

ARTIFACT COLLECTION CURATION FOR CITIZEN SCIENTISTS

Emily Reif, MAS, University of Nebraska-Lincoln



UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln

INTRODUCTION

The Grasslands Artifact Roadshow is a citizen science project coordinated by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the US Forest Service. The goal of this project is to document privately held stone tool collections throughout the Great Plains and provide the public with resources and educational opportunities. Most archaeological research is conducted on public land, but much of the land throughout the Great Plains is privately owned, which has led to a lack of information about archaeological sites throughout the Great Plains. Collaboration between private landowners and archaeologists provides many benefits to both parties.

Landowners and artifact collectors provide valuable insight about artifacts found on private land. In return, archaeologists provide artifact collectors with more information about their artifacts. This guide provides the amateur archaeologist, the citizen scientist, and the artifact collector all the resources needed to document archaeological sites on private land and curate privately held artifact collections.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS GUIDE

- ▶ **ARTIFACT COLLECTION LAWS**
 - Laws for state and federal land
 - Laws for private property
- ▶ **SITE DOCUMENTATION**
 - Photographs
 - GPS coordinates
 - Site notes
- ▶ **ARTIFACT CURATION**
 - Catalog system
 - Site notes
 - Photographs
 - Artifact storage
- ▶ **BENEFITS**
 - Benefits to collector
 - Benefits to archaeologists
- ▶ **IDENTIFICATION**
 - How to identify artifacts
- ▶ **CONTACT POINTS**
 - Universities
 - Federal Agencies
 - State Agencies
- ▶ **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**
- ▶ **REFERENCES**

COLLECTION LAWS

It is important to know and follow the law when collecting artifacts. Collection laws are in place to preserve cultural resources and prevent the loss of artifacts. When artifacts are removed from a site, any knowledge that could be learned from that artifact is lost. Understanding and abiding by the following laws helps to protect artifact collectors and cultural resources.

COLLECTING ON FEDERAL & STATE MANAGED LAND

All artifacts found on state or federally managed lands are protected by federal law. Therefore, it is illegal to collect artifacts from state and federally managed lands, this includes land managed by U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, and National Park Service.^{1,4}

Prior to 1906, objects of archaeological significance were not protected by federal law, which resulted in the removal of many artifacts. To combat the loss of significant sites, The Antiquities Act was enacted in 1906, which classified archaeological sites as public resources to be protected by the federal government.^{1,4} Unfortunately, The Antiquities Act was unsuccessful in protecting archaeological sites from looters and infrastructure construction projects. Fueled by public concern, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 included protection for archaeological sites.^{1,3,4} In 1979, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act was enacted to expand the protections from The Antiquities Act to include criminal and civil penalties for those found in violation. The Archaeological Resources Protection Act was amended in 1988 to make the intent to loot a felony punishable under federal law.⁵

COLLECTION LAWS

COLLECTING ON PRIVATE LAND

ARTIFACTS

It is perfectly legal to collect artifacts from private land. Privately owned land means that the artifacts and resources found on the land belong to the owner. It is the landowner's right to collect artifacts. Be sure to obtain permission before collecting on another individual's land. Since artifacts collected on private land are legally the landowner's property, they will not be taken by federal or state law enforcement.

HUMAN REMAINS

Unlike artifacts, it is important to remember, that human remains found on private land should be reported to the authorities.

Human remains and funerary objects found on federal or tribal land are protected under The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990.^{2,4,5} Laws regarding the unearthing of human remains and funerary objects on private land vary by state. More information regarding state laws can be found by contacting the local state historical society.

SITE DOCUMENTATION

Documenting the location of artifact finds helps to preserve the site and provides valuable information to the field of archaeology. Site documentation preserves the history of your artifact collection and land.

Older family members routinely find that artifact site locations aren't recorded. Leading to many questions about where their parents and grandparents found the artifact. Documenting the site location helps to preserve the location as well as the story of the site and collection.



A Nebraska artifact collector telling researchers and family where individual artifacts were found in this home visit, family members opted to record the collector discussing his artifacts to preserve knowledge for the future.

