



# Fossil Footnotes

Central Texas Paleontological Society  
December 2004

## President's Message

We had a great Christmas party with an excess of terrific food and some pretty nice gifts exchanged. It was the usual mix of presents, leading to the inevitable stalking of the neater fossils and amber jewelry. I'm still trying to figure out the Bubble Rock. We all owe a "thank you" to Ron and Janet Root for opening up their house to us. Part of the fun is oggling the hosts' collection. It was also good to see some of our newer members showing up. If you didn't make it this year, plan on it for next year.

It looks as though the slate of officers will be nearly identical in 2005 to 2004, but all of the slots have not been nailed down. This should be finalized in time for a vote at the January meeting.

The Board has roughed out the field trip schedule for 2005, which should appear elsewhere in the newsletter.

I am still negotiating with the LCRA regarding timeslots for 2005. Check the web site or check with me before you show up on the second Tuesday of January.

Have a great holiday and happy collecting in 2005!

Mike

Merry Christmas from all of us

## December 18, 2004 Field Trip To Brownwood

From Austin, take 183 through Goldthwaite to Brownwood. We will meet at 8:30am at the Heartland Mall parking lot in Early, Texas

which is a little way past the intersection of highways 183 and 377 going west into Brownwood on 377/67. You can't miss it.

On the map, highway 84 heading into Early is 183 coming from Goldthwaite.



For additional information, contact Ed Elliott at 512-453-5390.

## Upcoming Shows

**February 19-20, 2005** Williamson County Gem & Mineral Show, Georgetown Community Center, San Gabriel Park, Georgetown, Texas

**February 19, 2005** Gary Bowersox will come to Austin to talk about his travels and adventures in Afghanistan. His talk will be held at the Austin Gem & Mineral Society's Clubhouse from 1:00 PM until

5:00 PM. Gary is a very colorful and interesting person who has traveled to Afghanistan to buy gemstones many times over the past twenty plus years.

The charge is only \$10.00 per person and promises to be very intriguing. Light refreshments will be served.

Contact Hollis Thompson at 512 341-0212 or [dsticks@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dsticks@sbcglobal.net) for additional information or a registration form.

Gary is being sponsored by the Texas Faceters' Guild

**April 8-10, 2005** M.A.P.S. Expo XXVII, Western Illinois University, Macomb, Illinois

### **November Meeting minutes:**

By Eric Seaberg

Here is the report of both the November membership meeting and the field trips selected at the board meeting.

#### **Nov. 19th CTPS membership meeting**

We had many new members from fossil fest present and were introduced to the club. Welcome! Much of the meeting was devoted to discussing the details of what occurred at Fossil Fest. We had 1300 people in attendance and a nine year old from Fort Worth won the grand door prize.

The December Christmas party was planned December 11<sup>th</sup> at Ron & Jan Root's house.

The November field trip was planned for the Highway 21 site.

Several nice door prizes were available that were gathered at Fossil Fest.

#### **Dec 11th board meeting**

Board worked to discuss and assemble a slate of candidates for the election. The speaker chairperson was still at large at the conclusion of the discussion.

Board discussed and decided on most of the field trip schedule:

Jan. 15th	Jacksboro
Feb 12th	Hwy 21
Mar 13th	Bandera

Apr 16th-17th	Kent or E. Texas
May 14th	Brownwood
June 18th-19th	Oklahoma
July 16th	Brazos Canoe
Aug 13th	Non-Vertebrate Lab (UT)
Sept 17th	Midlothian
Oct 15th-16th	Sulfur/Red River
Nov ???	Kerrville
Dec ???	

After the meeting, the Christmas Party gala ensue

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I have included the October Field trip report from last month. I left out a paragraph. Sorry Ed.

### **October Field Trip Report**

By Ed Elliott

For me, the wonderful weekend started out early Friday afternoon. After making sure that the campsites were secured, writing a check and setting up camp, Rich Geist and I decided to do a little hunting. Little Mineral Creek seemed a good choice. At the spot we decided to go in, there were thick poison ivy vines going up the trees, two-foot tall poison ivy "bushes" and ivy vines all over the ground. Safety tip---in such situations always wear shorts and a tee-shirt. Well....maybe not. I still have the nice Duck Creek Formation ammonite but the rash is gone. A real tip; if after a silly act like mine, you find yourself with a rash, there's a new product that actually works, called Zanafel. It removes the inflammation and the itch.

