

Updated Site Report for Fox Pond Farm/Shaw's Creek Site, Aiken, South Carolina, 2006-2007 Excavations

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Introduction

Knight (2007) reported on a preliminary site reconnaissance excavation at the Fox Pond Farm/Shaw's Creek Site from April 2 through 7, 2006. This paper provides an update on the same site based on continuing exploratory excavations conducted between April 28 and May 3, 2007. ASAA members in attendance during both digs included Nick and Cindy Miller (PA), Don Munroe (FL), and Carl Kowalski (NY). During the 2006 excavation the group was also joined by Richard and Joyce Sojka, and Nancy Moore and Chuck Wright joined in the 2007 excavation. This report provides an updated summary of the information obtained during the Fox Pond/Shaw's Creek Site investigations.

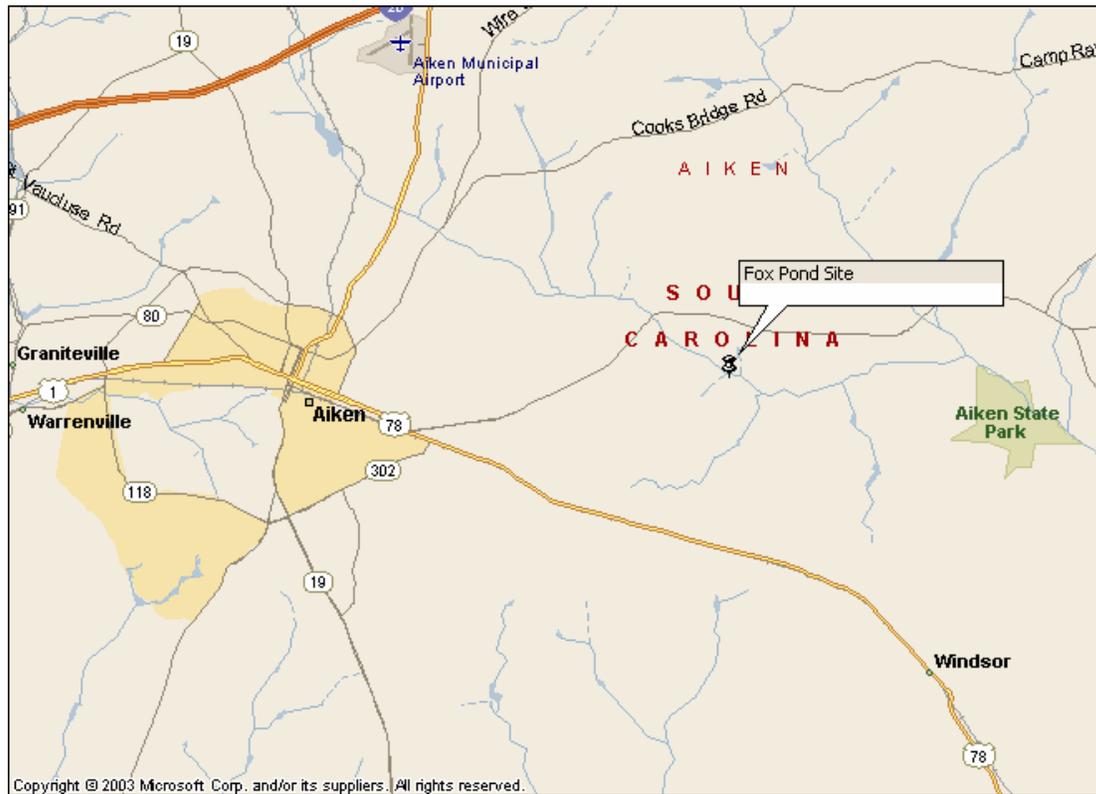
Site Location

The Fox Pond Farm/Shaw's Creek Site is located on Fox Pond Farm located 4.0 miles east of Aiken, South Carolina (Aiken County). Fox Pond Farm is owned by Hank and Bonny Kania. Figure 1 illustrates the approximate site location.

The site is located near the north edge of the Fox Pond Farm and is immediately south of and adjacent to Shaw's Creek which flows to the east to the North Fork of the Edisto River. The investigated site consists of a low sandy rise surrounded by transitional swampland. This site has been plowed and farmed for a considerable period of time and was reportedly the location of a sawmill before being acquired by the current owners in 1986. The Kania's and their friends have found a considerable number of flaked/polished stone and ceramic artifacts on the site over the past 20 years. Raw materials used on the site have been found to be highly variable. Aiken County is located near the junction of the Coastal Plain and the Piedmont in South Carolina and is characterized as a transitional landscape with geology varying from coastal clastic deposits to clays formed from weathering of metamorphic rocks. The Fox Pond/Shaw's Creek Site is located on Coastal Plain sandy deposits underlain by red clays. The only native stone found at the site is ironstone formed from iron-cemented sands and coarse quartz sand grains. All other stone is assumed to be imported by human activity.

