. 2016), both of which are species of considerable conservation concern. Because the ring pink also is a rare, endangered species today, charting its pre-modern-impact range is of particular importance.

Recently, Joseph Mitchell, a specialist trained in archaeomalacology at Mississippi State University, had a chance to look at the mussel shells from the Lake George site, which are curated at the Peabody Museum at Harvard University. As was suspected, there are no *Obovaria retusa* in the assemblage; specimens thus identified are in fact particularly robust specimens of *Reginaia ebenus*, the ebony shell, a species that still is found in Mississippi waterways today. In fact, Mitchell's analysis of the shells produced data quite unlike those reported by Barber (1983) in Williams and Brain (1983). While we have not had a chance to reexamine the shells from the Palusha Creek #2 site, we strongly suspect that the *O. retusa* reported there also are *R. ebenus*. We anticipate publishing a revised table of taxonomic data from Lake George in the near future, along with data from many more Delta assemblages not previously reported in any form.

Perhaps more than any other sorts of zooarchaeological remains, freshwater mussel shell has immediate and important value for conservation biologists and land managers struggling to preserve these extraordinary organisms (Peacock 2012; Peacock

President's Letter

I have had a busy summer full of archaeology, and hopefully many of you have been able to spend your summer involved in archaeology in one form or another as well. I know that our state universities have had field schools, there have been countless public and private projects going on across Mississippi, and people have traveled around the state, the country, and even the world participating in archaeological endeavors. We are actively planning our October Archaeology Month 2018 activities that will take place in all of Mississippi's regional areas, so be sure to keep an eye out for the schedule coming soon, and plan to attend an activity or two in your area. But for now, let's continue to dig deep (figuratively and literally) and use the long days of summer to advance our archaeological knowledge ever forward.

Bradley Carlock

and Jenkins 2010; Wolverton et al. 2016). Freshwater mussels provide a valuable ecological service in cleaning waterways, we still have much to learn about their extraordinary reproductive biology, including prey mimicry by female mussels designed to lure in host fish for mussel larvae. It is important that taxonomic identifications of archaeological shell be done and done correctly. The result presented here emphasizes the need to have molluscan identifications done by experts, and to take older identifications with several grains of salt. Whenever possible, previously analyzed collections should be reanalyzed and, of course, archaeological shell never should be discarded, especially if a thorough taxonomic analysis has not been completed.

Acknowledgements

I thank the Peabody Museum for allowing access to the mussel shell from the Lake George site, and Joseph Mitchell for going to do the identifications when I was unable to do so.

References Cited

Barber, Russel J.

1983 Analysis of Molluscs. Appendix D.2 in *Excavations at the Lake George Site, Yazoo County, Mississippi, 1958- 1960*, by Stephen Williams and Jeffrey P. Brain, pp. 471-474. Papers of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Vol. 74.

Bogan, Arthur E.

1987 Molluscan Remains from the Milner Site (22YZ515) and the O'Neil Site (22YZ624), Yazoo County, Mississippi. Appendix D in *Data Recovery at the Milner (22YZ515) and O'Neil Creek (22YZ624) Sites, Yazoo County, Mississippi*, by Hartfield, Price, and Greene, Inc., pp. D-1 – D-11. Report submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg District, by Hartfield, Price and Greene, Inc., Monroe, Louisiana.

Brown, Clifford T., and William P. Athens

1994 Late Woodland Subsistence at the Palusha Creek 2 Site (22LF649), Leflore County, Mississippi. Paper presented at the Southeastern Archaeological Conference, Lexington, Kentucky.

Jones, Robert L., William T. Slack, and Paul D. Hartfield

2005 The Freshwater Mussels (Mollusca: Bivalvia: Unionidae) of Mississippi. *Southeastern Naturalist* 4:77-92.

Mitchell, Joseph

2018 Prehistoric Molluscan Faunas of the Yazoo River, Mississippi, U.S.A.: Archaeological Perspectives for Modern Conservation. *Environmental Archaeology* 223:177-186.

Parmalee, Paul W., and Arthur E. Bogan

1998 *The Freshwater Mussels of Tennessee*. University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville.

Peacock, Evan

2012 Archaeological Freshwater Mussel Remains and Their Use in the Conservation of an Imperiled Fauna. In

Conservation Biology and Applied Zooarchaeology, edited by Steve Wolverton and R. Lee Lyman, pp. 42-67. University of Arizona Press, Tucson.

Peacock, Evan, and Cliff Jenkins

2010 The Distribution and Research Value of Archaeological Mussel Shell: An Overview from Mississippi. *Midcontinental Journal of Archaeology* 35:91-116.

Peacock, Evan, Cliff Jenkins, Paul F. Jacobs, and Joseph Greenleaf

2011 *Archaeology and Bioarchaeology of Prehistoric Freshwater Mussel Shell in Mississippi*. British Archaeological Reports International Series 2297. Oxbow Books, Oxford, U.K.

Peacock, Evan, Joseph Mitchell, and Cliff Jenkins

2016 Pre-Columbian Freshwater Mussel Assemblages from the Tallahatchie River in the Lower Mississippi River Alluvial Basin, U.S.A. *American Malacological Bulletin* 34:121-132.