By 8:00 Saturday morning ten members had assembled at the gate at Eisenhower State Park. Ron and Janet Root, Gary and Kathy Rylander, Hal Hopkins, Mike Smith, Jeff and Jonathan Doerzbacher, Rich Geist and myself. It was a blustery invigorating morning and we couldn't wait to get to our first site. This is generally a Weno/PawPaw Formation site; if you walk far enough, the shoreline becomes the Duck Creek Formation. Besides being a beautiful place for a morning walk-very nice fossil are always found. Rich found some very lovely gastropods with pearly shells in that red breccia-like rock. He and Jonathan also found some tiny button corals. Hal said he had found a Kirklandia texana, a jellyfish impression. Out of that same red rock, Mike found a very pretty ammonite with shell intact. I picked up a very nice Trigonia clavigera. I am sure that Gary picked up

some nice ammonites and large Macrasters from the Duck Creek.

By Bryn Nelson of Newsday

As much as we hated to leave, we took lunch and went to Lowe's Highport Marina to fill out the day. The area is all Duck Creek Formation and contains lots of ammonites of all sizes. The echinoids found here are *Holasters* and several types of *Macrasters*. I didn't see everyone's finds that day, but I am sure there were some nice ones. I know that Gary picked up an echinoid that appeared to be *Globator inaudita*; Mike got his long sought after *Trigonia clavigera*. I picked up a really nice *Holaster simplex* and a large but not perfect *Macraster elegans*.

At the close of the day, we all spruced up a bit and went across the dam into Oklahoma for our traditional dinner at Wendy's. To me, sitting around talking and laughing over dinner is simply a much anticipated part of the Texoma experience. I was sorry that some of the usual faces were missing from around the table that night.

Sunday morning most of us ate at the new and very close by I-Hop. (A new tradition?) We then went hunting by the dam. This Duck Creek Formation site has a wealth of fossils. There, a few areas where shark teeth can be found. There are a large number of small to medium sized ammonites to be found including Mortoniceras, Drakeoceras, Idiohamites and the truly large Eopachydicus. Though I have never found any of the large Macrasters here, there are quite a few of the small to moderate sized ones. There is so much area to collect in. The Doerzbachers had to leave to drive back to Tennessee and Rich back to East Texas. One by one everyone left. I stayed until five, partly because I'm hard headed and partly because this is one field trip I always hate to see end. To anyone who missed it, I can only say, "Don't miss it next year!"



**Bone of the Gods con't**

Mayor, an unaffiliated researcher whose analyses of ancient natural history have appeared in a number of scholarly journals, first became interested in how people of Greek and Roman times viewed unfamiliar fossils when she traveled to the Greek Island of Samos in 1979. Her husband, Josh Ober, was compiling topographical histories of military sites in Greece at the time. Mayor, a free-lance editor and artist, drew the accompanying illustrations.

An obscure reference in an old tour book led them to the island, where they planned to view giant fossils dug up from a dry local streambed known as the "Elephants' Cemetery". Arriving at the island's harbor, they ducked into another museum displaying local archaeological finds, and Mayor was immediately intrigued by the ubiquitous bronze statues of griffins. The mythological beasts, with the bodies of lions but the beaks and wings of eagles, were said to guard the gold caches of Central Asia. To Mayor, however, the griffin statues resembled modern reconstruction of dinosaurs.

Suddenly overcome with curiosity about whether she would find evidence of the statues' inspiration in the island's paleontology museum, Mayor and her husband rented motorbikes and headed to the small bone room, located above a post office in the village of Mytilini.

Although the glass display cases revealed no trace of the griffin's origins, they presented colossal bones unearthed by farmers from the nearby fossil bed.

"It just struck me that ancient farmers must have dug these up and that they couldn't have just thrown these aside without coming up with some kind of explanation," Mayor says. "It was kind of an epiphany. That's where it struck me that you could put together and maybe come up with something."

