

## **BOX 5.2 EATING A SHREW IN THE NAME OF ARCHAEOLOGY**

In what has to be one of the most interesting kinds of experimental archaeology and taphonomic research, two archaeologists set out to determine the effects of human digestion on a small animal. The objective was for all archaeologists to be able to better interpret small mammal skeletons in archaeological sites. Basically, one of the archaeologists ate a shrew and then that archaeologist's feces were examined to see the impacts of digestion.

The archaeologists published their work in a paper called "Human Digestive Effects on a Micromammalian Skeleton" in the *Journal of Archaeological Science* (Crandall and Stahl 1995).

As described by the authors, the shrew was skinned, eviscerated, segmented, and boiled for approximately two minutes. It was then swallowed, without mastication, in three parts – limbs, head, and body and tail. The results indicate the effects of