



ROCK EAGLE 4-H CENTER

ROCK EAGLE HIKE

Independent (Teacher led)

Trip Planner Description:

Lead your students along our trails to the Rock Eagle Effigy. Theorize why the mound was built and discuss Georgia history during the 1900s.

Objectives:

1. Explore some of the physical characteristics, history, and possible significance of the Rock Eagle effigy.
2. Enjoy a 2½-mile (round trip) hike through the woods.

Journal Questions:

1. Do you think the Rock Eagle looks like an eagle? If not, what do you think it looks like?
2. No one really knows who built the Rock Eagle or why it was built. What is your guess about why the Rock Eagle was built?
3. What is an effigy?
4. The observation tower and the Rock Eagle Lake were built in the 1930's as part of President Roosevelt's **Work Progress Administration** (WPA). The goal was to put men back to work. Why was this important at this time in the United States?
5. Did the land surrounding the Rock Eagle look like it does today 50 years ago? What did it look like 100 years ago? Will it look like this 50 years from now?

Class Outline:

- I. Start hike out to the Mound (little over 2 miles total)
 - A. Walk to mound 25-35 minutes, depending on your starting point
 - B. Discuss visual aids
- II. Arrive at the mound
 - A. Discuss proper etiquette
 1. To some this is a sacred place, we need to respect that.
 2. Keep your voices low and no running.
 - B. Give kids some time to explore
 - C. Scavenger Hunt
- III. The top of the tower is a good spot to fill in the facts about the mound
 - A. Time line of events
 - B. Reasons to protect our history
 - C. Thoughts from students
- IV. Hike back
 - A. Walk from mound 25-35 minutes, depending on your destination
 - B. Continue question and answer on the way back

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Trails:

The hike to the Rock Eagle and back will take most of the entire two-hour class period. It is a little over two miles total with some hills. You may take the yellow or white trail. The white trail is quicker, the yellow trail is prettier following the lakeshore. You can do a loop, but please remember other classes will be using the trail so **please keep your group together and quiet** so as not to disturb other groups. You get on the trail after crossing the boardwalk across the lake near cabin 36. Please ask for a map if you do not have one on hand.

During the hike:

During your hike you can point out the trees cut down by beavers along the lake. Try to envision this land a working farm in the early 1800's up until the 1930's and see if you can see the old land terraces. The 110-acre lake was a corn field before the dam was built in 1936. All the forest you see has grown up since the 1930's. Look for the areas that were recently cleared of trees and notice the succession in the plant communities.

At the Rock Eagle please be respectful of other people using the area and remind the students that this area is considered sacred by some people.

Background Information:

The Rock Eagle Mound is for the most part a mystery. It was built anywhere between 500 to 2,000 years ago and many believe it held a ceremonial purpose. The mound was built probably by inhabitants of the Oconee province, a series of woodland period chiefdoms that stretched from as far north as Athens to Milledgeville along the Oconee River. Chiefdoms in the Oconee River were related to the other Mississippian societies in Southeast. The image of bird with its wings open has appeared in Mississippian culture, on copper plates, in art, in petroglyphs, and in religion. The actual date and builders of the mound are not known. However, much speculation has ensued over the past century. The following information should begin to help you understand what has taken place here.

Rock Eagle Through the Years:

- † **1807:** The land on which Rock Eagle 4-H Center now stands was purchased for \$1.00 by Giles Tompkins through a land lottery.
- † **1854:** Reverend George White first mentions the mound in his Historical Collections of Georgia.
- † **1874:** The Eatonton Messenger publishes an article about the mound of rocks being in a "peculiar shape."
- † **1878:** CC Jones publishes the first sketch of Rock Eagle Mound in The Smithsonian *Annual Report*.