The griffin statues and the huge bones of prehistoric beasts led Mayor to delve into the origins of the griffin legend and ancient accounts of the Samos fossils. Huge fossil beds on mainland Greece became widely known to scientists after 1839, when paleontologists converged on a dry creek bed near Athens that yielded scores of prehistoric species, including enormous elephants, three-toed horses, and "immense tortoises the size of a Volkswagen Beetle," Mayor says.

In 1885, paleontologist Charles Forsyth Mayor tracked down a similar fossil bed near Mytilini with the help of descriptive clues from the ancient Greek scribe Plutarch and directions from the village doctor.

Barnum Brown, a famous fossil hunter and former curator of the American Museum of Natural History in New York, later dug on Samos in the 1920s and brought back about 5,000 fossils. Fossils unearthed there and from nearby locales in Greece and Turkey include the 7 million to a million year old remains of huge animals such as mastodons, giant rhinoceroses and giant giraffes.

Long before the Aegean Sea encircled the island, a land corridor joined Europe, Asia and Africa, providing abundant grazing land for the prehistoric behemoths. The Samos fossil bed, one of the richest in Europe, contains the ancestors of animals now found on all three continents.

For millennia, fossils in the area have washed out of gullies during rainstorms, emerged from eroding hillsides and coastlines and appeared after earthquakes. More recently, farmers plowing their fields have made surprising finds and in some cases have come to rely on their new cash crop, the mysterious bones of huge beasts.

Mayor maintains that scholars of classical literature dismissed the ancient mention of these big bones as little more than poetic license.

“They just assumed that it was pure fantasy or fiction,” she says. Most scholars were unaware of modern fossil finds in the area, and paleontologists studying the bones were largely unaware of the local myths.

“I was kind of an outsider who put the two parts together,” she says. “But of course, I couldn’t do it without the help of both classicists and paleontologists.”

### **Desert Guardians**

Where did the idea of the griffins come from? Aristeas, a seventh-century BC traveler, wrote of gold-seeking Scythians who fought creatures in Central Asia’s Gobi Desert that resembled “lions but with the beak and wings of an eagle.”

After consulting with paleontologists, Mayor linked the legend to the fossilized remains of Protoceratops; a beaked, lion-sized dinosaur whose fossilized bones litter the Gobi might well have been observed by

ancient nomads. Similarly, several paleontologists told Mayor that the Monster of Troy might represent an artist’s interpretation of a fossil skull commonly found in the area, such as those of the giant giraffes of the Miocene Epoch. Another especially popular and widespread myth among the Greeks concerned a supposed battlefield of giants and gods in southern Greece, where the ancients discovered blackened bones jutting up from a scorched field named Megalopolis, which means “giant city.”

In reality, the bones had been blackened from the surrounding lignite, a soft, brownish-black coal. But according to the myth, Zeus sent lightning bolts to destroy the giants; an explanation that Mayor says wasn’t as far-fetched as it might appear.

“The myth is obviously based on a pretty good observation of nature,” she says. “If lightning does strike lignite and the conditions are right, it can actually burn for hundreds of years, contributing to the blackened earth and bones and even smoke emanating from the ground.” “It’s a pretty plausible theory that these were giants struck by lightning,” says Mayor.

Mayor’s original fieldwork has blossomed into a number of related research ventures, such as her recent collaboration with William Sarjeant, a professor of geology at the University of Saskatchewan. Sarjeant, whose interest in fossils ranges from tiny dinoflagellates to enormous dinosaurs helped Mayor assess the relationship between fossilized dinosaur footprints and folklore—including an analysis of fossil prints in Germany’s Rhine Valley and their potential influence on the popular local legend of Siegfried and the Dragon. Richard La Fleur, head of the department of classics at the University of Georgia, invited Mayor to submit a condensed version of her analysis to a journal he edits after hearing about her research through a newspaper article several months ago. “I really think she is on to something here,” La Fleur says. “She has me convinced.”

