

# 12

## ***Animal Effigies from Coastal Southern California***

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### **Introduction**

“Birdstones,” “pelican stones,” “hooks,” and “killer whales” are some of the names bestowed on the stone effigies found along the Southern California coast and on the Channel Islands. Whales are famous as the most obvious representation and “hooks” are thought to represent some manner of bird. These figures have been noted in archaeological collections for over one hundred years. They are usually made of steatite and the quarries of Santa Catalina Island have long been recognized as the source of this raw material.

While several hundred of these animal effigies have been found, the vast majority are either undated or without provenience. Of the 212 effigies discussed by Lee (1981), just 19 had an exact provenience and only one was associated with a radiocarbon date.

Whales are pictured so frequently in the literature that it would appear as though birdstones form a very minor component of the effigy group. In reality, there are nearly as many of one as the other. Lee’s sample of 110 fish or marine mammals to 102 bird figures, plus research at various museums, seems to confirm this impression.

The 13 representations excavated at Eel Point on San Clemente Island add greatly to the comparative data

for similar figures since they have a clear record of provenience, archaeological context, and radiocarbon dating.

### **Effigies from the 1983 Field Season**

Eight effigies were excavated during the 1983 field season at Eel Point (Table 12.1). Six of the figures were found in association with burials (all male), one with a feature, and one in the midden. Five of these figures are small, stylized bird and mammal representations. The sixth is popularly referred to as a “hook” but could be a bird representation and the seventh object is “L”- shaped with an incised line up the center of one half. The burials were intrusive with the resultant mixing of some bones and artifacts. Many of the effigies were found in the screens, not in situ, so the original position in relation to the bodies is not known.

Burial 2 contained 3 effigies, all representing birds or hooks (Fig. 12.1). A bird bone whistle and abalone fishhooks were also associated with this individual. Burial 3 had a figure very reminiscent of a dolphin with a sinewy in-motion appearance when viewed from the top (Fig. 12.2). Other artifacts found with this burial include four obsidian points, a fishhook, and shell beads.

Table 12.1. Steatite objects from four San Clemente sites.

Catalog number	Object	Location	Length (cm)	Max. Width (cm)	Weight (gr)	Figure
Steatite objects from Eel Point (SCLI-43C)						
E 328	hook	Burial 2	2.7	1.3	3.7	12.1b
E 334	cormorant	Burial 2	3	1.8	10.4	12.1a
E 648	bird	Burial 2	2.2	1.3	2.4	12.1c
E 335	dolphin	Burial 3	3.8	1.4	6.5	12.2
E 736	pelican	Burial 5	3.9	2.5	14.8	12.3
E 762	L-shape	Burial 1	2.1	1.6	5.9	12.5a
E 230	elephant seal	Ft. 2	3.5	3.1	26	12.4
E 240	whale*	midden	14.6*	8.3	7710.5*	12.6a
E 213	one-half dish	Burial 1	(See E 263 for combined measurements)			
E 263	one-half dish	Unit 4	13.2	7.9	427	12.7
Steatite objects from Eel Cove Sand Dune (SCLI-47)						
198-48	whale	surface	14.1	10.1	740.5	12.6b
Steatite objects from Seal Cove Midden (SCLI-67)						
202-19	bird?		2.7	2.5	11	12.5b
Steatite objects from Ledge Site (SCLI-126)						
915	whale/fish?	0-28, 20-30 cm	5.9	2	23	12.8a
310	whale/fish?*	U-30,15-30cm	3.4*	2.3	10.3*	12.8c
M-18, 0-6	whale/fish?	ASA excavation	3.5*	2.1	12.4	12.8b
N-18, 6-12	whale/fish?	ASA excavation	2.0	1.7	2.5	12.8d

\* Incomplete



Fig. 12.1. Birdstones from Eel Point (SCLI-43c) Burial 2, from left to right, "cormorant" type, "hook" type, and "pelican" type, beak appears broken and smoothed off.



Fig. 12.2. Dolphin-like effigy from Eel Point (SCLI-43c) Burial 3. Note its sinewy, swimming appearance.



Fig. 12.3. Birdstone from Eel Point, Burial 5. Effigy has "pelican" style beak and a rare circular incision.



Fig. 12.4. Possible elephant seal effigy from Eel Point, Feature 2. "Eye" perforation is biconically drilled.

Burial 5 contained a birdstone with an incised line. This effigy has a graceful, moving appearance (Fig. 12.3). Two obsidian points, shell beads, and large mortars were also present. Feature 2 had a figure which looks like an elephant seal with a perforation representing eyes and incised lines outlining the nose (Fig. 12.4). Other elements in this feature were sea lion bones and a cache of *olivella* shells and beads.

The "L"-shaped object (Fig. 12.5a) was included in Burial 1 along with an ocher stained bowl and a basketry impression in asphaltum. A dog was also interred within this feature. Both E-762 (the "L"-shaped object) and E-334 (a birdstone) have incised lines which, for the birdstone, could represent wings (Fig. 12.5c). They are similar to an "L"-shaped pendant excavated from Seal Cove Midden (SCLI-67) in 1959 by McKusick and Warren (Fig. 12.5b). The latter find resembles a birdstone without a proper beak, and it protrudes at the base both in front and in back. The protrusions are incised with the longer one resembling wings. In profile it could also represent a very stylized sea mammal.

Hoover (1974b) has postulated that figurines with vertical incised lines on a flaring base resemble female genitalia and may relate to good luck charms used during pregnancy and childbirth. Of course, this is highly speculative. The three incised objects under discussion were not found in association with females, as might be expected if they held a special significance to women. More of these effigies must be found in situ in order to prove or disprove this theory.

