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## Rock baffles experts; can't figure out what it is

**A Preble County farmer found the very heavy, likely man-made pieces on his property.**

By Steve Bennish

Staff Writer

DAYTON — Calling all rock hounds and science geeks.

A mysterious 400-pound load of metallic rubble found by a Preble County farmer in a creek near his home is baffling geology experts at Sinclair Community College who have tried to analyze it.

The material appears to be man-made and the result of some industrial process, but even after a half-dozen common tests over many weeks, its composition and origin remains unknown, said Anne Henry, associate professor of geology at Sinclair.

The material's unusual properties have baffled testers, Henry said.

Some of it has been found in 20-pound chunks the approximate shape of squashed bread loaves with scorched, blackish exteriors. Broken open, the chunks have bright, aluminum-colored, granular interiors with some traces of green or gold. It does not attract a magnet, nor is it radioactive.

The hardness of the material is remarkable, measuring between an eight and a nine on the scientific Mohs scale of hardness, harder than steel and in the range of precious stones like topaz.

It's also extremely dense, greater than iron and on par with a lead ore or bronze alloy. Exposed to temperatures of 2,100 degrees Fahrenheit, the material didn't melt. Scrape a piece of it on unglazed porcelain, a common geology test, and it leaves a blackish streak.

Research into possible industries in the area that might have generated the material as waste has come to no conclusions, Henry said.

Mike West, the farmer who found the metal, said he was enjoying an afternoon with his granddaughter this year on the 80 acres he farms in northern Preble County when he was

throwing some rocks in the creek. "I picked up one rock and it was unusually heavy, so I saved that one."

Weeks later, still intrigued, he returned with a metal detector. The detector lit up on the piles of rocks in the creek.

If someone dumped the material long ago, it would have been a tough job.

Not only is the stuff heavy, but the driveway is three-quarters of a mile from the road. The owner of the land moved there in 1968 and has no knowledge of the deposit, West said.

West at one time thought it might be the remains of a meteor impact. Henry doesn't think so, and is pretty much convinced the material is man-made. Henry hopes that more sophisticated testing, using equipment the college doesn't have on hand, will expose the nature of the deposit.

Her best guesses are that the material is some form of industrial ingot or casting. She's hoping a local expert or business will volunteer to provide some guidance or more advanced testing facilities.

"From a geology point of view, I'd like to know what it is, what its industrial application is and why it is sitting in this guy's field," Henry said.

Contact this reporter at (937) 225-7407 or [sbennish@DaytonDailyNews.com](mailto:sbennish@DaytonDailyNews.com).

### Want to help?

To volunteer expertise help Anne Henry identify the rocks, you can reach her at (937) 512-4560 or write her at: Anne Henry, Geology Department, Sinclair Community College, 444 W. Third St., Dayton, OH 45402 or e-mail [anne.henry@sinclair.edu](mailto:anne.henry@sinclair.edu).

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