

# PALEO FOOTNOTES

NEWSLETTER OF THE PALEONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

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MARCH 2024



## President's Note

### Spring is finally here!

Our next field trip will be to Whiskey Bridge, one of my favorite locations for fossil collecting. Please remember to wear appropriate footwear as the terrain can be slick. The beginning of March has been brimming with outreach opportunities, offering enriching experiences for all involved. Keep your eyes peeled for future outreach events; they are incredibly rewarding and require no extensive knowledge of Texas fossils. Your participation could ignite the passion of a future paleontologist!

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## This Month's Speaker

### Intro to Fossils

Speaker: **Paul Hammerschmidt**

Paul Hammerschmidt is our Speaker for March. This presentation is a wonderful intro to fossils - great for the whole family, so if you have been considering attending a Paleo Society meeting to see what it's all about, this is a great opportunity to find out all about fossils, what they are, how they are formed, and what we can learn from them. He will also talk about the Geological Time Scale which marks the Geological history of the Earth and

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March 2024

**PSoA Regular Meeting**  
Tuesday March 19th - 7pm  
**AGMS Clubhouse**  
6719 Burnet Lane

Join Zoom Meeting  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88451710052?pwd=Uy9hV05BTy9rUmIzY1MzdVYnNTVjdz09>

**Club Field Trip**  
Saturday March 23rd - 8am  
Whiskey Bridge  
(see details page 2)

**April Auction & Potluck**  
April 20th 12-3pm  
Westcave Outdoor Discovery Center  
(see details page 2)

## President's Note

(continued from page 1)

At the February meeting I announced that we would be collecting monetary donations so that, as a group, we can make an in-memoriam donation to the Texas Science & Natural History Museum (formerly the Texas Memorial Museum) in honor of Erich. The easiest way to donate is to go to [www.austinpaleo.org/membership.html](http://www.austinpaleo.org/membership.html) and click on the "contribute" button on the right side of the screen. Make sure that you indicate in the notes (when checking out) that your contribution is for Erich.

Do not forget to RSVP for our April Auction, where we will gather for BBQ, camaraderie, and the excitement of bidding on remarkable fossils. The auction replaces both our monthly meeting and field trip, and this year, we will also feature a touch table indoors as a gesture of gratitude to Westcave for their continued support. Bring a potluck dish to share, an auction donation or two (those of you looking to thin your collection, this is the time to do so). Looking forward to seeing you all there!

See you all soon,

**Heather Aziz**  
PSoA President



PSoA Outreach at Wild by Wild Basin - see report page 3!

## April Auction & Potluck

On April 20th from 12:00 pm - 3:00 pm PSoA members will gather at Westcave Outdoor Discovery Center (24814 Hamilton Pool Rd, Round Mountain, TX 78663) for our annual auction and potluck. Please RSVP [here](#) so that we can make sure we order enough BBQ!

If you have fossils to donate to the auction, bring them with you. Additionally, as this is also a potluck, bring your favorite side, dessert, or beverage to share!

We will have a small table set up for the public to view on the inside of the Discovery Center earlier in the day. Our contact informed me that they will be present for tours beginning at 9:00 am. Would anyone be interested in staffing a touch table at that time and until the auction and potluck begin? If so, let me know.

**Heather Aziz**  
PSoA President

## This Month's Speaker

(continued from page 1)

what has occurred on our planet over the hundreds of millions of years of Geological time it has been in existence.

**About our Speaker:** Paul Hammerschmidt is a long time member and avid amateur paleontologist who has collected extensively in Texas and Colorado, among other places. His knowledge of Geology and Paleontology has served the PSoA well, especially as Presentation Coordinator at Fossil Fest and of course, our meetings!

## March 2024 Field Trip Whiskey Bridge

Field Trip: 8am Saturday March 23rd, 2024  
Whiskey Bridge

We will meet at 8 a.m. on Saturday, March 23rd at Whiskey Bridge which is just outside Bryan, TX. To get there look for an old train bridge crossing the Brazos River at Texas State Highway 21. From Austin, take either US-290 or TX-71 east and turn left onto TX-21 heading north toward Caldwell. Eleven miles past Caldwell, just after FM-50 on the right and County Rd-221 on the left, you will see the rusty railroad bridge. SLOW DOWN and prepare to turn left across the highway and onto a small pull-off along the left side of the road just before the bridge. If you miss the turn, cross the bridge, make a U-turn, and come back to the pull off. DO NOT PARK near the railroad equipment, but instead park along the small road/grass above the river. We will be collecting along the west bank of the river just below the parking area, so if you get there late just walk down to the river and you will find us.