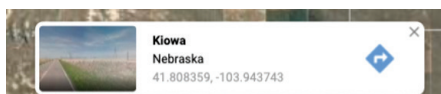
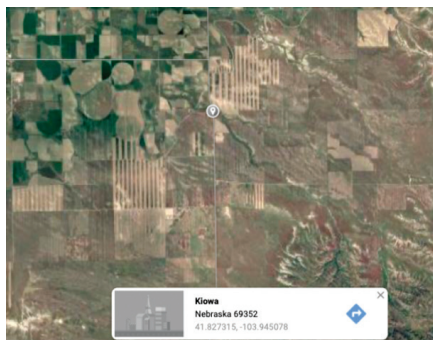
What can you do if you find an artifact? If the artifact is on public land, record the location, take photos, and report the finding to the local management office (see contact points). If the artifact is on private land, follow the documentation steps below.

SITE DOCUMENTATION

HOW TO DOCUMENT AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

RECORD THE LOCATION

Record the location of the site using GPS coordinates, quadrangle maps, or Google Maps. GPS coordinates can be obtained from a handheld GPS or smart phone. If you do not have access to one of those devices but know the general location of the site, you can use a quadrangle map or Google Maps to record the approximate latitude and longitude.

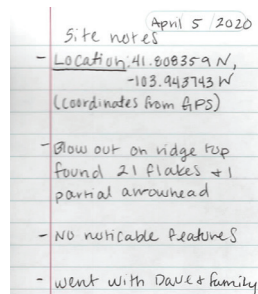


Example images to obtain latitude and longitude from Google Maps Satellite view

WRITE DESCRIPTIVE NOTES

Write descriptive notes about the site including a description of the site, artifacts observed, features (hearth, rock circle, wall, etc.) observed, and land use type. A link to the Nebraska State Historical Society site documentation form is provided in the additional resources section.

SITE NOTES APRIL 5, 2020	
<u>Location</u>	41.808359, -103.943743 (coordinates from GPS)
<u>Site Description</u>	Blow out on ridge top
<u>Artifacts Observed</u>	21 flakes, 1 biface
<u>Features</u>	None
<u>Other Notes</u>	Looked for about 3 hours in the afternoon with Dave and family



SITE DOCUMENTATION

HOW TO DOCUMENT AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

TAKE PHOTOS OF THE ARTIFACT

Take photos of the artifact in situ, meaning in the original position found, with a scale. Common objects, such as a quarter or pencil, can be used to provide a scale to the photo. For a more formal scale, a small centimeter ruler can also be used. Taking a photo of the artifact in the original location provides the collector and researchers with context to where the artifact was found.



Artifacts shown in situ with a scale



This image provides context of where the artifact was found within the landscape. Adding a person or object to the image helps to provide scale to the landscape.

SITE DOCUMENTATION

TAKE PHOTOS OF THE SITE

Take photos of the site looking to the north and take photos of any prominent features on the site. Feature can be landscape features, such as a butte or creek, or man-made features such as a grain bin, fence, or building. This provides context of exactly where the artifact was found for future visits and records.



A prominent butte near an artifact site



Looking north from an artifact site



Contextual photo of an artifact site

CURATING ARTIFACTS

After artifacts have been found and added to a collection, they can be identified and curated. Using a curation system allows for the collector and others to easily identify and recall valuable information about individual artifacts. There are numerous ways to curate and store an artifact collection, collectors should determine a method that works best for them.