A larger figure, probably representing a killer whale, was recovered in the garbage area of the midden among broken shells and fish bones. The figure itself had been damaged prior to deposition, suffering a broken dorsal fin and a missing tail (Fig. 12.6a). It would be difficult to escape the conclusion that this broken figure was discarded by the prehistoric population. It is very similar in size and style to one



Fig. 12.5 a-c. Problematic objects with incisions, compared to a birdstone, from left to right: a. E-762, b. 202-19, and c. E-334. Top row shows profile, middle row shows front view, and bottom row shows back view.

found on the surface of the Eel Cove Sand Dune Site (SCLI-47) by McKusick and Warren (1959) (Fig. 12.6b) and the whales uncovered by Rogers along the Santa Barbara Coast (Lee 1981:Fig. 25, Rogers 1929:plate 74).

A steatite object which could be a dish, ladle, or scoop was found in two pieces. One half was associated with Burial 1 and one half was found in Unit 4. It is included in this artifact grouping both because it is made of steatite (as are all the effigies) and because it bears a resemblance to a fish form (Fig. 12.7).

Seven fragments of steatite vessels were found during the excavation. They may also represent dishes, ladles, or scoops. The measurements and provenience of each piece are found in Table 12.2.

The two excavations at Ledge Site (SCLI-126) by the Archaeological Survey Association (ASA) (1963) and UCLA (1983) yielded four possible sea mammal effigies (Fig. 12.8). One whole and two fragmentary pieces of steatite resemble the stylized fish or sea mammal effigies found in the past. Number 915 has drilled indentations, which could represent eyes, at the



Fig. 12.6. Top row (a) shows whale effigy from SCLI-43c midden. Artifact has eyes, mouth, and blow-hole indicated. Bottom row (b) shows whale effigy from the surface of Eel Cove Sand Dune, SCLI-47, has mouth, one eye, and tail flukes represented. Top views (on the right) have a sinewy appearance.

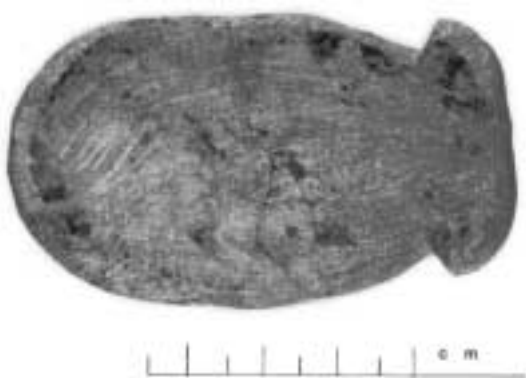


Fig. 12.7. Steatite dish, ladle, or scoop from Eel Point. One half was found with Burial 1 and the other half was in Unit 4.

Table 12.2. Steatite vessel fragments from Eel Point (SCLI-43C).

Catalog number	Provenience	Length (cm)	Width (cm)	Thickness (cm)
E-262	Unit 4 140-160 cm	8.1	5.3	1.7
E-635	Unit 4 190-205 cm	3.1	2.8	1.3
E-326	Bur. 2	3.5	2.1	0.9
E-626	Bur. 5A and B	2.4	2.1	0.95
E-626	Bur. 5A and B	4.3	2.5	0.9 (rim)
E-964	Bur. 5	3.6	3.1	0.8 (rim)
E-964	Bur. 5	2.9	2	1.0 (rim)

wide end and incised lines at the narrow end. This object might be a very simple whale effigy. Likewise, the two fragments (#310 and M-18 O-6) may represent the rear halves of whale figures. Number 310 could also be the bottom half of a pendant as an incised decoration may be present. (Since steatite, or soapstone, has a hardness of 1 on the Mohs scale and is easily scratched with a fingernail, it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between purposeful and accidental “decoration.”) A fourth object (N-18 6-12) may also represent a fish with eyes and an open mouth or a pendant on which a new hole was begun to replace one which had broken.

**Other Effigies from San Clemente Island**

Effigies were collected from San Clemente Island by Blanche Trask and George Schaffer at the turn of the century and Theodore Murphy three decades later (Zahniser 1981). While these lack a definite site provenience, some of the more recent discoveries provide clues as to where the earlier finds may have been made.

A large effigy, possibly representing a burrowing owl, was found on the surface above Seal Cove (Hudson 1978). It measures 20.5 cm high by 14.8 cm wide and

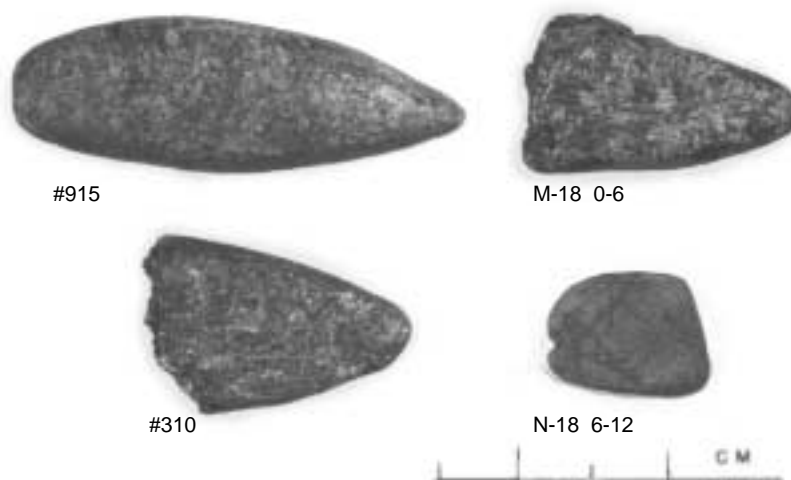


Fig. 12.8. Whale or Fish effigies from the Ledge Site. Upper left has eye representations. Two on the left are from 1983 excavations, two on the right are from 1962.