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- † **1936:** Under the Works Progress Administration, archaeologist Martin Cromer digs two exploratory trenches in and around Rock Eagle Mound. Excavations of the trenches reveal aboriginal pottery, chipped stone, and daub. Cromer works to restore Rock Eagle Mound solely on the dimensions of CC Jones' 1878 sketch.
- † **1938:** Both the fence around the mound and the observation tower are completed.
- † **1940:** A plaque explaining the mound's significance is placed outside the mound where it remains today.
- † **1952:** Rock Eagle 4-H Center is established.
- † **1954:** Jim Petrullo begins excavating Rock Eagle Mound. Burned and un-burnt human and animal bones are uncovered, as well as a single quartz point. Unfortunately, these artifacts are missing today. The 1954 excavation shows evidence that the mound is of prehistoric origin.
- † **1955:** Rock Eagle 4-Center is opened.
- † **1978:** The US Department of Interior lists Rock Eagle Mound on the National Register of Historic Places.
- † **1979:** Environmental Education at Rock Eagle begins.

Quick Facts

- The effigy is in the shape of a prone bird. Although it is referred to as the "Rock Eagle," many believe it more closely resembles a buzzard.

- It was constructed entirely of milky quartz rocks ranging from baseball-size rocks to boulders. You can find a bit of granite in the mound now probably from backfilling for reconstruction.

- There is no way to accurately date the mound, but the current accepted theory is that the Georgia piedmont has been occupied for approximately 12,000 years. The emerging evidence points towards the Rock Eagle Mound being built no earlier than 1,500 years ago to as recent as 500 years ago. Other archeological data from similar sites and dates lead many to believe the effigy held ceremonial purpose and for that reason it is considered a sacred site by many Native Americans living today.

- A similar effigy referred to as "Rock Hawk" is also in Putnam County, Georgia, near Wallace Dam on Lake Oconee. Though Rock Hawk was first sketched by CC Jones in 1877, it was not turned over for preservation until 1939. Because the mound was not taken care of as well as Rock Eagle, today it does not look like much of anything at all. The University of Georgia has control over Rock Hawk, but it has not been restored to CC Jones' sketch like Rock Eagle was.

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Similar images

The image of bird with its wings open has appeared in Mississippian culture, on copper plates, in art, in petroglyphs, and in religion. The Southeast Ceremonial complex is the name given to the regional stylistic similarity of [artifacts](#), [iconography](#), [ceremonies](#), and [mythology](#) of the [Mississippian culture](#) that coincided with their adoption of [maize](#) agriculture and [chiefdom](#)-level complex social organization from 1200 to 1650 CE. Although the Rock Eagle probably was built during the Woodland period, we can look at similar imagery and note the relation.

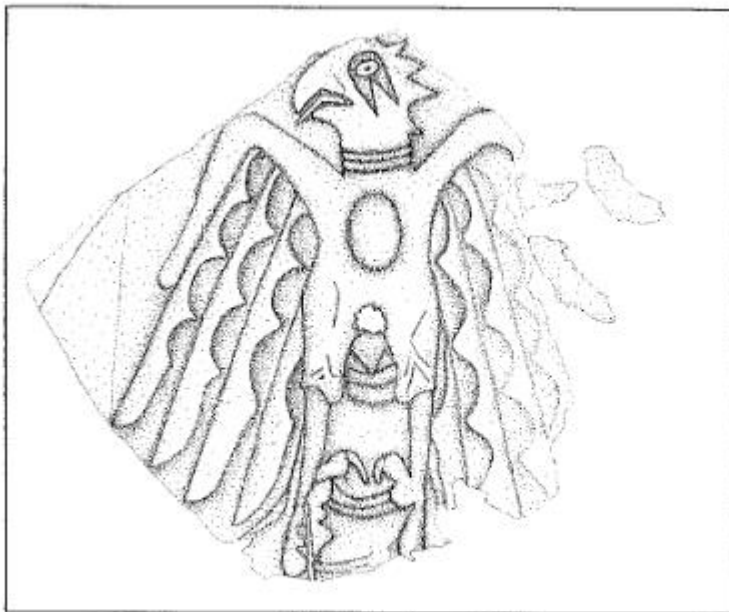


FIGURE 5
Medlin copper plate, Shinholser site

This image is from a medallion copper plate found at the Shinholster site outside of Milledgeville. The outline of the bird is similar to the shape of our Rock Eagle.



