



Paleo Footnotes

Volume 10, Number 4

April 2015

President's Note

Erich Rose
PSoA President

Have you been out collecting? It's a great time to visit your favorite site – enough rain to wash out new stuff and still not too hot or humid. Although I have not had time for a full day adventure, I have been putting in an hour or two here and there at some of my favorite local spots. The results have been good. I hope you get a chance to do the same.

Instead of our regular meeting and field trip this month, we will hold our annual auction while we enjoy good food, cold beverages and a nice afternoon in the Hill Country. This is a great way to get some new stuff at a good price (unless someone wants it more!) and spend the day with friends.

Many of you have been out to Westcave Preserve for the auction but maybe have not visited the grotto and cave. The tours are, in my humble opinion as weekend manager, well worth the time and money. Come early for the 10 a.m. tour or stay late for the 4 p.m. tour and make a day of it. The wildflowers are spectacular this year, and you may get to see some interesting critters. We have fossils, too.

The Oklahoma field trip will be the following weekend, and it is one of our best adventures. See this month's notice or ask Ed about it at the auction.

We have adopted a fossil! Check out: bit.ly/1bnEfof and consider doing the same. The money keeps the paleo lab at UT running and happy – a great cause!

We'll share more about some upcoming outreach events at the auction. These opportunities allow you to share your interest in fossils with others and inspire them to get involved. We need volunteers of any age or level of experience. I want to personally encourage new members to step up. Contact me for details.

Upcoming Field Trip

Two days in Oklahoma

Ed Elliott
PSoA Field Trip Chair

The Club's next field trip will be to Ada, OK for some Devonian, Silurian and Ordovician collecting. We'll meet at the petrified Callixylon tree on the corner of Main St. and Francis Ave. (pedestrian only) on the East Central University campus in Ada at 8 a.m. Sat., May 2. Park near Francis Ave. and East 12 St.

This is a two-day trip and we will visit numerous sites. Facilities will be scarce, so be prepared. Bring at least a gallon of water a day for each person, food, hats, long-sleeve shirts, sun block, knee-pads, etc. Bug spray is also recommended for chiggers and ticks. Some of the locations will require a short hike, which may be challenging for some. Depending on the site, you may need a hammer and chisel. Bring lots of containers, zipper bags, soda flats, newspaper, etc. and something to label your finds. Contact me if you have any concerns.

Ada is a college town, and there are a number of motels and restaurants in the area. We usually gather for a group dinner on Saturday night.

If you leave early enough on Friday, contact me for some possible bonus locations to visit along the way. More information will be provided at the auction, but call me at 512.657.7581 during the evening if you need more details.

Next Meeting

Saturday, April 25 – 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Westcave Preserve
24814 Hamilton Pool Rd.
Round Mountain, TX 78663

Field Trip Report

Eocene hunting in soggy East Texas

Ed Elliott
PSoA Field Trip Chair

A light rain was falling as we approached the meeting site in Nacogdoches. With me were John Hinte and Melvin Noble. Waiting for us were Linda McCall, Bob McDonald and a new member, Colleen Costelloe. The preceding afternoon four of us had done some local hunting despite the high rain percentage. I hoped the weatherman was wrong, as usual, and the current rain would soon stop.



Bob, Linda, John, Ed, guest, Melvin & Colleen

After a nice drive up TX-21 through the Piney Woods and San Augustine, we arrived at Mike's quarry. Both of our stops that day were Weches Formation, Claiborne Group, Eocene. This site has gotten a lot smaller due to gas well and infrastructure construction and plant growth. We found a lot of nice sand dollars (*Protoscutella mississippiensis*) and BBs (*Fibularia texana*). Melvin found a spot by the road and chopped out some bigger specimens. John found a few *Pinna* sp. I picked up a half dozen bivalve species, including two kinds of scallop, and two kinds of colonial coral (*Archohelia* sp and *Hemiastrea* sp). The site is still a great place to collect, overgrown or not.

Our second stop was the spoil piles of a working quarry. We hunted this stop as best we could, but this is a spot where we all get down and crawl around looking for lots of small or hard to see fossils. With the constant rain and the mud, crawling wasn't much of an option. Linda and Bob both found the heart urchin, *Martia argutus*. Several of us picked up nice *Flabellum* corals, and Linda found a nice partial crab carapace. After an hour or so, the elevated hunting area's exposure to the wind had us all feeling rather chilled, as soaked as we were. The rain was never bad, it simply never quit. The consensus was to call it a day, with most folks going home. Linda, John, Melvin and I stayed and had dinner with Rich Geist, a local member we seldom get a chance to see.

Sunday morning we surveyed our options. Most involved getting wet again and crawling in mud. We decided to drive back to central Texas and to a spot (on the way home?) south of Waco to a site on which Linda has been thinking of writing a paper. It had quit raining and was fairly dry, so we spent the day happily hunting a steep hillside and picking up lots of nice cretaceous fossils. The highlight for me was at least three species of horn corals from this Comanche Peak site. Melvin found a huge specimen in great shape. John found an incredibly detailed clam, very pretty.



Detailed clam with both halves

Not our best East Texas trip, but I think we all had a good time and brought back nice specimens. I would do it again. See y'all at the auction at Westcave!

