I found a possible archaeological artifact in IOWA

no, it's from another state or country

This is not OSA's area of expertise. Please contact an archaeologist or institution from the area of the find. A list of state contacts is linked below.

On private or public land?*

my own property

someone else's property

Did you get explicit permission from the landowner to collect on their property?

no or not sure

no

This is not OSA's area of expertise. Leave the artifact in place and contact the landowner.

STOP! It is illegal to take artifacts from public land without a permit. Contact the local, county, state, or federal agency that manages this land. If you find an artifact on public land, leave it place, record the location, take a photo, and provide this info to staff.

Is the object stone?

no or not sure

it is unmistakably stone

no

STOP! This is illegal. Leave the artifact in place and contact the landowner.

Is it unmistakably intentionally shaped by humans?

no or not sure

yes

Do you think it's a fossil?

no or not sure

yes

This is not OSA's area of expertise. Contact a paleontologist.

Do you think you might be ancient pottery?

no or not sure

yes

These are extremely rare on handheld objects. You may have a concretion. Watch the videos listed below and/or contact a geologist.

Could it be human bone?

no

yes

You may have a grinder. A cultural determination is not feasible without additional context. Watch the videos listed below and/or contact a geologist.

Is it unmistakably animal bone?

no

yes

You may have an omarolluk. Watch the videos listed below and/or contact a geologist.

Do you suspect it might be ancient pottery?

no

yes

You can likely identify this item. Email us a photo of the object next to a ruler or item for scale and provide basic contextual information.

Do you suspect it might be a historical object?

no

yes

It is mostly rounded and has a distinct round hole or indentation that looks like a paint well or place for a nut?

no

yes

Does it have a distinctly round shape and fits in your hand?

no or/and

yes

You may have a concretion. Watch the videos listed below and/or contact a geologist.

We can likely identify this item. Email us a photo of the object next to a ruler or item for scale and provide basic contextual information.

Is it unmistakably intentionally shaped by humans?

no

yes

This is not OSA's area of expertise. Contact a paleontologist.

Do you think you see a face, animal, writing, or glyphs?

no or not sure

yes

These are extremely rare on handheld objects. You may have a concretion. Watch the videos listed below and/or contact a geologist.

on private or public land?*

my own property

someone else's property

Did you get explicit permission from the landowner to collect on their property?

no or not sure

no

STOP! This is illegal. Leave the artifact in place and contact the landowner.

Is the object stone?

no or not sure

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my own property

someone else's property

Did you get explicit permission from the landowner to collect on their property?

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it is unmistakably stone

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Is it unmistakably animal bone?

no

yes

You may have an omarolluk. Watch the videos listed below and/or contact a geologist.

Do you suspect it might be a historical object?

no

yes

You can likely identify this item. Email us a photo of the object next to a ruler or item for scale and provide basic contextual information.

*Rivers and streams: The State of Iowa owns the channel bottom and streambanks up to the ordinary high-water mark for meandered rivers; beyond the high-water mark is a mix of public land and private ownership. The beds and banks of non-meandered rivers and streams belong to the landowner on either side.
1. I found an artifact, site, or fossil in **IOWA**.
   - If NO, IT’S FROM ANOTHER STATE OR COUNTRY go to Step 2.
   - If YES, go to Step 3.

2. This is not OSA’s area of expertise. Please contact an archaeologist or institution from the area of the find. A list of state contacts is linked below. [end of decision tree]

3. On private or public land?*
   - If PUBLIC LAND, go to Step 4.
   - If SOMEONE ELSE’S PROPERTY, go to Step 5.
   - If MY OWN PROPERTY, go to Step 7.

4. STOP! It is illegal to take artifacts from public land without a permit. Contact the local, county, state, or federal agency that manages this land. If you find an artifact on public land, **leave it** place, record the location, take a photo, and provide this info to staff. [end of decision tree]

5. Did you get **explicit** permission from the landowner to collect on their property?
   - If NO, go to Step 6.
   - If YES, go to Step 7.

6. **STOP!** This is illegal. Leave the artifact in place and contact the landowner. [end of decision tree]

7. Is the object stone?
   - If IT IS UNMISTAKABLY STONE, go to Step 8.
   - If NOT SURE, go to Step 11.
   - If YES, go to Step 24.

8. Is it unmistakably intentionally shaped by humans?
   - If YES, go to Step 10.
   - If NO OR NOT SURE, go to Step 11.

9. Do you think it’s a fossil?
   - If YES, go to Step 10.
   - If NO OR NOT SURE, go to Step 11.

10. This is not OSA’s area of expertise. Contact a paleontologist. [end of decision tree]

11. Do you think you see a face, animal, writing, or glyphs?
    - If YES OR NOT SURE, go to Step 12.
    - If NO, go to Step 13.
12. These are extremely rare on handheld objects. You may have a concretion. Watch the videos listed below and/or contact a geologist.

13. Does it have a distinctly round shape and fits in your hand?
   • If YES, go to Step 14.
   • If OR/AND, go to Step 15.
   • If NO, go to Step 17.

14. You may have a grinder. A cultural determination is not feasible without additional context. Watch the videos listed below and/or contact a geologist. [end of decision tree]

15. It is mostly rounded and has a distinct round hole or indentation that looks like a paint well or place for a nut?
   • If YES, go to Step 16.
   • If NO, go to Step 17.

16. You may have an omarolluk. Watch the videos listed below and/or contact a geologist. [end of decision tree]

17. If your rock doesn’t fit the above descriptions, we may be able to identify it. Email us, watch the videos, or contact a geologist. [end of decision tree]

18. Do you suspect it might be bone?
   • If YES, go to Step 19.
   • If NO, go to Step 22.

19. Could it be human bone?
   • If YES, go to Step 20.
   • If NO, go to Step 21.

20. CONTACT LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT. Our office will be asked to consult if it is determined to not be of legal interest. [end of decision tree]

21. Is it unmistakably animal bone?
   • If YES, go to Step 24.

22. Do you suspect it might be ancient pottery?
   • If NO, go to Step 23.
   • If YES, go to Step 24.

23. Do you suspect it might be a historical object?
   • If YES, go to Step 24.

24. We can likely identify this item. Email us a photo of the object next to a ruler or item for scale and provide basic contextual information. [end of decision tree]
*Rivers and streams: The State of Iowa owns the channel bottom and streambanks up to the ordinary high-water mark for meandered rivers; beyond the high-water mark is a mix of public land and private ownership. The beds and banks of non-meandered rivers and streams belong to the landowner on either side.

Email the OSA: osa@uiowa.edu

Find an archaeologist in your state: https://saa.org/about-archaeology/get-involved-locally

Video: Distinguishing Archaeological Artifacts from Natural Stone Objects

Video: Groundstone Tools vs Natural Stone