

# PALEO FOOTNOTES

NEWSLETTER OF THE PALEONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

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DECEMBER 2023



## President's Note

Dearest members,

Stepping away from the presidency will be bittersweet to be sure. Spreading the love of paleontology has always a major goal of mine. In fact anything nature/science oriented has been a large part of who I am my entire life. This does not mean that I will give up on my goal, but the PSoA Presidency was such a wonderful pulpit.

As some of you know my health has not been perfect lately. Going forward I need to save more time for the treatments I have to deal with. My availability for field trips may become  
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## This Month's Meeting

### Holiday Potluck + White Mammoth

The December meeting will start 1 hour early at 6pm as we will be hosting our Holiday Potluck and White Mammoth gift exchange! If you would like to participate in the gift exchange, please bring a wrapped or bagged Dinosaur/Paleo related gift in the \$20-\$25 range. Here are the rules for the White Mammoth gift exchange:

- Everyone is randomly assigned a number
- Number 1 picks a gift and opens it
- Number 2 can steal the opened gift or select a new wrapped gift.

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December 2023

### Holiday Potluck + White Mammoth

Tuesday December 19th - 6pm  
(Please note that this is an hour early!)

**AGMS Clubhouse** 6719 Burnet Lane

No zoom this month - come join us at the clubhouse for dinner and gift exchange!

### December Field Trip TBD based on interest

Saturday December 23rd  
Local Austin Sites

## Outgoing President's Note

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less, and that will pain me the most. There is nothing as grand as being able to help folks in the field find great fossils!

Things change but the club is going to be in good hands, I have no doubt. Time for "the young turks" to take us forward. And someone please take over for Mike Smith! He has also been Treasurer too long. He needs a break.

Our end of year White Mammoth event is almost here. Let's make it a good one. Hope to see you all Tuesday.

### **Erich Rose**

PSoA President Emeritus

## Incoming President's Note

Dear PSoA Members,

I hope this message finds you well and filled with excitement for the upcoming year. As the incoming president of PSoA, I am both honored and thrilled to take on this responsibility. I want to express my gratitude for entrusting me with the privilege of leading our organization. I have thoroughly enjoyed serving as VP and Show Chair for the past 3 years and look forward to collaborating with Eric Jones as he serves as my replacement in those positions.

As we step into 2024, I am eager to embrace a year that is not only paleontology rich but also filled with growth. Our society has a rich history of advancing the field and fostering a community of like-minded individuals, and I am committed to building on these foundations. One of my primary goals is to focus on expanding our community by attracting and retaining new members. The diversity of perspectives and expertise within our membership is what makes our society vibrant and dynamic. I look forward to welcoming new members and enjoying the company of current members in the coming year. So, here's to a fossil-filled 2024!

Best regards,

### **Heather Aziz**

PSoA President

## December 2023 Field Trip

### **Local Austin Sites - TBD**

Our field trip this month falls on the day before Christmas Eve. We will be taking a poll at the Holiday Potluck to see if folks have interest, and if so, where we should go. Please reach out to the Field Trip Co-Chairs Jamie and Melvin with any questions or thoughts at: [fieldtripchair@austinpaleo.org](mailto:fieldtripchair@austinpaleo.org)

### **Melvin Noble + Jamie Shelton**

Field Trip Co-Chairs

## This Month's Meeting

(continued from page 1)

- If your gift is stolen, you can choose a new gift to unwrap or steal a previously opened gift.
- Continue in order until all gifts are unwrapped.
- Each gift can only be stolen 2 times. After the 2nd time it's stolen, the gift is "locked" and can't be stolen again.
- After all gifts are unwrapped, Number 1 has the option to keep the gift they have or steal (trade their gift for) another unlocked gift

At the meeting we will discuss the possibility of a field trip on Saturday the 22nd to some local Austin sites if there is interest. Hope to see everyone there!

