

Sand Dune Cave Atlatl

John Whittaker, Phil Geib, Byl Bryce, and Chuck LaRue - September 2009

Sand Dune Cave in southeastern Utah was excavated in 1961 by a Museum of Northern Arizona team under J. Richard Ambler (Lindsay et al. 1969) and produced some notable Archaic and Basketmaker II finds. One was a classic Basketmaker type atlatl, one of the best preserved we have. The original publication included some photos and a diagram of the complex finger loops; Hunter (1992) reproduced the diagram and has a good drawing of the whole atlatl. The atlatl is currently on display in the Museum of Northern Arizona, but detailed photographs have not been available. Thanks to the cooperation of MNA, we were able to examine and photograph the Sand Dune Cave atlatl in the summer of 2008.

A second find of interest to atlatlists was a hunter's bag made of the entire skin of a white dog. It contained a variety of paraphernalia, some in other smaller bags. The photos show three of six atlatl dart foreshafts with stone points, and ten of 16 point preforms, essentially finished except for notching. Other objects in the bag included feathers, sinew, uranium ore, and 8 short rods made of mountain sheep horn. Geib (2002) has shown that these are flintknapping punches and pressure tools. AMS radiocarbon dates on three of the bags give an averaged range of A.D. 80-330 in calibrated calendar years (Geib 2004).

We are currently writing a detailed description of the atlatl.



Photographs taken by Geib, Courtesy of the Museum of Northern Arizona.

Three foreshafts with stone points: NA7523.P29-30.4G 6, 2, 3.

Complete atlatl: NA7523.K29-30.8

Point preforms: NA 7523.P29-30.4E 1-16.

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Hunter, Wryley

1992 Reconstructing a Generic Basketmaker Atlatl. *Bulletin of Primitive Technology*. 1(4):57-61.

Lindsay, Alexander J., J. Richard Ambler, Mary Anne Stein, and Philip M. Hobler

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