10.5 cm thick and is made of vesicular basalt. It was near a cave but not associated with any of the shell middens along the cliff. (A second large artifact also possibly representing a burrowing owl was noted at the Lowie Museum in the Blanche Trask Collection [Zahniser 1981:A4]. This figure is 35 cm long and 11 cm wide with a "brow ridge," broken "beak," and well defined "neck.") These thick, more globular figures are anomalies, as are the two effigies found at the Browne Site (CA-Ven-100) on the mainland (Greenwood 1969:46-69). These latter forms appear to represent amphibians and are referred to as the "toad" or "frog" and the "tadpole." The diorite toad is 16.5 cm long by 7.5 cm high and weighs 2,834 grams. The diorite gneiss tadpole is 13.2 cm long by 4.1 cm high and weighs 624 grams.

The San Diego Museum of Man sponsored excavations in 1954 on the extreme southeastern end of San Clemente. One of the sites examined (SCLI-122) had been disturbed by heavy equipment which accidentally uncovered burials reported to consist of two young adults, one adolescent, and one child. Among the artifacts collected from the back dirt pile left by the equipment was a birdstone 3.5 cm high and 2.4 cm wide at the base. It also appears to have either wing representations or an incised line on the side opposite the hook (Saylor 1959).

A thin fish effigy 6.4 cm long was found at SCLI-125, about 1.5 miles above Eel Point (Bryan 1963). It is very similar in shape to one of the fish effigies from Arroyo Sequit (LAN-52) (Curtis 1959:106) and many from the Malibu Site (LAN-264). Two others are, of course, the effigies recovered by McKusick and Warren in 1958, one on the surface of the Eel Cove Sand Dune (SCLI-47) (Fig. 6b) and one from the Seal Cove Midden Site (SCLI-67) (Fig. 12.5b).

### Effigies from Early Archaeological Excavations

Leon de Cessac (1951) collected archaeological specimens from San Nicolas Island in 1871. He at first found strange small, triangular stones which puzzled him. When further excavations produced graphic sea mammal figures, he believed the simple shapes were preforms or models for the more realistic effigies.

The depictions of "pajaritos" or small birds were not as obvious and de Cessac identified them only after his Indian informants assured him that they represented birds. Lee (1981) and Hudson (1978) differentiate between bird species, describing carvings of pelicans as having large, downward curving beaks while cormorants have elongated necks and high, short beaks. Hoover (1974a) identifies other possible bird models as heron, loon, and grebe by the size and shape of the beak. Due to the highly stylized nature of the effigies, such identifications must be considered tentative.

D. B. Rogers (1929:417) believed that animal effigies occurred very rarely. He mentions excavating four whale shapes at Las Llagas on the Santa Barbara coast. They were found in association with cigar-shaped charmstones and pipes in a ceremonial cache (Rogers 1929:388). These figures, made of siltstone, are rather flat and progress from very simple to more obvious representations.

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) also found an effigy in a possible ceremonial association in 1938 at the Corona del Mar Site in Orange County (CA-ORA-104). A perforated (doughnut) stone was found on top of a birdstone with two "ceremonial wands" or "paddle-like" stones nearby. The stone disc is 7.6 cm in diameter and the birdstone is 13 cm high, 4.8 cm from the tip of the beak, and weighing 680 grams. The "wands" are of blue schist and granite (Cameron 1983).

### Elaborate Effigies

The effigies found prior to the 1940s were plain, simple, sturdy, often highly stylized figures. Suddenly some rather fancy and fanciful forms began to appear (i.e., six-legged creatures, bears, and objects with elaborate bead decoration), many attributed to the Arroyo Sequit Site (CA-LAN-52). A turtle-shaped bowl from there is shown in Fig. 12.9. Other of these extraordinary carvings are pictured in Burnett (1944), illustrating items now in the Heye Foundation Museum of the American Indian in New York. Further excavations at Arroyo Sequit a decade later yielded only one, plain serpentine fish effigy, 2.3 cm long (Curtis 1959).

A. R. Sanger collected for the Heye Foundation and retained five effigies from Arroyo Sequit in his own collection, one of serpentine and four of steatite. They are very simple fish representations, ranging in length from 6.8 cm to 10.8 cm, and quite unlike the fancy specimens acquired by various museums. The



Fig. 12.9. Turtle Bowl (19.2 cm in length and 8.4 cm high) was “found in Indian burial at Arroyo Sequit” in 1942 (Los Angeles County Museum). Note the quartz crystal in mouth and shell inlay around the rim.

Southwest Museum also has a very simple fish effigy (#830-G-325) 5.2 cm long from this site.

The authenticity of the elaborate effigies is considered doubtful by many scholars (Rogers 1929, Pond 1968, Hoover 1974a, and Lee 1981). Sanger himself admitted that he “embellished” artifacts in order to make them more attractive and hence more saleable (Ross 1951). He also stated that he found trade beads in some of the bowls and insinuated that the fancy effigies were manufactured during Mission times. The fact remains, however, that the discovery of all of the fantastic forms can be traced back to one person and neither earlier nor later archaeologists ever discovered similar artifacts, even in the same site where the fanciful ones were purported to have originated. In addition, identical figures of the oft pictured killer whale, with turned up tail and bead decorations, can be found in collections at the museums of: The American Indian, New York; Kansas City; Lompoc, California; Catalina Island, Los Angeles County; Southwest Museum, California, and of a private collector in Fullerton, California. All of these were acquired during the same time period, either directly from Sanger or through donors who purchased artifacts from him.