### **Focus on Natural World**

Many of the Greek myths arose during a historical period sometimes called the first Greek Dark Age, according to LaFleur. From the 11<sup>th</sup> century to the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C., storytellers often waxed nostalgic for the early Greek glory days of Mycenaean civilization in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Besides recounting tales of war heroes and epic battles, the storytellers turned their attention to the natural world.

“The point she’s making is at that time, the largest known land animal was the horse,” LaFleur says. “You can imagine these farmers plowing their fields and clanking their plows on something that they thought was a stone, and then unearthing this bone that was bigger than anything they had known.” The resulting tales, then, would have had at their cores the element of direct observation, perhaps transforming a mastodon thighbone or scapula into the larger-than-life remains of a local hero. But the bones of these strange beasts weren’t relegated merely to myth and folklore. Emperor Augustus, who ruled the Roman Empire from 31 BC to AD 14, established the first known paleontological museum; built specifically to house the remains of sea monsters and giants, including some of the fossils he plundered from Greek temples. Several ancient scribes mentioned that huge bones attributed to local heroes or giants were displayed in these temples, which often served as museums catering to an intensely curious populace.

Mayor began constructing a map based on the ancient geographical descriptions of where people had discovered the bones of giants, heroes and monsters. Of 23 sites located in present-day Greece and Turkey that were described in historical texts, only five have not yet been verified as fossil sites by paleontologists. Nearly 20 other major sites where giant or petrified bones were observed in antiquity, ranging from India to Spain and France, have also been confirmed by recent fossil discoveries.

## **Email regarding January 2005**

### **Fossil Field Trip from Miriam Hall**

Here is the info on the January fossil hunt. I will not be able to attend but I encourage each of you to go as it sounds like fun!

Subject: January Fossil Hunt

By special arrangement with Mr. Guy Combs of Marathon, Texas, we are able to go fossil hunting on his ranch in the Glass Mountains on Saturday, January 8th, and Sunday, January 9th, 2005.

This trip will be my first fossil trip, so I have asked Dr. Neal Immega and his wife to help us figure out what are fossils and what are just plain old rocks. The Glass Mountains are well known for their

wonderful fossils, and Mr. Combs assures me that there are fossils galore there.

The particulars are:

Dates: Saturday, 1/8/2005 and Sunday 1/9/2005

Time: 9:00 a.m. until whenever

Meet at: Antelope Lodge, Alpine, TX

Cost: \$10 per person per day\* Rollin' Rock Club membership required (\$10 single, \$16 dual per year) Reservations required. Each day is limited to 20 participants, because we don't know how big the collecting area is.

\*The low cost is because we don't know for sure how much material is there. Future field trips to this ranch probably will be a bit more expensive.

Note to everyone who has contacted me before: please contact me again—my hard drive just tanked, and I've lost all my e-mail messages.

For those who want to stay in Alpine, I would of course recommend the Antelope Lodge. The number is (800) 880-8106. If you have an RV or trailer, try the Pecan Grove RV Park at (432) 837-7915.

For other Big Bend places to stay, try [www.travelbigbend.com](http://www.travelbigbend.com) <<http://www.travelbigbend.com>> .

### **November Field Trip**

We arrived at our November field trip by a somewhat circuitous route. Originally it was to be at U.T.'s Invertebrate Lab at the J.J. Pickle Center. Through a misunderstanding, a miscommunication, I neglected to contact Dr. Molineux in time to set it up. When I became aware of the problem and attempted a last minute rectification, luck was with me—she was out of town for a week. New plan; the Brazos River at Highway 21 for some Eocene fossils. After weeks of rain and half of central Texas in flood, we reassessed the situation. The Brazos was 35 feet above normal and the saturated buff was slick as glass. Most of the members would have become rescue candidates. The only local,

large, non-waterway site we could think of was the bluff at 360/2244. There you have it, a well planned, well thought out field trip. Thank heaven for last minute E-mail.

We had a good turn out at this frequently hunted Walnut Formation site; Mike Smith, Dave Lindberg, Ron and Janet Root, Bill Thompson, John Hinte, Linda Swanson and Bruce, David and Amy Prinz, Speedy and Irma Garza, Melvin Noble, Anita Ernest, Dana Lockler and myself. That's seven new members and one new old member! Welcome back Bill.

