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TEST EXCAVATIONS OF THE VAN DUYAN SITE (12 P 571), PARKE COUNTY

Surface altering projects, such as strip mining or highway construction, result in abrupt and obvious destruction of archaeological sites. However, the less obvious and more gradual impact of crop cultivation undoubtedly has accounted for a far greater loss of archaeological information over the years. Churning of soil by cultivation has destroyed the integrity of shallow sites, and with progressively deeper plowing, that of sites with buried deposits and features. The Van Duyan Site, located on the east bluff overlooking the Wabash River floodplain, once occupied 3 acres and contained an unknown number and variety of features. After years of plowing and related erosion, very little remains beyond a mixture of plowzone materials. With the labor of a group of high school honors students, 16 units, each 2 meters square, were excavated in what appeared to be the only remaining area of the site that seemed to have any subplowzone integrity. A two-week effort in August uncovered an area of intensively burned soil and associated charcoal and fire-cracked stones located around a central deposit of mussel shells. A mixture of shell fragments in the plowzone debris elsewhere on the site suggested other features of this type had been destroyed by agricultural activities. Projectile points recovered in archaeological context identify the feature as a component of the Riverton Culture. In the absence of other tools, as well as of floral and faunas remains, it is hypothesized that this is a specialized mussel processing site that should be included as a part of the Riverton settlement subsistence system. A number of hunting and nut processing sites occur in the general area, representing other specialized camps. Mussel processing for consumption likely was scheduled for late summer when water levels were low, and before fall nuts became available.