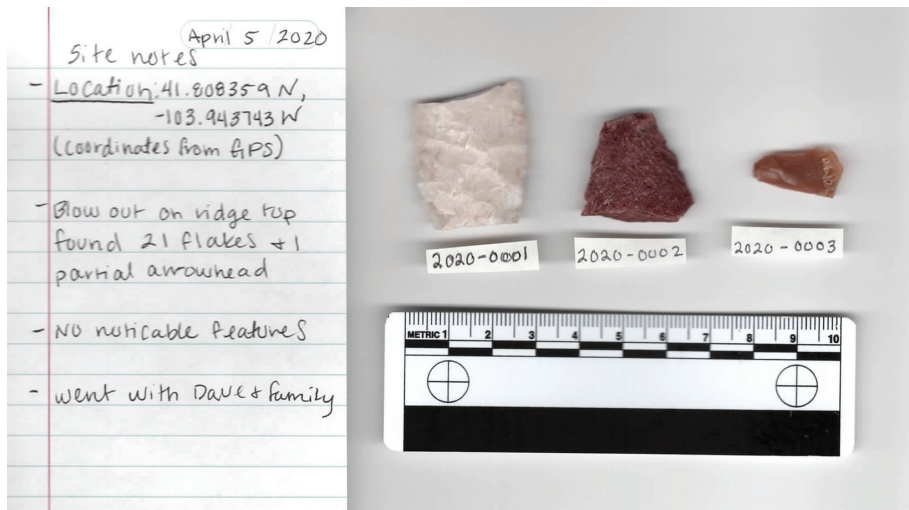
HOW TO CURATE AN ARTIFACT COLLECTION

- ▶ **DEVELOP A CATALOGING SYSTEM**
 - Each artifact should be assigned a unique catalog number corresponds to the year and number (ex: 2019-0001)
- ▶ **RECORD SITE INFORMATION**
 - Each cataloged artifact should have corresponding site information including location found, GPS coordinates, and date. Site information can be recorded in a spreadsheet on a computer or in a notebook to be kept with the collection.
- ▶ **CATALOG PHOTO**
 - Take a photo of each artifact with the catalog number and a scale, such as a small centimeter ruler. Artifacts found at the same location or on the same day can be photographed together.

COLLECTION RECORD SPREADSHEET

<u>Date Found</u>	<u>Catalog Number</u>	<u>Artifact Description</u>	<u>Site Description</u>	<u>Location</u>
04/05/2020	2020-0001	Biface	Blow Out	41.808359, -103.943743
04/05/2020	2020-0002	Flake	Blow Out	41.808359, -103.943743
04/05/2020	2020-0003	Flake	Blow Out	41.808359, -103.943743

CURATING ARTIFACTS



Site notes and catalog photo

CURATING ARTIFACTS

HOW TO SAFELY STORE ARTIFACTS

Artifacts should be stored in such a way that they are protected, which can be done numerous ways.

► DISPLAY CASES

- Specialized display cases can be used to store artifacts while still being visible. It is best to avoid gluing or taping artifacts to allows for rearrangement or further inspection.



Artifact Display Cases

► FRAMES

- Generic frames or shadow boxes can be used to store artifacts while still being visible. It is best to avoid gluing or taping artifacts to allows for rearrangement or further inspection.



Artifact Shadow Box



Artifact Frame Display

CURATING ARTIFACTS

► BOXES

- Artifacts can be stored in boxes with padding or tissue paper. If using this method, it is important to attach catalog numbers to individual artifacts using tape. Artifacts can be stored together based on location found or by date found.



Box Storage with Paper

BENEFITS OF ARTIFACT CURATION

PRESERVES FAMILY HISTORY AND CULTURE

There are numerous benefits to curating an artifact collection, but perhaps the most significant benefit is preserving family history and culture. Artifact collectors make up a unique, diminishing culture and it is important to document and preserve the information collected before it is lost. Artifact collections are often significant to family members. By documenting and preserving artifacts, future generations can appreciate the family and cultural history of the collection.



A Nebraska family learning about their family artifact collection

BENEFITS OF ARTIFACT CURATION

CONTRIBUTES ARCHAEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

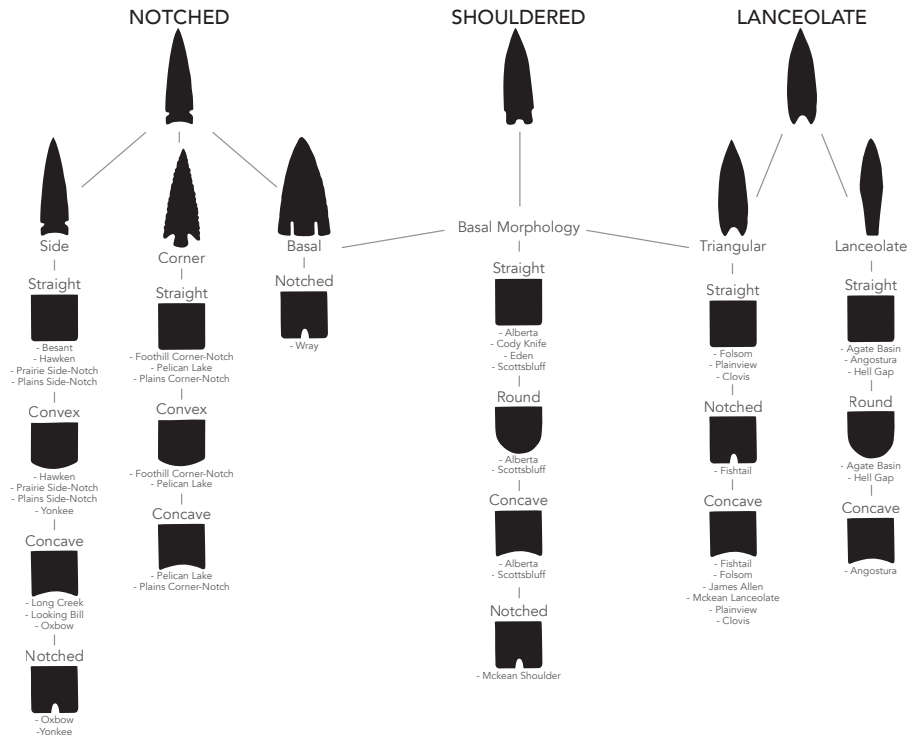
Documenting sites and curating artifacts preserves information about past inhabitants of the Great Plains. Much of the land in Great Plains states is privately owned, so there is a lack of archaeological knowledge throughout the region. Artifact collectors are citizen scientists, who possess much knowledge of archaeological sites on private land. Documented site data contributes to archaeological knowledge and can provide valuable information to professional archaeologists and academic researchers.