### **Eric Jones**

PSoA VP + Show Chair

## November Meeting Minutes

### **At the November meeting we voted in the following slate of Officers and Board Members for 2024.**

President	<b>Heather Aziz</b> (Board Member)
VP & Show Chair	<b>Eric Jones</b> (Board Member)
Treasurer	<b>Mike Smith</b> (Board Member)
Secretary	<b>Gary Vliet</b> (Board Member)
Editor	<b>Brian Bedrosian</b>
President Emeritus	<b>Erich Rose</b> (Board Member)
Co-Field Trip Chair	<b>Jamie Shelton</b> (Board Member)
Co-Field Trip Chair	<b>Melvin Noble</b> (Board Member)
Webmaster	<b>Randy Whited</b>
Program Chair	<b>Jamie Shelton</b>

We had a great talk by new member Cindi Collins covering a lot of the material that went into her book, 'Dinosaurs and Other Ancient Animals of Big Bend'. Jamie Shelton reported on the previous weekend's field trip. We decided to have a local field trip this month - more on that at our December meeting. Details will be emailed out when they are nailed down. Heather and Mike described the results from Fossil Fest. Despite slightly lower attendance than last year our net income increased, primarily due to lower overhead and great t-shirt sales. Finally, the slate of officers published in the November newsletter was approved by acclamation. Our apologies for those attempting to join via Zoom - we were unable to get the stream up and running. Please note that the December meeting is an in-person only event as well.

### **Mike Smith**

Treasurer





## November Field Trip Report: **Santa Anna and Brownwood**

Fig. 1 Crinoid (Jamie Shelton)

**O**ur November field trip started out a bit stormy! As we got to Brownwood storms started to pop up and began dumping rain and making for some messy roads. Our drive out to Santa Anna had us all wondering how the days hunting was going to go. But despite a persistent bit of drizzly, we trekked down the path to the site. It was a small group of us: Wayne Mandrell, Will Jo, a new member Kelly Schubert and her son Carson, Melvin and myself.

We explored the Santa Anna site thoroughly, hoping to find some trilobites, but alas, none were found except one tiny and not very well preserved one. We all found some nice little brachiopods – *Composita*, *Wellerella*, and *Neospirifers* – plus



Fig. 2 *Petalodus* sp. teeth fragments (Carmsen Shubert)



the usually crinoid stuff. I found a great little colorful coral *Dibunophyllum* sp. and some echinoid *Archeocidaris* bits and pieces. After a bit, we decided to head over to Wilson's Pit.

Fortunately, it had not really rained there so the ground was not the goopy mess that I was a bit afraid we might find! We all split up and went a variety of directions. Will Jo lead the majority of the troopers over to the back area to look for *Petalodus* teeth. Melvin joined them shortly and helped point out what to look for – that porcelain white look. Carson found quite a selection of them! (fig.2) Will found a nice one in matrix, but as we all know...sometimes they don't survive the extraction!

Wayne had the finds of the day with an almost complete *Petalodus*, plus a couple of other nice unidentified carboniferous shark teeth (fig. 3) and a lovely crinoid cup. I was happy to find my second trilo "butt" from Wilsons – a *Ditomopyge* sp. (fig. 4) and another nice crinoid cup (fig. 1).

The day ended up being the perfect hunting weather at Wilsons – not too cool and not too warm. It was hard to give up the hunting! Too bad Brownwood is a bit of a drive, but then again, if it were close by, it wouldn't be quite so special! Or would it??

**Jamie Shelton**  
Field Trip Co-chair



Fig. 3 *Petalodus* sp. + other teeth (Wayne Mandrell)



Fig. 4 *Ditomopyge* sp. pygidium (Jamie Shelton)

1 in





## Tailings...

### In The News

#### Skull of pliosaur, massive prehistoric sea predator, is discovered in the UK

The perilous mission to recover the fossilized skull of the prehistoric pliosaur will be documented in an upcoming BBC film narrated by David Attenborough.