FIGURE 1

Location map for the Fox Pond Site located adjacent to Shaw's Creek in Aiken County, South Carolina



Excavation Strategy

The excavation was limited to the cleared and plowed portion of the site. This area has dimensions of about 122 x 61 m (450 x 200 ft) with the long axis oriented from southwest to northeast (Figure 2). Metal pipe was sunk into the ground at the two ends of a baseline transect through the middle of the long axis of the field (starting point located just outside the plowed area to the northeast, designated NOW0; ending point at the opposite end of the field and designated as NOW450). During the 2006 dig, this baseline was staked at 30 m (100 ft) intervals with perpendicular transects staked out to the edges of the field (Figure 2). Shaw's Creek is located just to the north of the site and flows from west to east.

Prior to the two subsurface excavations, surface collections at the Fox Pond/Shaw's Creek Site had produced worked stone from one end of the cleared site to the other and with no apparently greater abundance observed near Shaw's Creek. The site had received previous subsurface testing on only one known occasion. Three 0.9 x 0.9 m (3 x 3 ft) test pits were dug near the center of the open field and closer to Shaw's Creek on March 28, 1998. Those test pits produced two broken points and a number of flakes. No detailed records of those finds were kept.

The site was methodically tested during the 2006 excavations. Based on the limited existing information on artifact density on the site it was decided to criss-cross the site with test pits. The test pit size was square with dimensions of 1.5 x 1.5 m (5 x 5 ft). These pits were dug in 30 cm (1 ft) vertical intervals until cultural materials were absent or greatly diminished in occurrence. Only one test pit was taken to 0.9 m (3 ft) since cultural material generally vanished by 60 cm (2 ft) and hard orange clay and saturated soil conditions were found deeper than that level. All materials in each lift were sifted through 0.6 cm (1/4 in) wire screen.

During the 2006 excavations, all test pits were randomly distributed across the length and breadth of the site with the exception of expansion of pit W100N35 into four adjacent pits with a total dimension of 3 x 3 m (10 x 10 ft). This pit was expanded since it was the locus of the highest preliminary density of worked lithic materials found in the initial random pit distribution.

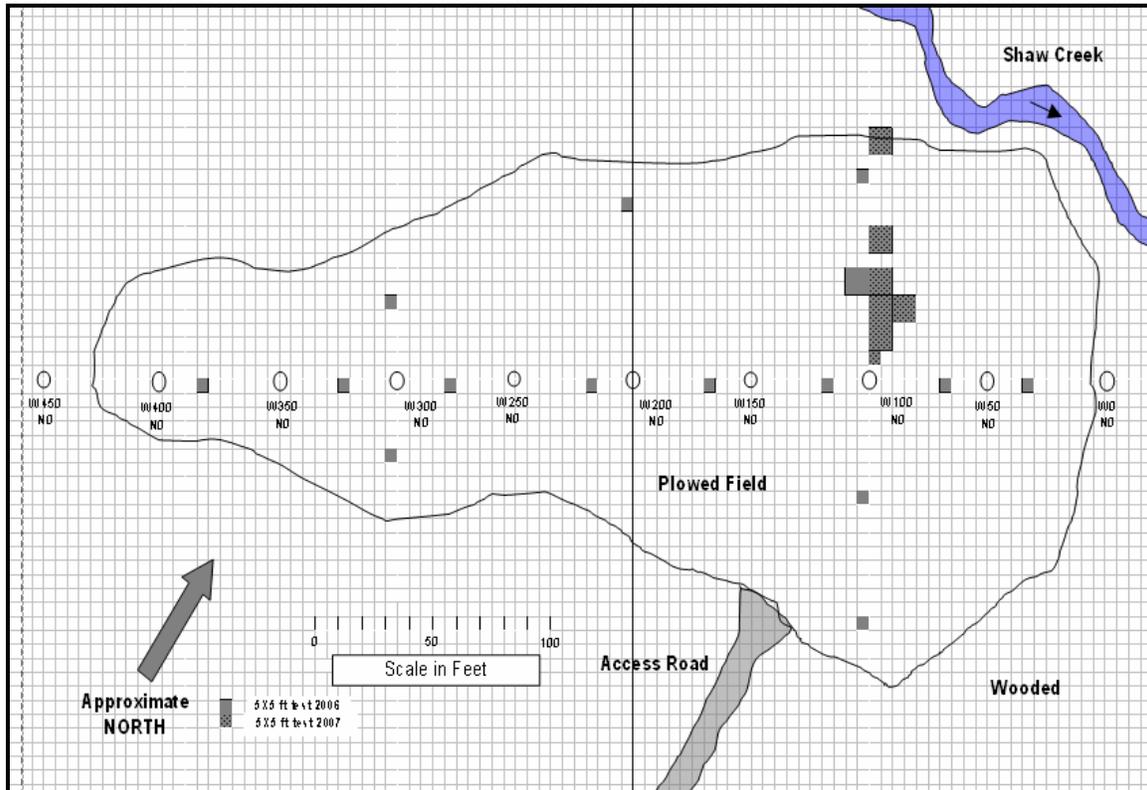
Excavations in 2007 were focused in the general vicinity of this high use area (Figure 2). The total horizontal area excavated during April 2006 was 44 m² (450 ft²) and the excavated volume screened was 27 m³ (900 ft³). During 2007, an additional 58 m² (600 ft²) was excavated with an additional volume of 24 m³ (782 ft³). All artifacts were initially retained by the author for study in the laboratory. Diagnostic artifacts were identified by pit number and vertical interval and bagged and returned to the finder for long-term curation.