PROTECTS ARTIFACTS FROM DAMAGE

Documented sites protect artifacts from potential damage and loss of knowledge. Future generations, professional archaeologists, and researchers all benefit from preserving archaeological resources.

IDENTIFICATION

For information on how to identify projectile point download the Projectile Points of North Western Nebraska identification key and guide booklet.



CONTACT POINTS

There are many different organizations that can be contacted for questions or additional resources. Universities and colleges are an excellent place to gain more knowledge about archaeological resources. Local U.S. Forest Service offices can answer land use and access questions, as well as provide educational resources. Other land management agencies at the state and federal level can provide land access questions. State historical society offices can also answer archaeological resource questions and provide additional resources or contacts.

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Phone Number</u>
Nebraska State Historical Society	Lincoln, NE	402.471.3270
Nebraska National Forest & Grasslands Bureau of Reclamation	Chadron, NE	308.432.0300
	McCook, NE	308.345.2908
South Dakota State Historical Society	Pierre, SD	605.773.3458
Black Hills National Forest	Custer, SD	605.673.9200
National Grasslands Visitor Center	Wall, SD	605.279.2125

Please contact Dr. Matthew Douglass at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in regard to the Grasslands Artifact Roadshow project. Dr. Douglass can be reached via email at mdouglass3@unl.edu.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Online resources can be a great place to start when looking to learn more about the practice of archaeology or about artifacts. It is important to consider the source of online information. When searching online sources, look for sites published by federal and state government agencies as well as universities and colleges. These institutions often provide the most accurate and reliable information. Print resources can also be another great way to gain new information. There are many books and articles available, similar to online sources it is important to check the source and date published. State and federal land management agencies as well as higher education institutions have many great print sources. Below are just a few additional resources that can be referenced.

ONLINE RESOURCES

SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

<https://www.saa.org>

NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

<https://history.nebraska.gov>

NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY SITE DOCUMENTATION FORM

https://nebraskaarchaeology.files.wordpress.com/2018/08/site_documentation_short_form_2018.pdf

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE ARCHAEOLOGY PROGRAM

<https://www.nps.gov/Archeology/PUBLIC/publicLaw.htm>

US DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR- INTERIOR MUSEUM PROGRAM

<https://www.doi.gov/museum/laws-and-regulations>

PRINT RESOURCES

PROJECTILE POINTS OF THE HIGH PLAINS BY JEB TAYLOR

(First edition is out of print)

REFERENCES

- ▶ National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. American Antiquities Act of 1906. Legislative and Congressional Affairs. Updated 2017.
→ **RETRIEVED FROM**
<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/legal/american-antiquities-act-of-1906.htm>

- ▶ National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Facilitating Respectful Returns. Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. Updated 2019.
→ **RETRIEVED FROM**
<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nagpra/index.htm>

- ▶ National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. National Historic Preservation Act. Historic Preservation. Updated 2018.
→ **RETRIEVED FROM**
<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservation/national-historic-preservation-act.htm>

- ▶ Society for American Archaeology. Archaeology Laws & Ethics.
→ **RETRIEVED FROM**
<https://www.saa.org/about-archaeology/archaeology-law-ethics>

- ▶ United States Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Archaeological Resource Protection. USDA Forest Service Law Enforcement and Investigations. N.d.
→ **RETRIEVED FROM**
<https://www.fs.fed.us/lei/archeological-resources-protection.php>