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Shell Mound Park - Dauphin Island, Alabama

Dauphin Island's Ancient Mound

Shell Mound Park, located on the north shore of Alabama's beautiful [Dauphin Island](#), preserves one of the most remarkable archaeological sites in the South.

It is believed that the massive shell middens date from the Mississippian Era (A.D. 900 - 1500), with University of South Alabama researchers dating them more specifically to A.D. 1100 - 1550. They were formed by the accumulation of debris from meal after meal of roasted oysters, fish and other delicacies by early Native Americans.

The archaeology of the site, in fact, is quite fascinating. According to a 2003 article in the campus newspaper of the University of South Alabama ([click here to read the article](#)), archaeologist Gregory Waselkov believes the shell mounds at Dauphin Island were built by people from the Bottle Creek site, a major Mississippian mound and village site to the north in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. During the winter, according to Waselkov, the residents of Bottle Creek would come down to Dauphin Island to gather and roast oysters.

Research at the mounds has revealed they were formed over centuries as meal after meal of oysters was roasted at the site. So many oysters were consumed here over such a long period of time that massive mounds were eventually formed.

Even as the mounds grew, they were reclaimed by the forest of the island. One oak tree in today's 11-acre Shell Mound Park is thought to be more than 800 years old. It started growing there when the site was still in use. The tree, in fact, has witnessed events on Mobile Bay ranging from the arrival of French settlers to the American Revolution and Civil War.

The beautiful trees are not the only unique plants growing in the park. Botanists have been surprised by the diversity of rare plants that grow in the park. Among them are plants from as far away as the Appalachian Mountains and the Yucatan region of Mexico. Researchers believe they probably survive from original specimens brought to the site by Indians hundreds of years ago.



Shell Mound Park

Maintained by the Alabama Marine Resources Division, beautiful Shell Mound Park on Dauphin Island preserves ancient Indian shell middens.

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Shell Mound Park is also an important stop on the Alabama Coastal Birding Trail. A major point for observing migratory birds, the park attracts birders from around the country each spring and fall. All of Dauphin Island, in fact, is a bird sanctuary.

Shell Mound Park is located on North Iberville Street on Dauphin Island. To reach the park, arrive on the island via the Dauphin Island Parkway, turn left on Bienville Boulevard and proceed two blocks and then turn left on North Iberville. The park is free to visit.

Shell Mound Park
Dauphin Island's beautiful Shell Mound Park preserves an important archaeological site.



A Mississippian Monument
The mounds are formed of millions of shells, left over from Indian meals.



Ancient Shell Mound
Grass grows over the ancient Dauphin Island mounds, but close inspection reveals the shells that form them.

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