Eric Lagatta, [USA Today](#), December 12th 2023

#### The Top Ten Dinosaur Discoveries of 2023

From uncovering a tyrannosaur's last meal to unlocking the secrets of a dino with a really long neck, these were the year's biggest stories

Riley Black, [Smithsonian Magazine](#), December 11th 2023

#### Once Thought to Be Plants, These Rare Fossils Are Actually Baby Turtles, Scientists Say

The prehistoric specimens found in Colombia could represent one of the oldest and largest turtle species to ever exist

Margherita Baggi, [Smithsonian Magazine](#), December 8th 2023

#### Amazing Fossil Preserves Teenage Tyrannosaur's Last Meal

Stomach contents from a juvenile Gorgosaurus reveal it feasted on small, bird-like species 75 million years ago

Brian Handwerk, [Smithsonian Magazine](#), December 8th 2023

#### Dinosaur extinction

New study suggests they were killed off by more than an asteroid

Eric Lagatta, [USA Today](#), November 28th 2023

#### Fossil Hunters Uncover Prehistoric 'Sea Monster' Skull at a U.K. Beach

The six-and-a-half-foot-long pliosaur skull was excavated from a rock cliff in England and may belong to a new species, scientists say

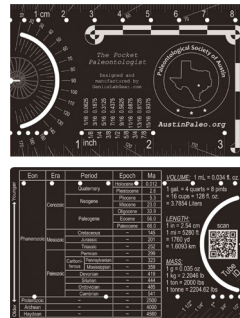
Margaret Osborne, [Smithsonian Magazine](#), December 12th 2023

### 2023 Field Trip Schedule

December **White Mammoth and Pot Luck (possible local Austin field trip)**

**Important Note:** Please refrain from visiting sites the club is scheduled to access as part of a scheduled field trip. Doing so can clear a site of quality fossils and negatively impact the experience folks will have, especially new members, if the site suddenly feels "picked over". We do our best to carefully space out trips to allow them to recover, so please be respectful of the club and stay off these sites within 3 months of a planned trip. Please note that dates and locations are subject to change - check the monthly newsletter or come to our monthly meetings for updates.

### New Austin Paleo Gear!



#### The Pocket Paleontologist

Eric Jones, on behalf of the PSoA, produced this awesome laser etched card that includes handy scales and other information for use in the field. The size of a credit card, it fits neatly in you wallet so you always have it with you. Available for sale at our meetings or by contacting Mike Smith. Makes a great gift!

### WhatsApp for PSoA Members

This would be handy for folks to have on their phones for Fossil Fest - or just an easy way for the board to communicate with you when email is not practical.

We are not setting this up for random interactions, like "anyone know what this fossil is". The goal is to have something we can use to broadcast last minute field trip changes, emergency notifications (like "we are locked out of AGMS, meeting cancelled"), pleas for help at Fossil Fest, etc.

To start you need WhatsApp installed on your phone. If you don't already know, WhatsApp is an app similar to normal texting and will show up as a text message on your mobile devices. If you want to get real-time information without having to check the app, then make sure to allow push notifications when you set it up. Then just scan the QR code and an Admin will approve your joining the group.