This is a Middle Eocene marine site: gastropods, bivalves, shark teeth and fish ear bones can be found. Most of the finds will be small and only a knife or small screwdriver is required. You will find plenty of fossils. This is a good place to take kids. Sectional boxes can be useful. It can be muddy and slippery if it has rained so be prepared. If it rains real hard we will reschedule or plan for an alternative.

There is a great ID book published by the Paleo group of the Houston gem and mineral society on their site that can be purchased on line. If you have any questions or need help, feel free to call me at (512) 468-8914, or email at [fieldtripchair@austinpaleo.org](mailto:fieldtripchair@austinpaleo.org)

Also don't forget next month in April our picnic and auction at West Caves on Saturday, April 20th!

**Melvin Noble**  
Field Trip Co-Chair



Mike Smith speaking to a family at the Wild by Wild Basin Outreach event this past month

## PSoA Outreach

**PSoA Members:** It is a primary part of our mission to provide outreach education to our community. I would like to start tracking PSoA's outreach efforts. If you have already done an outreach event this year, would you please let me know of how many individuals were at the event and if you handed out any fossils? Please reach out to me at [president@austinpaleo.org](mailto:president@austinpaleo.org), or speak up at the next meeting.

### Heather Aziz

PSoA President

## Texas Day at Ray Elementary Report

On March 7th we did an outreach event at the Ray Elementary School for Texas Day. Cindi Collins and I volunteered to do a touch table to educate elementary students on fossils and prehistoric life. We set up outside under a tarp where we had plenty room for the display. Grades 1- 5 came thru as well as pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. There were several questions asked, mostly "what is this"! Many students were surprised to learn that this area was a shallow ocean 65 million years ago during the Cretaceous period. Each grade had 40 minutes to come thru to see the exhibit and there were many curious minds. They were a great bunch of students and they displayed a wonderful intellectual curiosity. We adults could do well to have the same.

### Melvin Noble

Field Trip Co-Chair



Jamie Shelton ready to answer questions at Wild by Wild Basin

## Wild by Wild Basin Report

Mike Smith and I were invited again this year to be part of the Wild Basin Creative Research Center Spring Break "Wild by Wild Basin". We provided our Touch Table, informative posters, and knowledge of local fossils to help the visitors learn more about their natural surroundings. A variety of families, both from near and far (Houston to Wisconsin!) learned about the Western Interior Seaway and the fossils therein. We had a lovely time hanging out in the beauty of Wild Basin.

### Jamie Shelton

Field Trip Co-Chair / Programs Chair

## Minutes of the February 20th Meeting

The meeting opened about 7:00 pm. There were about 30 persons in attendance.

- **Speaker:** Jamie Shelton introduced the speaker for the evening: Liam Norris, whose topic was "My Journey through Paleontology: How a 'Dino' obsessed Child Became an Isotope Geochemist" (PhD Candidate, UT-Austin). This was a 'very' well received presentation!!
- **Business:** Heather Aziz opened the business meeting about 8:10 pm.
- **Erich Rose Memoriam Donation:** She noted that a donation will be made to the 'Texas Science and Natural History Museum' in honor of Erich Rose. Members can make their donation via the Paleo website.
- **Outreach:** Heather and Melvin will represent PSA at Ray Elementary School's (Round Rock) Texas Day event on Thursday, March 7th.
- **Fossil Fest:** Eric Jones noted that invitations for Fossil Fest have been sent out. Apparently 2 of last year's vendors will not attend (but one of these is just skipping this year), and there are two new vendors.
- **April Auction + Potluck:** Our PSA Auction event is set for Saturday, April 20th and as usual will be at West Cave Preserve. Members are encouraged to make donations of 'saleable' items.
- **Field Trip:** Jamie noted the field trip for the weekend (24th and 25th) will be to Jacksboro. Attendees are to meet at 9:00 am on Saturday at the Jacksboro Square.
- **Finances:** Mike Smith reported that our bank balance remains steady at about \$27,000.
- Meeting ended about 8:30 pm

### Gary Vliet

Secretary





Fig. 2 nautiloid (Eric Jones)