### Recent Recoveries of Animal Effigies

In the last three decades, other effigies have been recovered which have a dependable spatial or temporal provenience. In 1954, a large serpentine birdstone was uncovered during trenching activities near the Chilao Flats Ranger Station, California (LAN-1010), approximately eight miles north of Mount Wilson. Besides being one of the furthest and highest inland locations where an effigy has been reported, it is also one of the largest to have a firm provenience. Although no archaeologists were present during the discovery of this serpentine birdstone, and no similar artifacts were found during subsequent excavations, it is probably authentic. It measures 21.4 cm high and 12.4 cm wide at the base with lines of asphaltum



visible on the head, which may indicate it was once decorated (Rozaire 1958). It is slightly larger than the birdstone reported from a sand and gravel quarry east of San Juan Capistrano in Orange County. Local archaeologists described it as 15 to 18 cm long (Cameron 1983).

At the other end of the size scale, a very small birdstone effigy was excavated from Morro Canyon in Orange County (CA-ORA-327) in 1972. It is 2.2 cm tall and 1.1 cm wide at the base (Cameron 1983). A radiocarbon date for shell associated with this artifact is approximately AD 1000.

Meighan (1959) found fourteen very simple steatite “effigies” at the Little Harbor Site (CA-SCAI-17). He considers these rudimentary spike-like forms to be forerunners of the more naturalistic figures which appear in later sites, but their shape and dating of over 4000 years ago place them outside of the present discussion of animal effigies.

The sleeker “preforms” or “models” found by de Cessac compare readily to a cache of effigies found on the Palos Verdes Peninsula. A single abalone shell packed with seven effigies, a charmstone, and a steatite bead, was uncovered by heavy equipment in 1969 (Wallace and Wallace 1974). The figures were identified as representing whales, seals or sea lions, dolphins, and a sea otter. They range in length from 4.3 to 8.8 cm.

### Association with Burials

While the vast majority of the animal effigies have been surface finds, some have also been recovered in association with burials. While excavating on San Nicolas Island, de Cessac found twenty effigies, depicting both sea mammals and birds, with a male skeleton. Forty-seven years later, Bryan (1970:59) found a sandstone shark effigy with a burial on the same island (Fig. 12.10 top). A second shark effigy

was found on a sand dune by A.R. Sanger who accompanied B. Bryan (Fig. 12.10 lower).

In 1921, the Palmer-Redondo Site (LAN-127) on the mainland yielded a minimum of nine burials (Los Angeles County Museum Records 1932). The bodies had been placed in prone positions and four were associated with fetishes in the shape of spikes and animals. Table 12.3 gives the measurements and Fig. 12.11 shows a sample of the birdstones found with Burial 2. While no absolute dates are available, it is known that no historic artifacts were found in this site (Wallace, personal communication, 1984).

A total of 82 entire or partial burials were uncovered at the Malibu Site, on the coast of the mainland, in a prehistoric cemetery (CA-LAN-264): 23 infants or sub-adults which could not be sexed; 27 males; 29 females; and 3 unsexed adults. Sixty-one small stones were found with 11 of these interments, which



Fig. 12.10. Shark effigies from San Nicolas Island. Top effigy, found by B. Bryan, is flat, and weighs 12.3 grams. Lower effigy, found by A.R. Sanger, is round, and weighs 37.5 grams.

Table 12.3. Effigies from the Palmer-Redondo Site (LAN-127).

Provenience	Object	Length (cm)	Width (cm)	Description
Burial 1	bird	12.2	5.5	steatite
	fish/tadpole ?	10	3	steatite
	shark	7.8	3.5	tan colored stone
Burial 2	whale	12.7	2.5	gray stone
	whale	12.7	3	gray stone
	sea otter	6.3	2.5	gray stone, red paint
	seal	10.2	2.8	gray stone
	bird	7	5	gray stone, tar
	bird	5.7	3.7	gray stone, tar
	bird	6.1	3.1	green serpentine, tar
	bird	5	2.5	gray stone, tar
	bird	7	4.5	serpentine
	bird	8.3	5.7	serpentine
Burial 4	bird	17.6	10.4	steatite
Burial 5	shark (frag)	8.3*	10.4	steatite

\* incomplete



Fig. 12.11. Birdstones from the Palmer-Redondo Site (LAN-127), Burial 2.

Table 12.4. Effigies from the Malibu Site (LAN-264).

Acc.	Object	Provenience	Height or Length (cm)	Width (cm)	Weight (gm)	Figure
1733	birdstone	Burial 35, female, 17-19 years	10.5	6.4	321.5	12.12
1734	fish, flat	Burial 36, male, 18-21 years	6	2.6	25	12.12
1735	fish, flat		4.5*	2.2	12.0*	12.12
1736	fish, flat		5.6	2.5	16.5	12.12
1737	fish, flat		3.7	2	8	12.12
1738	fish, round		7.6	2.9	83	12.12
1739	fish, round		10.6	3.2	142	12.12
1740	fish		6.8	1.1	4	12.12
1741	fish, dorsal fin		8.7	2.7	40	12.12
1742	fish, dorsal fin		6.5	3.2	28	12.12
1744	fish, round		7.9	1.5	30.5	12.12
1745	fish		8	1	11	12.12
1746	fish		5.4	1.3	12.5	12.12
1748	fish		5.3	1	5.6	12.12
1749	fish		5.6	1	5.6	12.12
1750	fish		4.9	1.2	7	12.12
1751	triangle shape		7.1	4	18	12.12
1752	long, perforated		8.0*	0.9	10.5*	12.12
1753	pebble, flat		5.2*	1.8	10.9	12.12
1754	pebble		4.2*	0.9	2.8*	12.12
1763	fish, dorsal fin		8.2	4.4	33.8	12.12
1764	fish		7.4	2	34	12.12
1765	pebble		5.9	1.1	5.3	12.12
1057	birdstone	Burial 19, female, 18-26 years	5.9	2.1	36.6	12.13
1769	fish	Burial 48, male, 28-40 years	7.2	2.4	36.5	12.14
1770	fish		8.7	2.8	48.2	12.14
1771	fish		5.7	1.9	12	12.14
1772	fish		4.2	1.5	10	12.14
1773	plain pebble	Burial 44, female, 25-28 years	6.8	2.9	47	12.15
1774	plain pebble		8.6	2.3	78	12.15
1775	plain pebble		6.1	2.1	22	12.15
1776	plain pebble, flat		5.3	2.6	110.9	12.15
1777	plain pebble		5.1	2.1	11.7	12.15
1778	plain pebble		7.4	4.1	74.6	12.15
1779	plain pebble, flat		5	3.8	32.5	12.15

\*incomplete

Table 12.4. (continued). Effigies from the Malibu Site (LAN-264).