This fossiliferous site has the typical Walnut Formation fauna: numerous snails, clams and small oysters, principally Ceratostreon texanum. If you look closely, you will also see encrusting bryozoans. Though I have never seen one, I have heard of an ammonite being found there. I know of five kinds of echinoids from this site: Heteraster texanus, Loriolia texana, Coenholectypus planatus, Phymosoma texanum, and Pedinopsis yarboroughi. I think the find of the day goes to Melvin for the best large Phymosoma I've seen come from there.

It was a good trip and certainly beat out being washed downstream on the Brazos. I hope to see a good turn out at Brownwood this month, though it is close to Christmas. Certainly don't miss Jacksboro in January!! See you then.

***Ed***

### **South Central Federation**

The annual meeting of the SCFMS was held in Humble, Texas in conjunction with the Houston Gem & Mineral Show on September 27, 2004

At the Editor's Breakfast on Saturday morning, numerous awards were handed out for the various Fossil, Rock and Mineral Clubs in the Federation.

On Saturday afternoon, the meeting was held lasting approximately two hours. Reports were

presented to the members and officers by the Officers and Committee Chairpersons.

Discussion ensued regarding the AFMS Scholarship Fund. Based on the current level of funds, only one scholarship can be awarded rather than the two normally given each year to each region. The sad event that hit the treasury of the AFMS scholarship fund is having an impact on what the AFMS can do. So the Challenge put forth by the SCFMS that all members of the AFMS donate \$1.00 per member to the AFMS unrestricted fund so that a 2<sup>nd</sup> scholarship can be given. \$250.00 was collected during this SCFMS meeting that day to get the challenge off to a great start.

Another item of extensive discussion was the budget. When the new budget was approved, it required some of the excess funds (interest) from the SCFMS Endowment Fund to be transferred to the general fund. This also caused an increase in dues to 40 cents per junior member and \$2.00 per adult. Also the SCFMS insurance program was required to increase the premium per club member to \$2.00 each.

New officers were nominated, elected and installed. The new officers for the next two years are:

President	William Medford
Executive Vice -President	Chuck Schuler
Secretary	Ruth Cress
Treasurer	Mary Trammel
District 1 NE TX VP	Don Shurtz
District 2 SE TX VP	John Moffitt
District 3 South TX VP	Virginia Adian
District 4 Central TX VP	George Brown
District 5 West TX VP	Archie Scott
District 6 Rollin' Rock	Betty Gosewehr
District 7 Arkansas	Ormel Sabo
District 8 Louisiana	Paul Broussard

Merry Christmas from your Editor

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## Club Information

The Central Texas Paleontological Society is a scientific, non-profit, community-based organization devoted to the study of fossils, advancing the state of the science, educating the public, and collecting fossil specimens. Most of us are amateurs, fascinated by fossils, who love to collect.

Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month at the LCRA building, 3700 Lake Austin Blvd. (between Redbud Trail and Enfield Ave.) at 7:00 PM in the LCRA Offices Board Room of the Hancock Bldg. **The public is cordially invited** to attend these meetings as well as our field trips held throughout the year.

Annual dues are: \$15 per person or \$18 per family, which includes a subscription to this newsletter, membership in the South Central Federation of Mineral Societies, and liability insurance coverage for club activities. Associate membership is \$10 per year and includes a subscription to this newsletter.

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**Web page:** <http://texaspaleo.com/ctps>

## **About the Newsletter**

Fossil Footnotes is distributed once a month prior to each meeting. Contact the Membership Chair to subscribe or obtain a sample-issue. If your mailing-label has a date marked with a colored pen, it means your membership has or is about to expire. Please send your check to the club Membership officer or bring it to a meeting.

We accept material from club members (and non-members at our discretion) including, but not limited to, information relevant to club activities, fossil collecting, paleontology & geology, and science education. Feel free to reproduce original material contained in this newsletter for educational purposes (including other club newsletters), so long as you credit the newsletter issue and author, if applicable. Send submissions by e-mail or hardcopies to the Editor (see above) at least two weeks before the meeting. Expect some publication delays for exotic formats.

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