Williams, Stephen, and Jeffrey P. Brain

1983 *Excavations at the Lake George Site, Yazoo County, Mississippi, 1958-1960*. Papers of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Vol. 74.

Wolverton, Steve, Lisa Nagaoka, and Torben C. Rick

2016 *Applied Zooarchaeology: Five Case Studies*. Eliot Werner Publications, Inc., Clinton Corners, New York.

Aid for Bead Research

As an aid for those studying beads, the Society of Bead Researchers has prepared an Author Index and a Subject Index for all 29 issues of its journal, *BEADS*. While the Subject Index is not all-inclusive, listing only topics that are dealt with in some detail, it will still allow the user to locate a wide range of information (<https://beadresearch.org/our-publications/beads-index/>).

As a further aid to researchers, the Researching the World's Beads Annotated Bibliography has just been revised and updated. Due to its size, the bibliography is divided into nine major political-geographical groups, two specialized theme groups, and a general/miscellaneous group (<https://bead-research.org/resources/researching-the-worlds-beads-bibliography/>)

Since a bibliography such as this can never be complete, the compiler would appreciate receiving references to publications that do not appear therein. Suggestions regarding how the above two research aids might be improved would also be appreciated.

Karlis Karklins
Editor, Society of Bead Researchers
karlis4444@gmail.com
www.beadresearch.org

University News

University of Mississippi

Field School 2018

In May and June, the University of Mississippi field school took place in Oktibbeha County at a Native American site that dates from the AD 1400s to 1600s. Under the direction of Dr. Tony Boudreaux, students from UM worked with students from the University of Florida and members of the Chickasaw Nation to conduct excavations and a magnetic gradiometer survey of this important Late Mississippian to Early Contact period site. Part of our efforts went toward investigating an area where the presence of postholes, cob-filled pits, and a hearth indicates a structure was located.

Research & Events

On July 22-26, the 45th annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha conference will focus on Faulkner and Slavery. Tony Boudreaux and Maureen Meyers, along with Jeff Johnson (UM) and Jillian Galle (DAACS) will present a paper detailing the archaeological and geophysical investigations at Rowan Oak as part of the panel "Understanding Slavery and its Legacies at Robert Sheegog's Estate." Dr. Jodi Skipper and recently graduated master's student Suzanne Davidson will present "The 'Behind the Big House' Project in the panel "Community engagement and Interpreting Slavery in North Mississippi." Both panels will be held on Sunday, July 22, 2018 on the University of Mississippi campus.

Tony Boudreaux and Maureen Meyers were asked to sit on the Digital Archaeological Archives of Comparative Slavery (DAACS) Advisory Panel, funded by a grant from the Andrew Mellon Foundation. In early August they will travel to Charlottesville for a 2-day conference.

Ten students were inducted in the Gamma chapter of Lambda Alpha on May 10th at the department honors reception. In addition, graduate student Emily Warner received the inaugural Jay Johnson Graduate Student Award for her outstanding work on her thesis research.

2018 Mid-South Archaeological Conference

The next Mid-South Archaeological Conference will take place in Baton Rouge, **August 3 to 5, 2018**. The theme of the conference will simply be "Shell Middens." Although not all papers need to be related to work at shell middens, or research based on previous work at shell middens, we (meaning Jay Johnson and me) felt that this was a topic worthy of discussion. Becky Saunders is helping organize the conference and has arranged for a Friday-night, pre-conference gathering at the LSU Museum of Natural Science, with papers to be presented all day Saturday and half a day on Sunday at the Howe-Russell Geoscience Complex on the LSU campus. For more information please contact Rich Weinstein at rweinstein@coastalenv.com.

Schedule:

Friday, 6-8 p.m.: Reception at the LSU Museum of Science

Saturday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.: Presentations at the Howe-Russell-Kniffen Geoscience Complex, E130; 4-6 p.m.: LSU Campus Mounds & Archaeology Tour; 7-9 p.m.: Get-together at Driftwood Cask & Barrel

Sunday, 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.: Presentations at the Howe-Russell-Kniffen Geoscience Complex, E130

Accommodations: The Cook Hotel (www.thecookhotel.com)

2019 Annual Meeting of the Louisiana Archaeological Society

Date: February 15-17, 2019

Place: Shreveport Convention Center, 400 Caddo Street, Shreveport, LA 71166 www.shreveportcenter.com

Hotel: Hilton Shreveport, 104 Market Street, Shreveport, LA 71101 (connected to the Convention Center) www.shreveport.hilton.com; www.facebook.com/hiltonshreveportla

Reservations: Single or Double \$109; Triple \$119; Quad \$129; plus \$8/day parking fee for adjacent parking garage. Reservations must be made by February 1, 2019. Go to <https://book.passkey.com/go/LAArchaeologicalSociety> or (318) 698-0515

Meeting Registration: \$40 (\$45 after February 1)

Banquet: \$35

Tentative Schedule:

Friday, February 15: Executive Committee Meeting 4-6 pm; Registration and Reception 6-8 pm

Saturday, February 16: Presentations 8 am – 4 pm; Banquet 6 pm -9 pm; Keynote Speaker TBA

Sunday, February 17: to be announced

Presentations: send abstracts to David Jeane, Program Chair, djeane@centurytel.net or 305 Hickory Street, Springhill, LA 71075