Acc.	Object	Provenience	Height or Length (cm)	Width (cm)	Weight (gm)	Figure
1780	plain pebble, flat		6.1	2.9	21.5	12.15
1781	plain pebble		8	3.6	98	12.15
3095	fish	Burial 67, female, over 28 years	6.7	2.5	35.5	12.16
	fish, shark		6.6*	2.5	210.5	12.16
	fish	female, 25-29 years	4.9	2.3	32	12.16
	fish	male, over 26 years	6.4	1.9	18.7	12.16
	fish		6.9	1.6	17.7	12.16
	fish		6.8	1.9	18	12.16
	fish, incised line		5.5	1.4	13.5	12.16
	fish		5.6*	1.5	15	12.16
	fish		3.8	1.4	10	12.16
	fish		3.1*	1.5	8	12.16
	fish, pectoral fins		5.7	1.3	12	12.16
	fish		5.1*	1.4	10	12.16
	fish		4	1.7	13	12.16
	fish		4.2	1.2	7.5	12.16
	fish, incised line		4.1	1.4	6.5	12.16
	plain pebble		4.9	2.2	15	12.16
3218	fish, large cobble	Burial 63, 15-17 years, immature	11.6	7.7	2410	12.17
3219	plain pebble, flat		10	2.9	36.6	12.17
	plain pebble, flat		7.7	2.5	32	12.17
	plain pebble, flat		3.8	2.2	10.6	12.17
	plain pebble		8	3.1	64	12.17
	plain pebble		7.6	2.6	56.8	12.17
3358	plain pebble	Burial 75, female, over 19 years and male, 28-40 years	4.3	2.1	5.5	12.18
	plain pebble		3.9	2.3	11.5	12.18
142	pebble, smooth	A-8, 64-68 inches	2.9*			12.19
432	pebble, smooth	B-3, T-H 84-96 inches	3.7			12.19
432	pebble, smooth	B-3, T-H 84-96 inches	5.2			12.19
991	pebble, flat	A-34, T-BC 54-60 inches	5.9			12.19
1055	pebble flat	A-28, T10-EF 90-102 inches	4.6*			12.19
1084	pebble, hole begun	A-18, T10D 84-90 inches	4.2			12.19
1247	pebble	A-27, 66-72 inches	3.8			12.19
2058	pebble	A-25, 78-90 inches	6.2			12.19
2600	pebble	A-44 56-60 inches	5.9			12.19
2682	pebble, flat		4.8			12.19

\*incomplete



Fig. 12.12. Effigies from Malibu Site (LAN-264), Burials 35 and 36.

represent seven burial features (Table 12.4). Two of the stones are typical birdstones (Figs. 12.12, 12.13); 37 are simple fish creations; some have fins, mouths, and eyes (Figs. 12.12, 12.14, 12.16, 12.17); and 21 are unmodified beach pebbles (Figs. 12.15, 12.17, 12.18). Eleven similar pebbles were found throughout the site but with no apparent associations (Fig. 12.19). Some of the fish representations are cylindrical, while others are flat. One large figure may represent a whale and is

formed from a cobble (Fig. 12.17). It is one of five with dorsal fins.

The burial lots range from one female and one male (Burial 75) with two plain pebbles, beads, and lithic flakes, to one female and one male (Burials 35 and 36) with a birdstone, 17 fish effigies, two pendants, three pebbles, two ear spools, and over 900 shell beads (Meighan 1976). The significance of the distribution



Fig. 12.13. Birdstone from Malibu Site (LAN-264), Burial 19. Shown on the cover.



Fig. 12.14. Fish effigies from Malibu Site (LAN-264), Burial 48.

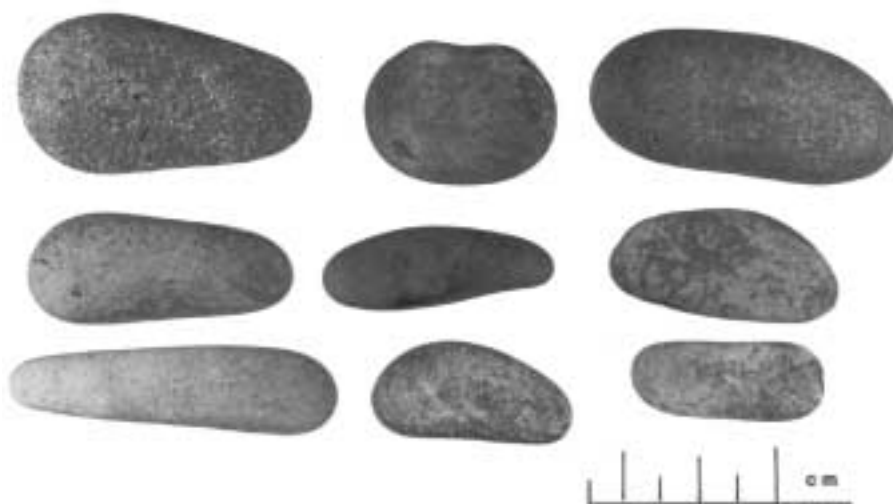


Fig. 12.15. Plain pebbles from Malibu Site (LAN-264), Burial 44.



