

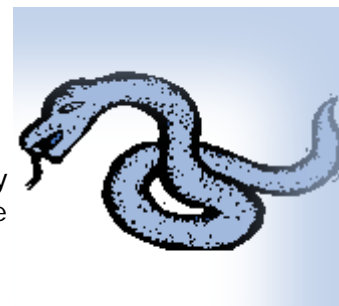


Environmental Resources

From Animal Extinction to Ozone

Serpent Mound

The Serpent Mound is one of North America's most spectacular effigy mounds, and the first privately funded archaeological preserve in the United States. It is located in Adams County. The Mound is the largest serpent effigy known and stretches about a quarter of a mile long. Effigy mounds are earthworks that resemble animals such as reptiles and birds. Similar effigy mounds can be found in Scotland and Ontario, Canada.



Coincidentally Serpent Mound is near the center of a unique geological structure that was created when a cataclysmic explosion occurred sometime after the Mississippian Period ended, 325 million years ago. Scientists believe a meteor struck the area. The force of the explosion must have been immense. Immediately after impact, the center rebounded, lifting Ordovician rocks 950 feet above their normal positions. In contrast, an outer ring of younger Mississippian sandstone and shale was depressed nearly 400 feet. As these sandstones are harder than the surrounding rocks, erosion has resulted in a circle of hills clearly visible from

the air. Since land use depends on the different types of exposed rocks, the terrain here has a great impact on area agriculture. The high center of limestone and shale is mostly given over to pasture, while a surrounding inner ring on Silurian dolomite supports crops. The hilly outer rim of sandstone and shale is forested.

Serpent Mound effigy was originally surveyed by Ephraim Squier and Edwin Davis in 1846. They eventually published a map to the spot, and brought wider attention to mounds that can be found throughout the United States. Several decades later in 1886, Harvard University archaeologist, Frederic Ward Putnam, excavated Serpent Mound. Even more recently excavations have surfaced wood charcoal that was carbon-dated to the Fort Ancient Culture, about 1000-1550 AD. Like many effigies, the head of the serpent lines up with the sunset of summer solstice. In 1900, Harvard University turned Serpent Mound over to the Ohio Historical Society, which has maintained it as a state memorial ever since. The Serpent Mound is open to the public for viewing at the Serpent Mound museum, which opened in 1967.



Find out more...

- Serpent Mound (www.ohiohistory.org/places/serpent)