

Shell Mound

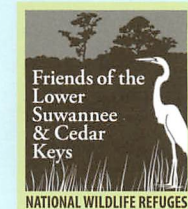
A Window To Another World



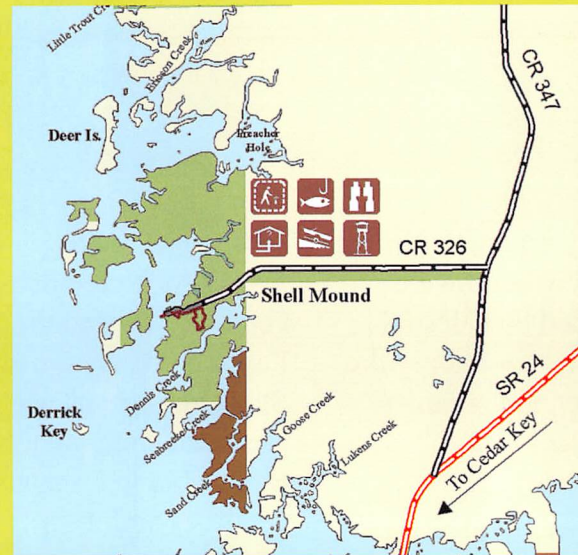
Coastal villages throughout history were abandoned and resettled due to environmental change. Then as now, resilient and persistent inhabitants reorganized their communities under stressful conditions.

To gaze upon the massive, U-shaped ridge at Shell Mound is to observe an engineering marvel built during a time of rising seas.

A 30-minute self-guided walking tour developed by UF archaeologist Dr. Ken Sassaman is less than 1/2-mile long and reveals mysteries and insights about daily life along the Nature Coast nearly 20 centuries ago.



Getting Here



Shell Mound is a unit of the Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge located 9 miles north of Cedar Key.

From SR 24 turn north on CR 347 for 2.4 miles.

Turn left on CR 326 and follow it 3.5 miles to the end.

Please consider joining Friends of the Lower Suwannee & Cedar Keys NWRs, a membership organization.



Through voluntary action, we support the mission of the Refuges to conserve the region's natural and cultural resources, its wildlife and the places they need to thrive. Membership gifts may be deductible.

We invite you to enjoy the pristine and primitive beauty of the Refuges with us.

www.FriendsofRefuges.org

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The civic-ceremonial center at Shell Mound was a village as well as a significant ritual center for more than 10 generations until it was abandoned about A.D. 650. Shell Mound is a time capsule of ancient life on the northern Gulf coast. Similar to modern coastal residents, the occupants of Shell Mound witnessed a variety of changes in their environment.



An archaeological excavation at Shell Mound



Get the complete Shell Mound Self-Guided Walking Tour at friendsofrefuges.org/shell-mound-trail.html

In 2009, the University of Florida launched the Lower Suwannee Archaeological Survey to document and interpret an archaeological record of coastal dwelling over the past 5,000 years. Shell Mound was identified as a site of special interest and is now under the care of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



For more archaeological reports around our region go to the UF Laboratory of Southeastern Archaeology at lsa.anthro.ufl.edu/publications.html

Journey back in time

Imagine the unified effort it took to build this 15 foot high hill by carrying approximately 1.2 billion oyster shells—basket by basket—to reshape the landscape.

Shell Mound is a special place.

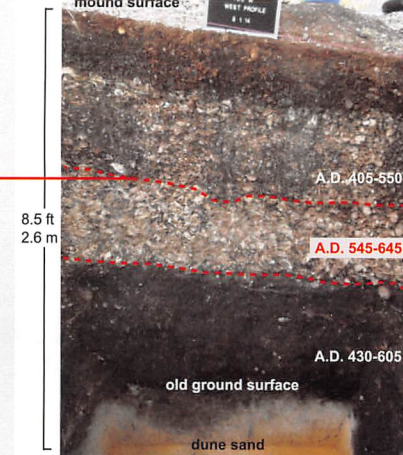


Many aspects of life at Shell Mound were marked by celestial events, commonly the winter and summer solstices.

Native peoples, since at least 4,500 years ago, buried their dead at the ends of dune arms that point to the

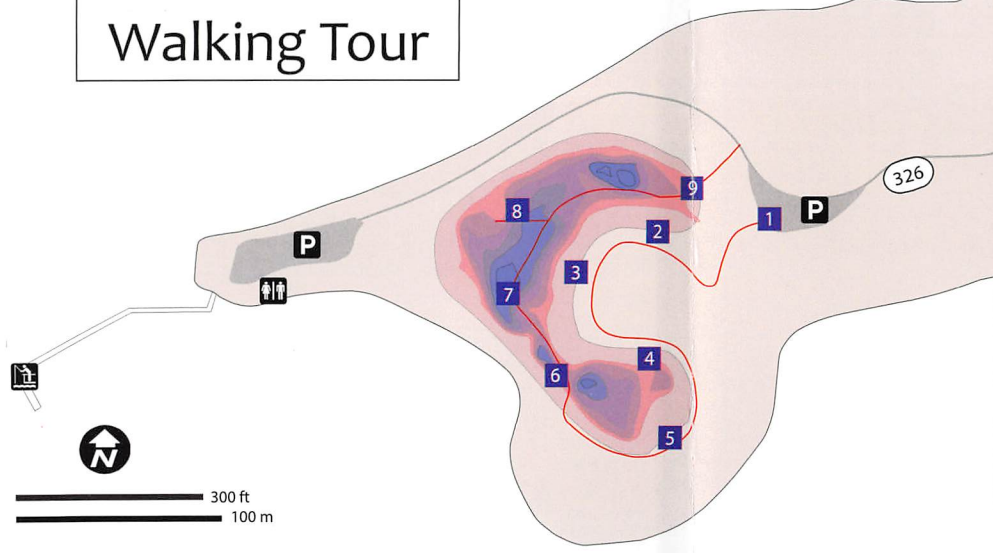
setting sun on the winter solstice. Such a cemetery existed on Palmetto Mound, near Shell Mound. Its use preceded settlement of Shell Mound by many centuries and it continued to be used hundreds of years after the village was abandoned. Having their ancestors buried nearby might have prompted people to build the village at Shell Mound.

As revealed by many lines of archaeological evidence, recurring ritual feasts appear to have taken place in the village around June 21, the summer solstice and longest day of the year.



Some of the layers archaeologists are studying at Shell Mound

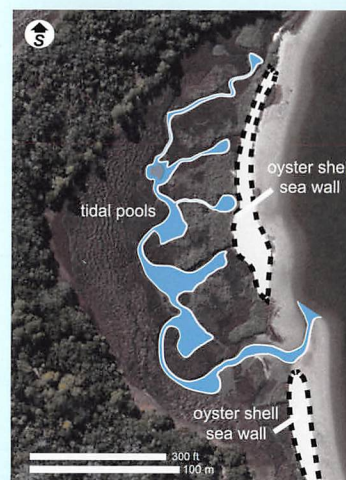
Shell Mound Walking Tour



Unanswered Questions

Archaeologists continue to uncover mysteries of life at Shell Mound but many remain.

- Why was Shell Mound abandoned after being central to native people for so long?
- Did they develop sophisticated fishery management techniques? On the western



An early fish trap near Richards Island

margin of nearby Richards Island scientists documented a fish trap consisting of an oyster shell seawall and a series of tidal pools. Mullet feeding in the summer, before their fall runs, are a good target for traps like this.