Fig. 12.16. Effigies from Malibu Site (LAN-264), Burial 67. Eight have mouths and eyes represented and only one is a plain pebble.



Fig. 12.17. Effigies and pebbles from Malibu Site (LAN-264), Burial 63. This effigy is made from a cobble.

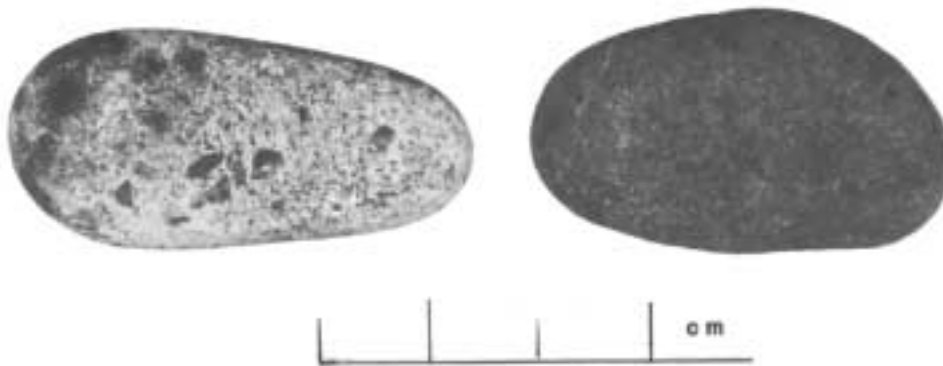


Fig. 12.18. Pebbles from Malibu Site (LAN-264), Burial 75.





Fig. 12.19. Pebbles from the Malibu Site (LAN-264), similar to some found with burials, but uncovered with no apparent association with each other or other artifacts.

pattern is difficult to assess. Since sex and age appear random, social or economic status may be relevant.

The Malibu effigies are important because they represent the first clearly-dated artifacts of this type. Malibu has been dated by radiocarbon and obsidian dating and the effigies reported are approximately 1000 years old, an age which may correlate in part with the Eel Point C site on San Clemente Island.

Hoover (1974b) describes a large white quartzite birdstone from Catalina Island in the Glidden collection. This artifact is approximately 30 cm high and 20 cm wide (larger than the Chilao Flats effigy) with shell beads decorating the beak and base. It was gathered in the 1920s but lacks a provenience. Decker (1969) studied Glidden's collection and pinpointed Little Harbor as the site where two whale effigies, one fish effigy, and three stone "hooks" were found associated with burials. It is not known, however, whether the quartzite birdstone is one of these

"hooks." (This Little Harbor Site is not the same as that reported by Meighan, 1959. They are separated by over six hundred yards in distance and two hundred feet in elevation.)

### Conclusions

Questions abound concerning stone animal effigies. Can they serve as diagnostic time markers for the sites in which they are found? Do they indicate tribal boundaries prior to contact? Were they made for grave offerings, ritualistic shaman's objects, children's toys, hunters' good luck charms, or family totems? Did the larger whale effigies have a different use than the smaller figures? Where do the large birdstones, both the "hook" and the "spade" shapes, fit into the effigy puzzle? (While none of the latter have been found recently, they must be considered within this artifact class.)



Fig. 12.20. Locations of animal effigies discussed in this report.

At present, it is known that animal effigies, ascribed to the prehistoric Chumash, have been found from Santa Barbara to southern Orange County (Fig. 12. 20). San Diego County seems to be nearly devoid of bird and sea mammal effigies since only one sea mammal has been reported (Hedges, personal communication 1983). The small “amulet or effigy forms” from Cuyamaca State Park (Polk 1972:22) may represent frogs but are more similar to Southwest cultural objects than coastal California.

Most of the figures are made of steatite from the outcrops on Santa Catalina Island. Catalina, together with San Nicolas and San Clemente, make up the majority of the Southern Channel Islands group that is traditionally placed in Gabrielino territory. These are the only islands from which animal effigies have heretofore been reported. We can now add a previ-

ously unpublished small, flat “whale” effigy that was a surface discovery on Santa Barbara Island (Rozaire, personal communication, 1983).

No references to animal fetishes from the Northern Channel Islands have previously been published. This is a curious circumstance since several boat effigies are reported from there (Lee 1981:51, Rogers 1929). The islands of Santa Cruz, Anacapa, and San Miguel, as well as the Santa Barbara coast and the Santa Inez Valley were all explored and excavated by de Cessac (1951) prior to his trip to San Nicolas Island. The latter, however, was the only area from which he reported fetishes.

Excavations in 1919 on San Miguel Island, conducted by Ralph Glidden, produced many artifacts of bone, stone, and shell, but no animal effigies were reported



Fig. 12.21. Only birdstone known from the Northern Channel Islands, found by D. B. Rogers.

(Heye 1921). Orr (1968) examined many sites on Santa Rosa Island that spanned occupations from “the Mammoth Eaters” to the Canaliño and no effigies were mentioned. Recent archaeological work by UC Santa Barbara has also failed to recover animal effigies (Glassow, personal communication 1983).

Personal research at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History uncovered four instances of animal effigies from the northern Channel Islands, three on San Miguel and one on Santa Cruz. The American Museum of Natural History retains four fish-like forms (AMNH T-6026, 6028, 6038, 6047) collected by Stephen Bowers in 1879 and A. W. Barnard in

1881 “on San Miguel Island and along the Santa Barbara Mainland” (Hudson and Blackburn 1986). They are very similar to those from the Malibu Site (LAN-264) (Fig. 12.12). If the provenience of these items is correct as stated, they surely represent trade items from the southern islands.

