



The Tortoise's Burrow At Hugh Taylor Birch State Park

Hugh Taylor Birch State
Park

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Who were the Tequesta Indians?

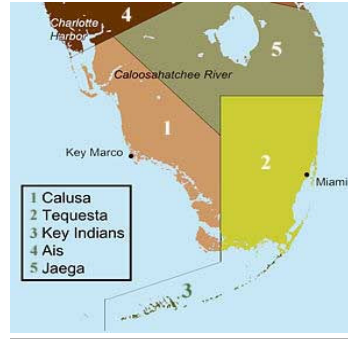


In a time when Giant Sloths roamed extensive, subtropical forests and Mammoth grazed the open plains of an ancient Florida triple the size of present day Florida, the first human inhabitants arrived to the peninsula. Over the eons they developed into various cultural groups moving out of the Achaean era into the Current era. In our particular area **The Tequesta** (tuh-KES-tuh) became one of the first tribes in South Florida that settled near Biscayne Bay in the present-day Miami area. They built the majority of their hut villages and shell midden (shell pile) camps at the mouth

of rivers and streams. The chief, also called The Tequesta, resided at the mouth of the Miami River where he dined on sea cow, considered a royal delicacy. At the **Miami Circle**, an astounding archeological find on Biscayne Bay (1998), it is strongly theorized that the chief presided over traditional rites honoring and supplicating to the adorned bones of ancient chiefs and elders. The chief, and medicine men honored a stuffed deer that was said to symbolize the power of the Sun, but also displayed the tribe's technology in taxidermy. Another sacred symbol that was widely used was a painting of a Barracuda crossed by a harpoon and surrounded by small tongue-like figures. There was also a spirit of the graveyard, a crow's head carved in pine. The painted board and bird's head



Miami Circle



were stored in a *temple* in the cemetery, along with carved masks used in festivals. The shaman marked the shifts between Windy and Calm seasons, shared the Cassina or the Black Drink (brewed from Youpon Holly) in vision quest ritual and or rite of passages, as well as settled disputes and decided on trade with neighboring tribes. The Tequesta settled along the coastal islands all the way up into present Broward County and as far south as Cape Sable in the Keys, where the Calusa also settled. To the north of the Tequesta

January Monthly Highlights

Dry Season Underway— But our Winter in Florida is hardly a hibernation. Currently Mango Trees all over this region are in full bloom. Sapodilla Trees have begun to fruit, and Snow Berries garnish our woods with bits of Winter white. Get ready for a Spring full of Fruits.

Birds Seen this month:

- Peregrine Falcon,
- Chuck-Will's-Widow
- Great Egret,
- Catbird,
- & resident Osprey



Ask about our tours!

We are offering a Full Moon nighttime canoe tour in the Mangrove restoration area—weather dependent. This usually runs a night or two AROUND the Full Moon. Watch for announcements and leave your information @ the R.Station.

FRIENDS OF BIRCH St. Pk.

Share your ideas and help enhance the features of our park through this wonderful volunteer, citizen's organization. Inquire at the Ranger Station today!

were the Jaega tribe, a close ally.

Like the other tribes in South Florida, the Tequesta held the land and wildlife of Florida as divine and obtaining food was a sacred act often accompanied by festival and ritual. They were primarily hunters and gatherers. They gathered palmetto berries, coco plums, sea grapes, and palm nuts to eat. They made flour by grinding up the roots and processing certain -otherwise toxic—plants such as the Coontie.

Inland they hunted bear, deer, wild boar, and small mammals and along the coast they relied on fish, shellfish, nuts, and berries for food. The men caught sharks, saifish, sea cows, and porpoises. The women and children collected clams, conchs, oysters, and turtle eggs in the

shallow waters. The many shell middens, basically shellfish heap piles, found throughout the state by various tribes attest to their appetite for shellfish. Some of these middens are theorized to have held religious significance by their particular design marking cardinal directions or other geometrical aspects. It is known that the Tequesta used shells



and sharks' teeth for a variety of tools. These included hammers, chisels, fishhooks, drinking cups, and spearheads. Sharks' teeth were used to carve out logs to make canoes.

The Tequesta migrated during the year based on the *mosquito season*. In particular, most of the inhabitants of the main village relocated to barrier islands or to the Florida Keys during the worst

of the mosquito onslaught, which lasts about three months.

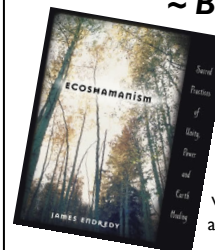
During the 1500s, Europeans began arriving in Florida. At first, the Tequesta did not welcome these new visitors. But before long, the Europeans won their friendship by bringing gifts of colored cloth, knives, and rum.

