




Caribbean News

Vol. 8 (1): May 2005

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Florida bones confirmed as Caribbean monk seal's

Bones from a large mammal, unearthed by volunteers at a Pineland, Florida archaeological excavation in 1990, have since been identified as having belonged to the Caribbean monk seal, *Monachus tropicalis*, now considered extinct.

The March 2005 issue of the newsletter of the Randell Research Center relates how identification of the bones was made possible during a visit to the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in September last year.

A 2-inch long bone found at the excavation site, originally assumed to have come from a deer before being put into storage along with other mammal and fish bones, was compared with Smithsonian samples and identified as the fourth metatarsal from a left hind flipper.

Other bones in the collection were also identified as seal, probably from the same individual. Archaeologists attempting to analyse the odd accumulation of bones and other marine debris at the Pineland excavation, estimated to be about 1,650 years old, have postulated that a storm surge washed the marine creatures onto shore, along with a wave of mangrove mud. Among the animal remains were shells, fish bones, sea urchin fragments, and the bones of at least one bottlenose dolphin and a loggerhead turtle. Archaeologists have raised the possibility that native Indians who survived the violent storm took advantage of their sudden bounty, butchering the seal and leaving behind the rear flippers.

The full text of the article is available online at the [Randell Research Center](#).

Walker, Karen J. 2005. Pineland mystery bone is from Monk Seal. Now-extinct animal was at Pineland 1,650 years ago. Friends of the Randell Research Center 4 (1) March 2005: 1-2.