A figure possibly representing a sea lion (NA-CA-SBAXX-7A-3) was discovered by Mr. Owen O’Neill in 1895 “on a cliff above Valdez Cove” on Santa Cruz Island. This effigy was on loan from the museum and not available for study.

A long, thin birdstone (MN-CA-132-13A-1) was found by D.B. Rogers in 1927 on the surface of the north shore of San Miguel Island. It is 14.2 cm long and 5.5 cm wide at the base but only 2.1 cm thick along the slender neck (Fig. 12.21).

A killer whale figure (NA-CA-132-7A-1) was picked up on the surface of San Miguel Island, at an unknown

date, by Phil Orr. This still leaves the northern Channel Islands nearly bereft of animal fetishes.

The use of these figures remains a mystery. They have been found with burials at Malibu and the Palmer-Redondo Site as well as on the islands of Catalina, San Nicolas, and San Clemente. They have been found in caches or features in Santa Barbara, Palos Verdes, and Corona del Mar (Orange County). They

Table 12.5. Southern California animal effigies with a dependable provenience.

Site		Effigies	Association	Length (cm)	Date (*radiocarbon)
SBA-81	Las Llagas	4 whales	cache/shrine	15.7	
SBA-78	Mikiw	2 whales	cache/shrine	21	
VEN-100	Browne Site	2 amphibians		16.5, 13.2	from 5000 BC
LAN-52	Arroyo Sequit	1 fish		2.3	AD 50 to historic
LAN-127	Palmer-Redondo	7 birds	burials	17.6-5.0	
		7 sea mammals			AD 500-1500
LAN-264	Malibu Stie	2 birds	burials	10.5, 5.9	
		37 fish	male, female	11.6-3.7	AD 850*
LAN-	Palos Verdes	7 sea mammals	cache	8.8-4.3	
LAN-1010	Chilao Flats	1 bird		21.4	
ORA-104	Corona del Mar	1 bird	cache	13	
ORA-163	Griset Site	1 whale		8.2	
ORA-327	Morro Canyon	1 bird		2.2	AD 1070-1029*
ORA-	Quarry	1 bird		15.0-18.0	
SNI-	(de Cessac)	20 effigies	burial, male		
SNI-	(Bryan)	1 shark	burial	6.1	
SCAI-17	Little Harbor	3 birds	burials		
		3 sea mammals			
SCLI-122	(S.D. Museum)	1 bird	burials	3.5	Canalino
SCLI-47	Eel Cove Dune	1 whale	surface	14	
SCLI-	(Hudson)	1 owl	surface	20.5	
SCLI-67	Seal Cove Midden	1 bird ?		2.7	
SCLI-	(ASA)	1 fish	burial, male	6.4	late Canalino
SCLI-43c	Eel Point	4 birds	burials, male	3.9-2.1	
		2 sea mammals	burials, male		
		1 whale	midden	14.6	
SCLI-126	Ledge Site	3 simple whales, 1 fish		5.9, 2.1	AD 500 to historic

have been found throughout the entire area, both surface and subsurface, in no particular association with other artifacts or features (Table 12.5). Their range is normally near the coast, although Chilao Flats is more than forty miles inland at “the foot of the Idyllwilde grade,” where two steatite birdstones were uncovered in an orchard (PCAS *Smoke Signals* 1969), is nearly sixty miles from the ocean. These inland locations must be considered exceptional.

There is no ethnographic evidence concerning the use of effigies at the time of contact. The journals of Fages (1972), Costansó (1911) and Crespí (Bolton 1927) fail to mention them. The “vanquech” figure noted by Boscana (1978:155), is the prepared skin of a coyote formed into a quiver-like receptacle and clearly unrelated to the animal effigies under discussion.

Heizer studied the de Cessac collection in France and some of his notes are published in Volume IV of *The Material Culture of the Chumash Interaction Sphere* by Hudson and Blackburn. (Travis Hudson generously allowed the author to see this manuscript prior to publication.) He found that 23 of the figurines from San Nicolas Island had a small hole drilled in the bottom. He thought this basal hole could indicate that sticks were inserted so the figures could stand upright on the ground and there was the “vague suggestion of ritual” where many effigies might be used.

All of the cavities contain asphalt and one has a piece of metal embedded in it. This could represent a metal drill bit or a previous attempt by museum personnel to stabilize the figures while displaying them. Hudson (personal communication 1984) does not believe that de Cessac would have drilled the holes himself. No other effigies are known which have these basal holes so it does not seem likely that the Indians drilled them.

Animal effigies were not mentioned by informants after de Cessac’s time although Harrington noted that Fernando Librado told him canoe builders kept small

canoe effigies, about 15 - 20 cm long, as charms. These boats were buried with the owner when he died since, as charmstones, they would have no power for others (Hudson et al. 1978:126). On the other hand, another Chumash informant reported that the small canoes found with infant burials were to take children into the next world because they were too small and inexperienced to find the way themselves (Rogers 1929:378).

Following Harrington’s theme, Hudson et al. (1978) notes that the duck hawk was one totem associated with the canoe brotherhood. *Helek* (duck hawk) is mentioned as a canoe captain in Chumash mythology and is a dream helper. *He’w* (pelican) and *Mut* (cormorant) go to sea with *Helek* and may also be crew members. Hudson proposes that bird effigies may be charmstones for men who have either pelicans or cormorants as their dream helpers. If this is the case, the figures should be found only with male burials, although Meighan (personal communication 1983) has discussed broken artifacts being interred with their owners while unbroken objects may represent offerings to a loved one.

None of the animal effigies found with burials has been ritually “killed.” The San Clemente Island figures were all found with males while the Malibu Site was mixed with the two birdstones being found with females.