Results

Table 1 summarizes the artifacts recovered during the preliminary Fox Pond/Shaw's Creek reconnaissance dig in 2006 and 2007. A total of 26 bifaces (191 g) were represented in the 2006 collection (see representative examples in Figure 4). A total of 44 additional bifacial tools (204 g) were recovered in 2007 (Figure 5). Average biface density in the widely spaced grid sampled in 2006 was about 0.60/m². Biface artifact density was somewhat higher in 2007 (0.76/m²) in the Northeast-Central portion of the site, confirming that this area has a higher concentration of tools than the site as a whole. This finding was duplicated in terms of total lithic (flakes, cores, tools, and imported raw materials) densities between the two years: 2006 – 40/m² (76 g/m² and 40 g/m³) and 2007 – 50/m² (158 g/m² and 61 g/m³). Other lithic tools that were found on the site in 2006 and 2007 included a sandstone grinding stone or mano, a portion of a large quartzite metate, a few flake knives, and a total of 12 steatite fragments (124 g). A number of partial drilled steatite pendants or boiling stones have been found on previous surface collections on the Fox Pond Site.

FIGURE 2

General excavation plan for the Fox Pond Site, April 2006 and 2007. The portion of the site within the plowed field was tested using 1.5 x 1.5 m test pits excavated to a maximum depth of 0.9 m or to the bottom of cultural materials. The 2007 excavations were concentrated in the northeast quadrant of the field in the vicinity of the highest artifact densities observed during the first excavation period.



The most common diagnostic bifacial tools were 15 Morrow Mountains, followed by 13 Savannah Rivers, and 21 unidentified Archaic stemmed points, one a possible Dalton, one a Kirk, one Guilford, and two triangular points (Yadkin ?). Archaic stemmed points were most common (Figure 6).

There were approximately equal numbers of bifaces made from quartz/quartzite (25) and of coastal plains chert (27). There were 12 bifaces made from rhyolite and 6 from argillite, including the possible Dalton (Table 2). The possible Dalton point was exceptionally weathered with numerous holes through the blade (Figure 7). One possible Paleolithic tool is shown in Figure 8. This point is made from quartz crystal but was not obviously fluted or ground.

Other lithic artifacts included 3,744 flakes (2.37 kg), several pieces of steatite (124 g), and chunks of lithic raw materials, including especially quartz and quartzite pebbles, chert, argillite, and rhyolite. Raw materials represented in the flake collection (Table 2) include 1,681 g of chert (71%), 463 g of quartz and quartzite (20%), 151 g of argillite (6%), and 79 g of rhyolite (3%).

FIGURE 3
Example excavation squares during the 2007 field season.



TABLE 1
Summary of artifact occurrence and density at the Fox Pond Site, Aiken County, South Carolina, 2006 and 2007 excavations.

