

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