

Wave action washed the ooids back and forth in the shallows of Lake Idaho.

Shoofly Oolite

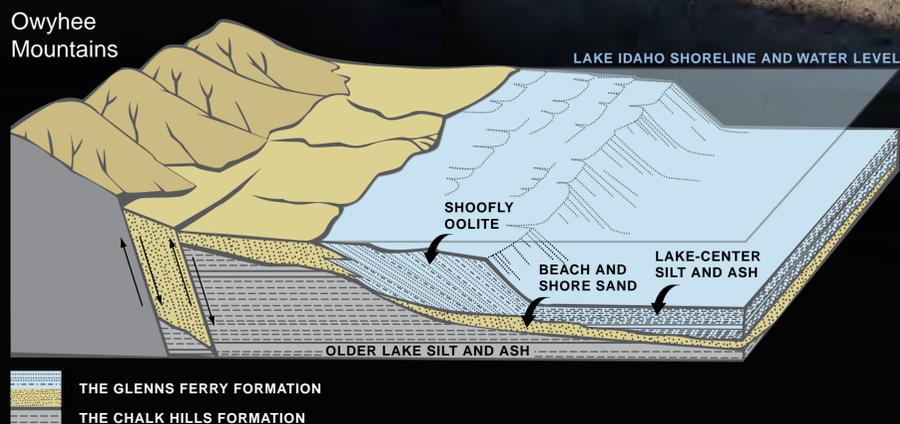
The natural sculpture garden before you is a section of the Glens Ferry Formation called the Shoofly Oolite. Oolite (egg stone) is sedimentary limestone composed of tiny ooids, which form when calcium carbonate precipitates in concentric layers around individual grains of sand. The Shoofly Oolite is one of the largest freshwater lakebed oolites known in the world.

Most other examples of ooid formation and deposition are found in wave-agitated sea waters or on the beds of much saltier lakes. Wave action that varied with the seasons, the weather, and the types of sediment in the water washed the ooids back and forth in the shallows on the southwestern side of Lake Idaho, depositing them from 2 to 40 feet thick on steeper benches near the shore.

Erosion carried away softer siltstone and volcanic tuffs but left the more resistant oolite to weather above the mud flats. Small, isolated deposits are exposed discontinuously across the 40 miles between this spot and Murphy. In some places, the upper surface of the oolite has been sculpted into hummocks, small arches, and other intriguing shapes.

Beach sands of varying thickness underlie the oolite. Siltstone, deposited by lake waters, forms the stratum above it. Rivers and fans at the base of the adjacent mountain slopes later deposited a veneer of alluvium over the lake deposits.

The physical and chemical properties of the Shoofly Oolite provide the foundation for the unique set of plants and fossils found here. Few other lands in Idaho support such a rich suite of rare species in such a small area.



Oolite As You Find It



One Grain of Sand Becomes An Oolite



Through A Microscope