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# The Killdeer Site (41SM379): A Middle Caddo Site in Northern Smith County, Texas

*Timothy K. Perttula and Mark Walters*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Killdeer site was reported in July 2007 by Mark Walters, based on a surface reconnaissance of the site area and a small surface collection of artifacts, primarily prehistoric Caddo pottery sherds. The site is situated on a lower upland slope (410 feet amsl) about 190 m northeast of Loves Branch, a small stream in the Harris Creek drainage in the Sabine River basin. Soils are a Redsprings very gravelly sandy loam, 8-25% slopes. Darkly-stained sediments and burned animal bone suggest that there is a Caddo midden deposit at the northern end of the site.

### Artifacts

The artifacts (n=119) collected from the Killdeer site include 75 Caddo ceramic sherds, a piece of burned clay, one burned animal bone, one Gary dart point, two expedient flake tools, one chipped adze, 36 pieces of lithic debris, a ground stone mano, and one piece of quartzite fire-cracked rock.

### Ceramic Sherds

The sherds from the Killdeer site include 46 plain sherds and 29 decorated sherds. The plain to decorated sherd ratio is 1.59, which is indicative of the latter part of the Middle Caddo age in this part of the upper Sabine River basin. The plain sherds are represented by one rim, 44 body, and one base. Only 2% of the plain sherds are from vessels tempered with crushed and burned bone; rather, the sherds are from grog-tempered vessels.

The decorated sherds from the site are dominated by sherds from utility ware vessels, probably cooking jars (Table 1). Approximately 90% of the decorated sherds are from utility wares, and only 10% are from fine ware bowls and carinated bowls. Only 3.5% of the decorated sherds are from bone-tempered vessels; the vast majority of the sherds are tempered with grog.

The principal utility wares have brushed (52% of the decorated sherds), brushed-incised (3.4%), and brushed-punctated (10.3%) decorations; 65.7% of the decorated sherds from the Killdeer site have brushed decorations. These sherds are probably from Bullard Brushed vessels. Other utility wares have applied (3.4%), incised (13.8%), and punctated (6.9%) decorative elements. One of the incised body sherds has a vertical and opposed incised decorative element that occurs with regularity on Pease Brushed-Incised vessels (Suhm and Jelks 1962:Plate 60k).

As previously mentioned, sherds from fine ware vessels are not common in the decorated sherd assemblage from the site, accounting for only 10% of the assemblage (see Table 1). The fine ware sherds include two body sherds with single straight engraved lines as well as a bowl or carinated bowl body sherd with a red slip on both interior and exterior vessel surfaces. Generally speaking, red-slipped sherds are only common in upper Sabine River Caddo sites that were occupied during the Middle Caddo period (Perttula 2011a, 2011b).

**Table 1. Decorated sherds from the Killdeer Site (41SM379).**

Decorative element	Rim	Body	% Bone-tempered
<b><u>Utility Ware</u></b>			
straight applied ridge	-	1	0.0
opposed brushed	-	2	0.0
parallel brushed	-	13	7.7
parallel brushed-incised	-	1	0.0
horizontal brushed with tool punctates thru the brushing	1	-	0.0
parallel brushed with tool punctates thru the brushing	-	2	0.0
vertical and opposed incised lines	-	1	0.0
opposed incised lines	-	1	0.0
parallel incised lines	-	1	0.0
straight incised lines	-	1	0.0
cane punctated rows	1	-	0.0
fingernail punctated rows	1	-	0.0
<b><u>Fine Ware</u></b>			
straight engraved lines	-	2	0.0
int./ext. red-slipped	-	1	0.0
Totals	3	26	3.5

### Chipped Stone Tools and Lithic Debris

The one dart point in the collection is a narrow contracting stem Gary point, *var. Camden*, made from a local quartzite. The *var. Camden* is a late Woodland dart point form, estimated by Schambach (1982) to date from ca. A.D. 200-700. There are also two expedient flake tools, probably used for cutting and scraping tasks, made from chert, and a bifacial adze made from a local quartzite.

The lithic debris includes chert (n=31, 6.4% cortical), petrified wood (n=4, 75% cortical), and quartzite (n=1, 0% cortical, heat-treated); its presence at the site indicates that tools were made and refurbished there during at least one of the occupations. The petrified wood and quartzite raw materials are considered to be locally available, probably in stream gravels along the major streams, most likely the Sabine River. The chert debris are probably from non-local sources (given the low proportion of cortical flakes), and is a product of the refurbishing, maintenance, and resharpening of already completed chert tools that were brought to the site.

### Ground Stone Tool

The one ground stone tool is a ferruginous sandstone mano-pitted stone. Both surfaces of the cobble have smoothed grinding areas as well as pitted areas in the central part of the tool.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Killdeer site is one of many Middle Caddo habitation sites on tributaries to the Sabine River in this part of the Upper Sabine River basin (Perttula et al. 1993; Perttula and Walters 2012; Walters 2003, 2006, 2008; Walters and Haskins 1998, 2000; Walters and Perttula 2011); it also has a Woodland period component that likely dates from ca. A.D. 200-700. The Middle Caddo component at the Killdeer site is marked by a ceramic assemblage dominated by sherds from utility ware vessels (probably cooking jars) decorated with brushing, incised lines, punctated elements, and applied ridges, and a low percentage of engraved and red-slipped fine wares. Sherds from vessels with brushed decorations are by far the most common in the small decorated sherd assemblage; this, combined with a plain to decorated sherd ratio of 1.59, suggests that the Killdeer site was likely occupied by a Caddo group in the latter part of the Middle Caddo period, after ca. A.D. 1300.

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