While absolute dating is lacking for most of the figures, we now have four instances in which radiocarbon dating is available from material in direct association with the effigies. These dates range from AD 850 to AD 1290 or between 650 and 1100 years ago, and cease before European contact. The Ledge Site effigies are puzzling because the site was inhabited until contact time and seems to be fairly homogeneous, although Redtfeldt (1964:8-10) found evidence of stratigraphy during the ASA excavation. Obsidian dates range from AD 450-950 so the site may have

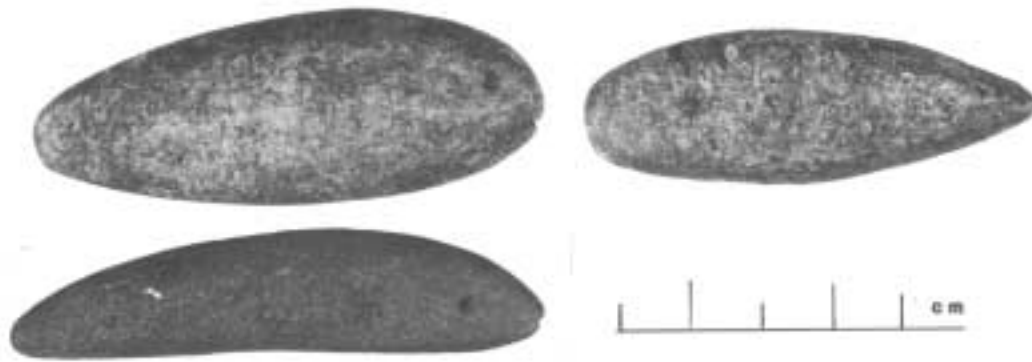


Fig. 12.22. Malibu effigies (on the left) and Ledge Site effigy. Some Malibu effigies have mouths and eyes as indicated.

been in use for over 1200 years. The figures found here are flat, rather than rounded (Fig. 12.22) and are similar to several of the effigies from the Malibu Site, which has three radiocarbon dates and 65 obsidian dates centering about 1000 years ago.

San Clemente Island is the logical place for further research on these artifacts. It is one of the few remaining spots in Southern California which contains undisturbed archaeological sites, free not only from development but from farming activities and burrowing rodents. Despite the tremendous amount of armed forces related activity, many areas of the Eel Point Site were in pristine condition, which must be duplicated in other sites on the island.

While the radiocarbon dates correspond well, a larger sample producing a broader data base would certainly be most welcome. It is highly likely that additional effigies will be found in situ which will add valuable information toward solving the questions of male/female association, position in relation to the body, types of animals depicted, significance of the size of the figure, and the time and extent of the Shoshonean intrusion into Hokan territory. It is entirely possible that a slender border of Hokan-related people inhabited the coast of Los Angeles and Orange Counties and the Southern Channel Islands until almost the time

of contact. Some recent archaeological research in Orange County also points to this conclusion.

#### 1984 Excavation Season

During the 1984 excavations at Eel Point (SCLI-43C), five additional effigy figures were recovered. Their location within the site is described in Table 12.6. Only one was discovered in a feature and none were found with burials.

All are unusual, but for different reasons. EC-420 is a simple sea mammal effigy similar to those found at Ledge. It is the first one recovered at Eel Point, although these simple figures were found together with more complex effigies at Malibu (LAN-264). Effigies EC-514 and EC-620 are crude bird-like representations. The former is flat and plain, possibly using a natural crack in the stone to represent a wing (Fig. 12.23a). The latter is a heavy-bodied, lop-sided figure with folded wings and a cocked head (Fig. 12.23b).

Effigy EC-621 is unique in shape and could represent either a seal looking backwards or a sea otter swimming on its back (Fig. 12.24). Some sort of lower appendages, either feet or flippers, are depicted. The broken head and neck of a bird effigy (EC-634),



Fig. 12.23a. EC-514 (on the left) b. EC-620 (on the right)  
Crude birdstone representations from Eel Point (SCLI-43c).

Fig. 12.24. Possible sea mammal effigy which looks different  
from every angle (Eel Point, SCLI-43c).

which fit together, were found in two units. It is larger than the birdstones found previously. Two steatite pendants, representing birds, were also found. Half of a small birdstone with just the wings remaining is similar to a number of such items in a private collection. The other pendant, which has a broken “beak,” was found on the surface of SCLI-43a where McKusick and Warren dug in 1958.

Another possible sea mammal representation (Cat. no. 2011) was discovered at Ledge, bringing the total effigies from that site to five. At 3.25 cm in length and 5.2 g, it is much smaller and lighter than the others.

A finely made sea mammal effigy (T-2) was found at the Target Site (SCLI-1375). No burials or features were uncovered here. All pertinent data on these effigies can be found in Table 12.6.

Table 12.6. Provenience of effigies, San Clemente Island, 1984 excavations.

Catalog Number	Object	Location	Length (cm)	Width (cm)	Weight (gm)	Figure
SCLI-43c						
EC-420	simple sea mammal	H-17, 195-210 cm	4.7	1.4	11.9	
EC-514	bird	G-17, 190-205 cm	2.1	3.2	26	12.23a
EC-620	bird	TPc, 105-120 cm	6.1	2.4	45.7	12.23b
EC-621	seal/sea otter?	Feature 3	2.9	0.8	4.7	12.24
EC-634	bird*, head/neck only	H-12 & H-13, 200-215 cm	5.5*	3.3	52.3*	
EC-53	1/2 birdstone pendant	F-15, 60-75 cm	1.1*	1.2	1.3*	
SCLI-43						
43a	birdstone pendant	surface	2.9	2	4.0*	
SCLI-126						
2011	simple sea mammal	R-32, 30-45 cm	3.25	1.2	5.2	
SCLI-1375						
T-2	sea mammal	TPc, 10-20 cm	5	1.2	12.5	

\* incomplete