The Tequesta numbered a couple thousand, but they started to die out as a result of settlement battles, slavery, and disease. By the 1800s, the Tequesta tribe had only a few survivors. It does honor to remember them for persisting on this peninsula without technology, without AC, without grocery stores, cars or other modern conveniences for centuries.

Environmental Tip of the Month

You've decided to buy organic produce and you recycle everything you can get your hands on. That's great. But you don't have to stop there. What you wear is just as important as the food you eat. And since going green is a growing trend, organic and recycled clothing isn't just responsible, it's stylish too. Although you easily could, you don't have to spend a fortune. **Sierra Trading Post** carries organic cotton clothing and other recycled products at great prices. Organic cotton saves the earth from fertilizers and other harsh chemicals. Put organic cotton on your back and take a little weight off the world.

~ Bookworm ~ [Ecoshamanism by James Endredy](#)



Enter the Ecologically Sound, Holistic Worldview of Modern Shamanism. James Endredy, who has studied with tribal shamans all over the world, offers a rigorous and authentic new philosophy of shamanic practice called ecoshamanism. Rejecting the consumer/industrial worldview and the spiritual deadness that accompanies it, ecoshamanism leads to a fundamental shift in consciousness—first, by becoming aware of the sacred natural world and our role within it, and next, by forging a spiritual alliance with the sentient forces that sustain our planet.

Customs

By one account, when the Tequestas buried their chiefs, they buried the small bones with the body, and put the large bones in a box for the village people to adore and hold as their gods. Another account says that the Tequesta stripped the flesh from the bones, burning the flesh, and then distributed the cleaned bones to the dead chief's relatives, with the larger bones going to the closest relations.

The Tequesta men consumed *cassina*, the [black drink](#), in ceremonies similar to those common throughout the [southeastern United States](#).

The Spanish missionaries also reported that the Tequesta worshipped a stuffed deer as the representative of the sun, and as late as 1743 worshipped a picture of a badly deformed barracuda crossed by a harpoon, and surrounded by small *tongue-like* figures painted on a small board. There was also a *god of the graveyard*, a bird's head carved in pine. The painted board and bird's head were stored in a *temple* in the cemetery, along with carved masks used in festivals. By this time the tribe's [shaman](#) was calling himself a *bishop*.

The Tequestas may have practiced human sacrifice. While enroute from Havana to Biscayne Bay in 1743, Spanish missionaries heard that the Indians of the Keys (including, apparently, the Tequestas) had gone to Santaluz (the village of [Santa Lucea](#) was at the [St. Lucie Inlet](#)) for a celebration of a recent peace treaty, and that the chief of Santaluz was going to sacrifice a young girl as part of the celebration. The missionaries sent a message to the chief begging him not to sacrifice the girl, and the chief relented.

Miami Circle

The [Miami Circle](#) is located on the site of a known Tequesta village south of the mouth of the Miami River (probably the town of *Tequesta*). It consists of 24 large holes or basins, and many smaller holes, which have been cut into bedrock. Together these holes form a circle approximately 38 feet in diameter. Other arrangements of holes are apparent as well. The Circle was discovered during an archeological survey of a site being cleared for construction of a high-rise building. Charcoal samples collected in the circle have been radiocarbon-dated to approximately 1,900 years ago, or about 100 [C.E.](#)

Diet

The Tequestas did not practice any form of agriculture. They fished, hunted, and gathered the fruit and roots of local plants. Most of their food came from the sea. [Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda](#), who lived among the tribes of southern Florida for seventeen years in the 16th Century, described their "common" diet as "fish, turtle and snails, and tunny and whale..."; the "sea-wolf" ([Caribbean monk seal](#)) was reserved for the upper classes. According to Fontaneda, a lesser part of the diet consisted of [trunkfish](#) and [lobster](#). The "fish" caught included [manatees](#), [sharks](#), [sailfish](#), [porpoises](#), [stingrays](#), and small fish. Despite their local abundance, [clams](#), [oysters](#) and [conchs](#) were only a minor part of the Tequesta diet (their shells are much less common at Tequesta archeological sites than they are at Calusa or [Jaega](#) sites). [Venison](#) was also popular; [deer](#) bones are frequently found in archeological sites, as are [terrapin](#) shells and bones. [Sea turtles](#) and their eggs were consumed during the turtles' nesting season.^[5]

