

Figure 1. A, stemmed point (surface); B, excavated basal fragment from Peñones site; C, scraper from Nare site; D, stratigraphy, Nare site; E, main middle Magdalena early sites.

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Ontolo (8JE1577): Another Early-Prehistoric Site Submerged on the Continental Shelf of NW Florida

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Ontolo (8JE1577) is one of 39 submerged prehistoric sites now known on the continental shelf of NW Florida (Faught 1996; Faught et al. 1992; Faught n.d.; Marks 2002). The site is located approximately 9 km from the mouth of the modern Aucilla River, in approximately 5 m of seawater, along the western margins of the paleo-channel of the Aucilla River (*PaleoAucilla*). Based on the number of artifacts observed during initial surveys, it is one of the densest submerged prehistoric human occupation sites encountered offshore so far (Marks 2002; Tabón and Pendleton 2002). The collections include artifacts diagnostic of late-Paleoindian (Figure 1A and B) and middle-Archaic age (Figure 1C–J), suggesting at least two different occupation periods.

The extent of the artifact array is more than 120 m east-west and over 110 m north-south. The area is covered with marine biota and biogenic (shelly) sand. Patches of very low relief rocks (<5 cm) are frequent. The natural margins of the site are defined on three sides by sea grass and a sandy plain on the west side. Subbottom profiler remote sensing has revealed several areas near the site where karst depressions with preserved sediment beds may exist, and survey operations have indicated other large artifact clusters nearby.

Initial surface collections at Ontolo produced several diagnostic artifacts (Figure 1). Of the artifacts collected, 20 percent are tools ($n = 103$), including 38 bifacially flaked tools and 36 unifacial tools (Marks 2002). Expedient tools are also frequent ($n = 21$); these include flakes with side and end use wear, notches, and spurs. Eight cores make up 7 percent of all tools. Cortex coverage on the artifacts is very low, indicating materials were transported to the site from elsewhere (Marks 2002).

Ontolo is a surface array of chipped-stone artifacts that has been untouched by humans for thousands of years, essentially since the site was completely submerged sometime after 5,000 years ago (Faught and Donoghue 1997).

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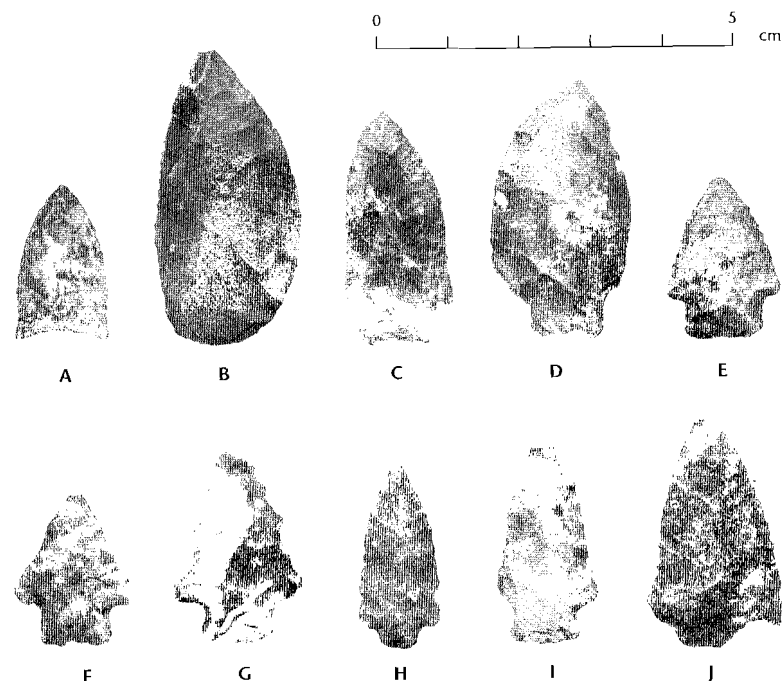


Figure 1. Diagnostic chipped-stone tools found at Ontolo 8JE1577; B is unifacial.

Additional work is planned at Ontolo to determine the depth and character of any preserved sedimentary deposits at the site.

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Buried Dalton Occupation in the Upper Alabama River Valley, Autauga County, Alabama

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The Pearson site (1Au397) lies in the upper Coastal Plain approximately 25 km west of Montgomery in south-central Autauga County, Alabama (Figure 1). The site was initially recorded and evaluated during compliance work by the University of Alabama, Office of Archaeological Research (OAR) (Meeks 2001). Subsequent archaeological mitigation involving a .62-ha portion of the 1.8-ha Pearson site by OAR resulted in excavating 604 m² of deposits, producing evidence of 12,000 years of human occupation at the site (Meeks et al. 2003). The earliest deposits include a relatively discrete Dalton occupation directly overlying Pleistocene gravels. Such a multicomponent site with Pleistocene/Holocene transition archaeological materials had yet to be reported for this region. The investigation included detailed lithic, archaeobotanical, and geoarchaeological analyses.

The Pearson site, located on the north bank of the Alabama River, is situated along the backside of a dissected Pleistocene terrace overlooking a backwater swamp associated with Bear Creek, a major tributary of the Alabama River. Today the local Pleistocene terraces are discontinuous and segmented, with the local soils mapped as Quartzsipsamments formed in Pleistocene overbank deposits reworked by colluvial processes. Sites in these sand-rich depositional environments are often dismissed as mixed, with poor context. While geoarchaeological analyses identified wind-sorted sediments throughout the stratigraphic sequence, geochemical and artifact spatial and size data all suggest nominal vertical mixing of the cultural components.

The deepest archaeological deposit at the site contains Dalton points and uniface tools in a 20- to 30-cm-thick yellowish brown mixed sand, ca. 60-90 cm below ground surface. Directly underlying the Dalton zone is a zone of concentrated rounded gravel most likely related to the late-Pleistocene formation of the terrace sequence (Szabo 1973). Significant increases in total phosphorus and organic carbon in the Dalton zone suggest a buried surface that most likely formed as the terrace stabilized during the Pleistocene/Holocene transition. Although there are no radiocarbon results yet, the timing of the Dalton occupation above the gravel deposit indicates deposition of these gravels probably occurred no later than ca. 10,500 RCYBP. By this time the Alabama River was entrenched at an elevation of 12-

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