Artifact Category	Total Number	Average Density (#/m ²)	Total Weight (g)	Average Weight (g/m ²)
Lithics				
Bifaces				
Morrow Mountain	15	0.147	169	1.66
Savannah River	13	0.128	203	1.99
Other archaic stem	21	0.206	144	1.41
Triangle	2	0.020	6	0.059
Other	19	0.186	254	2.49
Total Bifaces	70	0.687	775	7.61
Unifaces	4	0.039	23	0.226
Hammerstone/grinding stone	3	0.029	691	6.78
Flakes	3744	36.7	1403	13.8
Steatite	12	0.118	102	1.00
Other Raw Materials	793	7.78	1842	18.1
Ceramics				
Plain	72	0.707	481	4.72
Punctate	30	0.294	388	3.81
Linear	8	0.079	47	0.46
Other fragments	250	2.45	443	4.34
Total Ceramics	360	3.53	1358	13.3

Total Area Excavated (m²) = 102

FIGURE 4
Representative bifacial stone tools recovered from the Fox Pond Site during April 2006. The tools in the top row are made from quartzite and quartz crystal. The tools in the second row are made from coastal plains chert. The first tool in the third row is made from argillite and the second and third tools are rhyolite. Scale is in inches.



FIGURE 5

Representative bifacial stone tools recovered from the Fox Pond Site during 2007. The first six tools are made of rhyolite and include a Guilford, Morrow Mountain, and three stemmed Archaic (Savannah River) points. The next four bifaces are made of coastal plains chert and include a possible Bolen or Kirk stemmed bifurcate, Morrow Mountain, Savannah River, and possibly a Decatur. The second to last biface is a lanceolate made of quartz crystal (no apparent fluting) and a Rowan, Big Sandy, or Van Lott made of quartzite. Scale is in centimeters and millimeters.



FIGURE 6

Archaic stemmed point (similar to Gary, Dickson, or Newnans type) made from coastal plains chert.



FIGURE 7

Highly weathered (eroded) possible Dalton projectile point or knife made from argillite.



FIGURE 8
Possible Paleo point made of quartz crystal.



TABLE 2
Summary of Lithic Raw Material Occurrence at the Fox Pond Site, Aiken County, South Carolina, 2006 and 2007 excavations.

Artifact Category	Total	Quartz	Chert	Rhyolite	Argillite	Steatite
Bifaces (#)	70	25	27	12	6	0
Flakes (#)	3744	685	2843	106	110	0
Flakes (g)	2373	463	1681	79	151	0
Unworked raw materials (g)	3750	2634	118	308	566	124
Total Area Excavated (m ²) =	102					

Clay ceramics were well represented in the two excavated collections from the Fox Pond/Shaw's Creek Site (Table 1). Most of the ceramics were either plain or punctuate with a variety of round, pointed, or fingernail impressions that appear to be late Archaic Stallings Island and/or Thom's Creek types (Figure 9). Ceramics were concentrated at the area of highest overall artifact density (near N35W100).

FIGURE 9

Representative selection of ceramics (assumed to be Stallings Island and Thom's Creek) recovered from the Fox Pond Site, Aiken, South Carolina .



Surface collections produced a number of interesting artifacts (Figure 10). Nick Miller found a well-made chert drill tip. Several pieces of steatite slabs or bowls were also found on the surface, including one that was drilled, possibly as a cooking stone. The pieces illustrated in Figure 8 were surface collected, including a corner-notched (MALA, Sassaman 1985) chert point, a quartzite Morrow Mountain, a chert stemmed point, a polished quartzite pebble, and two rhyolite preforms. All flakes found on the surface during the 2006 dig were flagged to provide an idea of overall site artifact concentration density. At the end of the dig these flakes were examined and raw materials noted. In this flake collection there were 69 chert flakes, 22 quartzite, nine crystal quartz, six argillite, one jasper, and one rhyolite.

Since the culturally rich soil profile on the Fox Pond Site is only about 60 cm thick at its deepest point, and the site has been extensively disturbed by plowing, there was no clear evidence of temporal stratification observed in these reconnaissance investigations. Future work at the Fox Pond Site, if conducted, will more closely pinpoint depths for specific artifacts as they are uncovered.

FIGURE 10
Surface-collected artifacts from the Fox Pond Site, April 2006.



Regional Context

In common with most of the southeastern U.S., South Carolina has a long and rich archaeological record. Most of the archaeological investigations that have been conducted in South Carolina are reported in the journal *South Carolina Antiquities* published since 1968 by the Archaeological Society of South Carolina, Inc. (www.assc.net). These journals provide a history of archaeological research by the many staff of the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology (SCIAA) in Columbia, South Carolina.