## Good Field Trip Etiquette

1. Arrive on time or early. At the prescribed meeting time (often 8AM) you should be out of your car standing with the field trip leader, signed in and ready to hear the day's schedule, directions and helpful pointers.
2. Do your homework. Use one of the online mapping programs to determine travel time and directions from your home the day before. Take the map with you and leave at least 15-30 minutes early. This is critical when we are going to quarries, private property or if the first stop is a meeting-point, not the collecting site. The field trip leader will not wait more than 15 minutes beyond the scheduled time.
3. Make sure you have the field trip leader's phone number. Their number will appear in the field trip notice. Bring a copy of the notice from the newsletter or e-mail blast so you have the information. That is the best way to find the group if you do get delayed or lost. But do not count on it. Some of our remote sites have poor cell reception. We have no way to guarantee you will get there if you miss the meeting spot.
4. The first stop is not breakfast. Please do not expect the rest of the group to wait while you order food or take care of business. If you need to do that, arrive 30 minutes early and then be ready to go at 8:00AM sharp!
5. The field trip leader sets the schedule. Gather near the leader at the beginning of every trip and listen carefully. The leader will describe where and when things will happen. That will include directions, plans for breaks and everything else you need to know about how the day will unfold. If you are not sure about directions or the schedule speak directly with the field trip leader. Do not count on hearsay.
6. Do not ask the entire group to stop for unscheduled breaks. If you need to take a break during the day, do it after you know where the collecting site is located. The field trip leader will usually schedule a break around lunch but not between every stop. Follow the group to the site and then circle back for food or facilities. This is why we suggest bringing your own food and beverages. Also being prepared with TP, or whatever else, for "emergencies".
7. Sign in and don't forget to report to the leader when you leave. This is not critical, but he or she will greatly appreciate those two things. Having everyone's name let's him know how well attended the trip was and we like to list everyone in the follow up reports. Secondly, getting a chance to hear and see what you found that day and being able to keep track of who is on site at the very end is just a good thing.
8. Be prepared. Make sure you have the materials you need to collect safely. In particular, water, hat, sunscreen and food.

9. Don't crowd the next guy. Please be courteous of your fellow collectors space. If someone says "Hey I found a good one!" don't come rushing over and crowd into their collecting zone. Let them offer to share the space. You can ask them where they found it and then move off to one side or the other, but don't just flop down next to them.

10. Be safe. If someone is working an area on a slope do your best not to pass above them. If you need to do so, please let them know you are passing and do your best not to send any debris down on top of them. If someone is working above you and you must pass below, please alert them for the same reasons. Generally speaking, if someone is working a spot respect that they "own" that area and your passage through or around that location should only be done with their permission and/or invitation.



### Editor's Note:

I would like to extend an invitation to all members to submit stories of their own travels for publish in future episodes of SIDE TRIPS. All I need is a short write up (and I can assist with this) as well as some photos of your trip (iPhone or Android photos are perfect - just make sure to send me the full resolution version). Fossil hunting trips are always welcome, but so are trips to museums, fossil/mineral shows, and other adventures that explore the world around us. You can reach me at [editor@austinpaleo.org](mailto:editor@austinpaleo.org) and I will do my best to include your stories in future issues.

**Brian Bedrosian**  
Newsletter Editor

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 normally 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](http://austinpaleo.org) for more information.

*Please note, our monthly meetings are currently held in a hybrid format, with in person gatherings at the AGMS Clubhouse which can also be attended virtually via Zoom. Please see information provided on page one of this newsletter each month. While we are not currently requiring masks at any in person gatherings, we ask that you maintain a safe distance from others when socializing. Please note all virtual meetings are recorded and the Society may elect to publish the video of these meetings, in part or in total, to the Society's website or another publically accessible venue as benefits the goals of the club listed above.*

#### Membership Information

Annual Dues: **\$18/individual**  
**\$24/family**  
**\$12/associate** (non-voting, receiving newsletter)

Pay on-line at: <https://www.austinpaleo.org/newMembership.html>

Send payment to: **Treasurer, Paleontological Society of Austin,**  
**P.O. Box 90791, Austin, TX 78749-0791**

PSoA Web Site: [www.austinpaleo.org](http://www.austinpaleo.org)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/austinpaleo>

Twitter: [@Austin\\_Paleo](https://twitter.com/Austin_Paleo)

#### Current Club Officers

President	<b>Heather Aziz</b>	<a href="mailto:president@austinpaleo.org">president@austinpaleo.org</a>
President Emeritus	<b>Erich Rose</b>	
Vice President	<b>Eric Jones</b>	<a href="mailto:vicepresident@austinpaleo.org">vicepresident@austinpaleo.org</a>
Treasurer	<b>Mike Smith</b>	<a href="mailto:treasurer@austinpaleo.org">treasurer@austinpaleo.org</a>
Secretary	<b>Gary Vliet</b>	<a href="mailto:secretary@austinpaleo.org">secretary@austinpaleo.org</a>
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