This image comes from depictions of petroglyphs found in the Bushnell Ceremonial Cave near Ste. Genevieve, Mo. The cave is close to the Common Field Site, a fortified Mississippian town with at least 8 mounds.

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Rock Eagle Mound Scavenger Hunt

This activity is designed to make you aware of the many activities that have taken place at the Rock Eagle Effigy Mound. Remember that this is a sacred place to many visitors, so use respect as you explore.

1. Finish this statement taken from a sign here at the mound. "Tread softly here..."

2. Can you identify a tree near the mound? What characteristics led you to this identification?

3. Pick up a piece of rock from the ground outside the fence that you think matches the rock of the eagle. What kind do you think it is?

4. How many steps does it take you to walk around the fence? _____

5. Are there any traces of past excavations? Check the old roadbed behind the mound.

6. Why do you think the mound was built? _____

7. Why do you think there is a fence around the mound? _____

8. What does the rock eagle look like to you? _____

9. What do you think the round stones are on the walk around the mound?

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Rock Eagle Mound Scavenger Hunt (Answer Key)

This activity is designed to make you aware of the many activities that have taken place at the Rock Eagle Effigy Mound. Remember that this is a sacred place to many visitors, so use respect as you explore.

1. Finish this statement taken from a sign here at the mound. "Tread softly here..."
white men for long ere you gone strange races lived, fought, and loved.
2. Can you identify a tree near the mound? What characteristics led you to this identification?
Various trees surround the mound. You can identify them by leaves, bark, branch patterns, seeds, etc.
3. Pick up a piece of rock from the ground outside the fence that you think matches the rock of the eagle. What kind do you think it is? Quartz or Granite.
4. How many steps does it take you to walk around the fence? This varies.
5. Are there any traces of past excavations? Check the old roadbed behind the mound. You can see the remnants of terracing behind the tower towards Founder's Lodge.
6. Why do you think the mound was built? We do not know the exact reasons for the mound being built. This is an exploratory question.
7. Why do you think there is a fence around the mound? The fence is to protect and preserve the effigy.
8. What does the rock eagle look like to you? Kids usually suggest a vulture or penguin.
9. What do you think the round stones are on the walk around the mound? Millstone.

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*Please take advantage of the following vocabulary to supplement your trip to the mound.
Please ask your staff person if you would like a more detailed history of the mound.*

VOCABULARY:

Archaeology:	the study of historic and prehistoric cultures conducted by analyzing their artifacts, inscriptions and monuments. Usually uses other areas of science such as zoology, botany and geology.
Artifacts:	objects that are made or modified by humans. Examples are arrowheads, baskets, pottery, stone tools and glass or metal objects.
Effigy:	a representation of a person, animal or object especially in the form of sculpture
Excavation:	method of exposing past cultures and artifacts by systematically removing layers of soil.
Historic:	documented by written records
Mound:	a raised platform made from piled soil, stone or other material
Pre-historic:	time period before written records, passed on orally and written about later on.
Site:	any place of past human activity fifty years or older. Usually contains several different features.
Stratigraphy:	a principal that states that artifacts found in an upper layer of soil will be younger than those found in deeper layers of soil. This rule also assumes that any major geological processes have not disturbed the area. On a side note superposition is a geological law created by Neils Steno in the 1600's, the Church felt it was blasphemous so it did not reach popular thought till much later.
Surface survey:	a walk over the site before excavation when surface features and artifacts found lying on the ground are identified and recorded.
Quartz:	a hard glossy mineral consisting of silicon dioxide in crystal form

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