Avocational archaeologists have also made major contributions to the science in their state, especially through the Collectors Survey sponsored by the SCIAA and through the Underwater Archaeology Permit (Hobby Diver) program also sponsored by SCIAA. A total of 323 artifact collections representing 46 counties were recorded after the first five years of the survey (Charles 1981, 1986). These collections conservatively included more than 1,200,000 artifacts. A total of 204 diagnostic Paleo points were recorded by the Collectors Survey. A total of 805 new sites were recorded in South Carolina as a result of this survey, during that same period. In addition to the Collectors Survey, an unreported

but significant number of artifacts recovered in South Carolina rivers have been reported to the SCIAA (Amer and Steen 1988). As evidenced by the Collectors Survey, the Hobby Diver Program, and other reported cooperation with avocationalists (Sassaman 1988), South Carolina has the distinction of having one of the highest levels of cooperation between amateur and professional archaeologists of any state in the U.S.

Considering the extreme archaeological richness of the state, publications concerning long-term significant investigations in South Carolina are rather limited. However, long-term, relatively well-funded investigations have been conducted at a number of locations in the general vicinity of the Fox Pond Site. Ken Sassaman (currently Department Chair of Anthropology and Archaeology) at the University of Florida) conducted numerous excavations of Late Archaic to Woodland sites in Aiken County on the Savannah River Site (e.g., sites 38AK158 and 159, Sassaman 1989). Recent intensive investigations in the Allendale County area, southeast of Aiken County, have focused on the Paleo and possible pre-Paleo periods and were initiated due to the observed high density of coastal plains chert and Paleo points reported in this area by collectors (Goodyear 2005). Work by Goodyear has focused on the Paleo and presumably older artifacts from this site and not on the abundant Early to Late Archaic and Woodland Period materials that appears to also be present. The Cal Smoak Site in Bamberg County, southeast of Aiken County and along Briar Branch near the Edisto River was intensively excavated and reported almost three decades ago (Anderson *et. al.* 1981). There were many similarities between the artifact assemblages at Cal Smoak and Fox Pond, including the abundance of Morrow Mountain and Savannah River bifaces, steatite boiling slabs, and Stallings and Thoms Creek ceramics.

Additional relevant site reports include the Nipper Creek Site in Richland County, just above the fall line in the South Carolina Piedmont, northeast of Aiken County (Wetmore 1987), the Copperhead Hollow Site (38CT58) in Chesterfield County along the South Carolina – North Carolina border near the Piedmont-Coastal Plain interface (Gunn and Foss 1992), the Pen Point Site (38BR383) in Barnwell County adjacent to the Savannah River (Sassaman 1985), the Thom's Creek Site (38LX2) near Columbia in Lexington County (Trinkley 1974), and site 38PN35 in Pickens County. These and numerous other excavated or surface collected sites in the state share Morrow Mountain and Savannah River point types, the two most frequent diagnostic bifacial tools at Fox Pond, occasional Guilford Points (5,300 B.P.), thought by some to be intermediate between Morrow Mountain and Savannah River, and the evidence of early Woodland Period occupations characterized by Stallings and Thoms Creek punctate pottery. Gunn and Foss (1992) conclude on the basis of the Copperhead Site being associated with an active dune and other circumstantial evidence that the landscape of the Early to Middle Archaic in South Carolina was a grassland ecosystem. Sassaman (1991) states that the Middle Archaic archaeological record in South Carolina is much like any other Piedmont area along the South Atlantic Slope, being characterized by ubiquitous, small sites in varied locations with sparse, low diversity, and unspecialized artifact assemblages. Sassaman (2008) also provides extensive development of the hypothesis that Early through Late Archaic people and their Woodland descendants were highly dependent on a migratory lifestyle (“high residential mobility”) that had them conducting annual or more frequent trips between the

piedmont and the low country coastal landscape. The people who lived at the Fox Pond Site appear to fall into this nomadic existence pattern with the distinction of spanning as much as 7,000 years of human history.

Based on a brief review of the results of these studies it appears that the Fox Pond Site artifact distribution is fairly typical of the coastal plain/piedmont interface in South Carolina. The single possible Dalton point found in 2006 and the two Taylor (?) side-notched points excavated in 2007 may indicate a low occupational frequency as far back in time as the Early Archaic (about 8,500 before present [B.P.]). The high frequency of Morrow Mountain points indicates a high habitation density during the Middle Archaic (7,500 to 5,500 B.P.) as is typical throughout much of the central portion of South Carolina (Sassaman 1993). Middle to Late Archaic artifacts are further represented at this site by the presence of steatite cooking slabs, Savannah River point types, the MALA type (Middle Archaic – Late Archaic), and the earliest pottery types found in South Carolina, dating to about 4,500 B.P.. While a few Woodland Period to possible Mississippian Period point types appear to be present, the Fox Pond Site is distinctly Middle to Late Archaic in its overall composition.

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