The Tequesta gathered many plant foods, including [saw palmetto](#) (*Serenoa repens*) berries, cocoplums ([Chrysobalanus icaco](#)), sea grapes ([Coccoloba uvifera](#)), prickly pear fruits ([Opuntia](#) spp.), gopher apples (*Licania michauxii*), [pigeon plums](#) (*Coccoloba diversifolia*), [palm](#) nuts, false mastic ([Mastichodendron](#)) seeds, cabbage palm ([Sabal palmetto](#)) and hog plum (*Ximenia americana*). The roots of certain plants, such as [Smilax](#) spp. and coontie ([Zamia integrifolia](#)), were edible when ground into flour, processed to remove toxins (in the case of coontie), and made into a type of unleavened bread. (Archaeologists have commented, however, on the lack of evidence for coontie use in excavated sites.) Briton Hammond, the sole survivor of an [English](#) sloop that was attacked by Tequestas after grounding off [Key Biscayne](#) in 1748, reported that the Tequestas fed him *boil'd corn*.^[6]

The Tequestas changed their habitation during the year. In particular, most of the inhabitants of the main village relocated to barrier islands or to the [Florida Keys](#) during the worst of the mosquito season, which lasted about three months. While the resources of the [Biscayne Bay](#) area and the Florida Keys allowed for a somewhat settled non-agricultural existence, they were not as rich as those of the southwest Florida coast, home of the more numerous Calusa.^[7]

http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.columbia.edu/itc/anthropology/v1007/davis/cirmap.gif&imgrefurl=http://www.columbia.edu/itc/anthropology/v1007/davis/sites.html&usq=__zz4mrA09_OVWmiLjZlCw2ReowxYc=&h=382&w=593&sz=140&hl=en&start=5&um=1&tbid=zhClp9t5NoCqTM:&tbnh=87&tbnw=135&prev=/images%3Fq%3DMiami%2Bcircle%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den

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Avoid Toxic Plastic Toys

Children's toys and baby products made of soft plastic may contain hormone-disrupting chemicals. Phthalates (pronounced thal-ates) are a class of chemicals found in many consumer products -- from cosmetics to children's toys. Commonly used in fragrances and to soften PVC plastic, phthalates interfere with hormonally-driven reproductive development.

Phthalate-leaching toys and baby products pose a particular threat to infants and young children. Phthalates can be ingested, inhaled and also absorbed through the skin.

[Tell the Consumer Product Safety Commission to stop the sale of toxic toys!](#)

Although Congress has banned the sale of toxic phthalate-laden toys beginning in February 2009, the Consumer Product Safety Commission has caved to industry pressure and created a loophole that will allow these dangerous toys to be sold indefinitely to unsuspecting parents. [Tell the commission that these toxic toys must be banned from store shelves immediately.](#)

They interfere with the production of male sex hormone, testosterone, and have been associated with reproductive abnormalities. Numerous animal studies have linked prenatal exposure to certain phthalates with decreases in testosterone, birth defects of the genitals and reduced sperm production.

But don't bother looking for phthalates on the label. Without labeling requirements, there is no way for even the most careful shoppers to know whether a toy or other product contains phthalates.

Earlier this year, Congress banned the sale of toys and child care products that contain six different phthalates. The law goes into effect February 10, 2009 but the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) opted to apply the U.S. ban to the production - and not sale - of toys with phthalates, allowing manufacturers to stockpile the banned toys and products and put them on store shelves long after the ban was intended to go into effect. The law lowers the allowable level of lead in toys and bans the same phthalates that have been banned from European toys for nearly a decade. There's no reason Americans should have to wait any longer for safer toys.

NRDC is suing the CPSC to enforce the ban on toxic toys and keep them out of the hands (and mouths) of children. Read more about the lawsuit in our scientist's [blog](#).

Toy manufacturers both in the US and abroad are already making toys that don't contain phthalates. Parents just need to find them. Call customer service and ask the manufacturer if their products contain phthalates. If they can't tell you whether or not the toy is phthalate-free, find another that is. Check healthytoys.org or the [ZRecs guide to safer children's products](#). Avoid buy anything that is made of PVC plastic and buy fragrance-free personal care products. Ethylene Vinyl Acetate (EVA) is a soft plastic that is bisphenol A (BPA) and phthalate-free.

Several major retailers have pledged to remove or restrict children's products containing phthalates but this is a voluntary and unenforceable measure. Without a permanent ban, there's no assurance that baby products and toys won't contain toxic chemicals that disrupt normal development.

You've decided to buy organic produce and you recycle everything you can get your hands on. That's great. But you don't have to stop there. What you wear is just as important as the food you eat. And since going green is a growing trend, organic and recycled clothing isn't just responsible, [it's stylish, too](#).