PSoA Annual Auction

Suzanne Galligher
PSoA Vice President and Show Chair

Join us for the PSoA Annual Auction and Potluck Picnic on Saturday, April 25 from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. at Westcave Preserve. BBQ and soft drinks will be provided, just bring your favorite picnic side dish or dessert. Please consider donating a fossil or fossil-related item for the auction, as all proceeds go toward furthering our mission of education. In addition to fossils, books, maps, tools, hand-made cards and art have been popular items in the past. Come early or stay after the auction to take a guided tour of Westcave Preserve at 10 a.m. or 4 p.m. Tour rates are \$10 per adult, \$5 per child (4–12 years) or \$25 per family. Please RSVP and let us know what you plan on bringing to the picnic. Don't forget your checkbook or cash! Westcave Preserve is located on Hamilton Pool Road in western Travis County. From Austin, travel west on Highway 71 and turn left at Ranch Road 3238 (Hamilton Pool Road). Westcave Preserve is the first gate on your right after crossing the Pedernales River.

Upcoming Educational Outreach Opportunities

Suzanne Galligher
PSoA Vice President and Show Chair

Camp Fire Nature Celebration

Camp Fire is hosting its Nature Celebration to introduce children and families to the natural beauty of Texas. Each station will feature a different summer camp theme so families can experience "a day at camp." This free event is a day of fun, education and celebration of the natural world! By having fun at the Camp Fire Nature Celebration, you will support sending kids to Camp Fire Summer Camp through scholarships. In Camp Fire, children identify their sparks, lift their voices, and discover who they are. Activities include: identifying insects with the Austin Nature & Science Center, water conservation education with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, angler fishing, enviroscape models with Texas Parks and Wildlife & Keep Texas Beautiful to illustrate healthy, eco-friendly living, learning bird calls with the Wild Turkey Federation, building cob structures with the Zilker Botanical Garden, fossil dig with PSoA... and more!

Join us for this family-friendly event in Mueller Park on Saturday, May 30 from 9 a.m. to 11:00 am. The Club will sponsor a fossil touch table and dig pit. We'll need three volunteers to interact with the general public and introduce them to common fossils found in Central Texas. Children will have an opportunity to dig and take home a few fossils in our gravel dig pit, so donations of any small fossils would be greatly appreciated. If you're interested in volunteering, please contact Ron Root (programchair@austinpaleo.org) and Erich Rose (president@austinpaleo.org). Remember, you don't have to be an expert. You just have to be willing to share your passion for fossils with others.

Meeting Minutes

March 17, 2015

Austin Gem and Mineral Society Building

Dale Vargo
PSoA Secretary

Erich called the meeting to order and noted our visitors, among them David from the D.C. area. Erich mentioned the upcoming field trip to East Texas and Ed gave the important details of the two-day trip to a quarry in the San Augustine Eocene formation for collecting fossil sand dollars and other marine fauna. It was noted that the newsletter did not go out online due to illness. Mike referred us to last year's March newsletter website archive for info on the location of the East Texas field trip. Then Dax arrived with hard copies of the current newsletter, which he passed around. Kathleen reported that her attempts to contact the school outreach assigned to her were unsuccessful. Dino Day was announced to be on May 9 in Cedar Park. Ron says he is going to discuss fossils at a retirement home, but in no way is referring to those in residence. Ron brought up the launch of 'Adopt-a-Fossil', an ambitious fund-raising program operated through UT's 'Horn Raiser' program, which will be used by our friends at the UT non-vertebrate lab to purchase a 3-D scanner. Erich also brought up that CINCA is beginning to raise funds for a community bus. Ron announced that the DVD lecture series by Professor Summers is on sale for \$99.00 and proposed that we purchase this series. Melvin submitted a motion to purchase this series now and his motion was seconded and passed by member vote. Then a discussion ensued about how to best care for our book collection, which is housed in a standard storage space. Erich spoke about Guenther's unique book and map collection, which needs to be looked at and distributed per the wishes of his family, and Erich invited those interested in going through it at his house. Dr. Sprinkle agreed. Ron mentioned the interesting experiences that a field trip with Guenther produced. Mike then gave the Treasurer's report. Then Erich explained the details of the upcoming annual Paleo Society Auction at West Cave Preserve, and asked that we each donate auction items that people would bid on: great fossils, books and related high-quality items. And while there for the Auction, Erich recommended a tour of the Preserve. Mike reminded the members that there is no scheduled meeting this month, with the Auction being the meeting event. And Ed reminded us that the weekend after the Auction is the field trip to Oklahoma and outlined the details. Bob brought up the North Sulphur River proposed dam and its impact being the loss of great fossil collecting there.

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The door prizes were won by Paul, Cathy, Ron, David, Kevin and Melvin. Ron noted that his planned field trip to New Mexico is going well. We then took our refreshment break. Then when we returned, Ron introduced Alicia M. K. Power, who presented her talk for tonight on her Villanova U. Master's thesis: The Fossil Herpetofauna of New Caledonia. Alicia, a fourth year PhD student at UT, told of her studies in analyzing the effects of civilization on lizard populations from only 2000 years ago. She did this by looking at owl pellets, the digested remains of their prey, which are found in certain caves in New Caledonia. By examining over 25,000 fossil bits, and ,rigorously cataloging and determining the species changes contained in these owl pellets over time, she has concluded that , more than the Melanesians who had first colonized there, the impact of European arrivals altered these lizard and frog indigenous populations greatly, by introducing rats and geckos that were not there before. Thanking her staff, museums and funding sources, she then took questions from the audience. The meeting was then adjourned.

The purpose of the **Paleontological Society of Austin**, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is the scientific education of the public, the study and preservation of fossils and the fossil record, and assistance to individual, groups and institutions interested in various aspects of paleontology. Meetings of the **Paleontological Society of Austin** are held on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Austin Gem and Mineral Society building located at 6719 Burnet Ln. in Austin, Texas. The public is welcome to attend. Visit austinpaleo.org for more information.

Annual Dues: \$18/individual, \$24/family and \$12/associate (non-voting, receiving newsletter) Send to: Treasurer, Paleontological Society of Austin, P.O. Box 90791, Austin, TX 78749-0791.

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