Although you easily could, you don't have to spend a fortune. Sierra Trading Post carries [organic cotton clothing](#) and other [recycled products](#) at great prices. [Organic cotton](#) saves the earth from fertilizers and other harsh chemicals. Put organic cotton on your back and take a little weight off the world.





The Miami Circle A Tequesta Legacy

The Miami Circle

The "Miami Circle," pictured at the right, is located at Brickell Point, Miami Florida. The photograph was taken by Mark Diamond, DiamondImages.com

The Miami Circle was discovered in August/September, 1998, during routine archaeological investigations conducted at the site of six low-rise, 1950-era apartment buildings (Brickell Point Apartments), which were razed to make way for construction of two high-rise apartment towers. Surveyor Ted Riggs uncovered an arc-like section and was convinced this would be a circle incised into the stone, underneath the three feet of overlying earth. Considering the amount of modern construction (and demolition) that has taken place on top of the site, the Miami Circle is remarkably intact -- with approximately 85% of it preserved. The Brickell Point property contains intact prehistoric midden deposits on at least 50% - 75% of the parcel. This material contains a tremendous quantity of well-preserved shell, bone, ceramics, and other artifacts deposited during several centuries of human occupation.

Archaeological evidence suggests the Miami Circle marks the footprint [foundation] of a large, prehistoric structure, possibly the "foundations for a 'Council House,' or other ceremonial structure created by native Americans known as the Tequesta. The evidence also suggests that the Miami Circle had ceremonial importance to the Tequesta:

- Cardinal points (i.e. North, South, East, and West) along the Miami Circle appear to have been specially denoted. In particular, an eye-shaped hole was cut into the bedrock at the Circle's eastern point. Its shape was unique among hundreds of holes uncovered at the site.
- Two possible animal offerings, a complete sea turtle carapace and the articulated remains of a shark more than six feet in length, were found within the Circle's interior. Each was oriented east-west, a practice often associated with prehistoric human burials.
- Several teeth belonging to an extinct species of seal were found within the Miami Circle. Spanish explorer's accounts indicate that the consumption of monk seals, or "sea wolves," were reserved for the elite class.
- Two finely-crafted stone axes were found along the Miami Circle's eastern portion. One of these was recovered from within a post-hole cut into the bedrock, and possibly represents an offering. Both axes were made of basalt, a volcanic rock that is not native to Florida.
- The minority scientists say that the structure's puzzling ring-shaped array of 30 rectangular "basins" are more analogous to England's "Stonehenge" -- once serving as the "foundation slots" for a ring of 30 upright stones, which once stood in the currently surviving geometric bedrock basins -- "an archeo-astronomical "stonehenge-like device," for observing the solstices and equinoxes, as well as other astronomically-based ceremonial uses ..."

Miami Circle Fundraising Information

On June 28, 1999, a Miami-Dade County Circuit Court Judge ruled that Miami-Dade County has the right to take the Miami Circle property from developer Michael Baumann, clearing the way for the transformation of the ancient Tequesta site into an archaeological preserve. The value on the 2.2 acre property at the mouth of the Miami River, will be decided by a jury.

On March 16th Miami-Dade Mayor Alex Penelas and County Manager, Merrett Stierheim, held a meeting with the various groups working to save the Miami Circle. They urged the groups to work together in fundraising and public awareness. At the meeting there were representatives from The Historical Society, Dade Heritage Trust, Miami-Dade Mayor's office, Native Americans, Miami Circle supporters, Backus Turner International and TribalLink International.

The ancient archeological site has been covered in every major news media including CNN, NBC Today Show, The New York Times, and Associated Press.

The public outcry and the plea of school children, as well as thousands of letters written to public officials from President Clinton to Mayor Penelas has stopped development on the site. An emergency injunction filed by Miami-Dade County lawyers and the support of Governor Bush and the Florida Cabinet has given Circle supporters a ray of hope. The main focus now is raising the money needed to purchase the land at the mouth of the Miami River where the ancient Circle was found.

Discovery of the Tequesta Indian Site Circle has presented us with a unique opportunity to physically connect to our past as we look towards our future. Such an opportunity is indeed, quite rare and presents this community with an awesome responsibility to do what is right while balancing public policy interests. I would like to see the site preserved for the many generations of Miami-Dade Countians," said Mayor Penelas at the Task Force meeting.

Contributions are being received at the following address:

Miami Circle Trust Fund" 111 NW 1st St. Miami-Dade Office of Management and Budget Suite 2710 Miami FL 33128 Attention: Terea Hebert (Please make checks payable to: Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners.)