## February Field Trip Report: Lake Jacksboro

What a beautiful weekend we had for fossil hunting at Lake Jacksboro! We were well rewarded for postponing a month...it was a perfect day, not too cool, not too warm, but JUST RIGHT. We had a great group, with some new people joining us for the first time out fossil hunting! Will Jo, Tim Cawthorn and kids Evie and Wesley, Cindy Collins and her friend Stacey Duvall, Kevin Bills, Ron Di Pronio, Eric and Jack Jones, Leslie Riddle and the Rylanders - plus Ed Elliot, Paul Hammerschmidt and myself all caravanned to the site and we were surprised to find a car in the little parking lot...it's not a very "popular" place, and surprise surprise...it was Leia Pfaff who had driven up early that morning, hunted with us and turned around and drove home after! That's some dedicated fossil hunting..... And then, another surprise, Shawn Caradine who is now a student at UT Permian showed up too! We haven't seen him in a while since he is now out in West Texas!

After we hauled ourselves and our stuff over to the area, everyone spread out and started finding some really excellent finds this trip. A surprising number of whole or nearly whole nautiloids and goniatites were the finds of the day. Tim Cawthorn found a BIG chunk of *Tainoceras* nautiloid (fig. 3), even if it wasn't whole, it was a real keeper. Both Leslie Riddle and Jack Jones found great examples of *Brachycycloceras* nautiloids (fig. 6). Eric Jones found another excellent half of a large nautiloid (fig. 2) and Gary and I found "matching" *Gonioloboceras* (fig. 1). Gary also found a



Fig. 3 *Tainoceras* nautiloid (Tim Cawthorn)

# February Field Trip Report (continued)

## Lake Jacksboro



Fig. 4 *Fimbrinia plummeri* brachiopod (Jamie Shelton)



Fig. 5 *Glaphyrites goniatite* (Jamie Shelton)

little *Eoasianites* (tentative ID) *goniatite*. And I was excited to find something that I've been hoping to find for a while... a tiny *Glaphyrites goniatite* (fig. 5)!

Both Cindy and Jack found some interesting coral specimens that we finally ID'd as *Syringopora* (fig. 7) thanks to the *Color Guide of Pennsylvanian Fossils of North Texas* (see page 7). If you are interested in Pennsylvanian fossils, this is a great book to have – either physical copy or the PDF version. But of course, we also have our own walking encyclopedia in Ed Elliot and he of course, found some really lovely items – big brachiopods and corals - including something I'd never seen before, a bivalve called *Parallelodon carbonarius* (fig. 8). Absolutely lovely little fossil.

Conularids are one of the special little fossils found at this site and Leslie was the winner of “most conularids found within a foot of each other”. I heard her exclaiming “here’s another one!” over and over. Gary found quite a few too! Yours truly found...none. Ah well. Skunked by the conularids! But I did find something else that I was super excited about... a tiny spikey little brachiopod called *Fimbrinia plummeri* (fig. 4). AND I was thrilled to find my first crinoid calyx. While bits and pieces of crinoids are fairly common, finding a relatively intact calyx is a bit more unusual.

I'm sure there were some other really great finds, because we all seemed to be having a very good day. And we'd love to see everyone's fossil finds on the Facebook PSoA Members Group. We invite you to post your finds, no matter how big or small! We love admiring fossils! And I am already raring to return to Jacksboro... after I finish looking through my 5 gallon buckets full of micro matrix...

**Jamie Shelton**  
Field Trip Co-chair



Fig. 6 *Brachycycloceras nautiloids* (Jack Jones)



Fig. 7 *Syringopora* coral (Cindy Collins)



Fig. 8 *Parallelodon carbonarius* bivalve (Ed Elliot)



## Tailings...

### In The News

#### **Fossil Hunter Discovers Gigantic Crab in New Zealand—a New, Extinct Species**

The massive creature is 8.8 million years old, and its modern descendants in Australia can grow to be the weight of a human toddler

Sarah Kuta, [Smithsonian Magazine](#), March 8th 2024

#### **Newly Discovered, Parrot-Like Dinosaur Roamed North America Alongside T. Rex**

While larger dinosaurs are comparatively well-known, finding smaller species paints a more complete picture of life before the mass extinction

Riley Black, [Smithsonian Magazine](#), January 24th 2024

#### **Ancient Iberians Ingested Red Dust Loaded With Mind-Altering Mercury**

Bones in Spain suggest a mercury-rich mineral used for art and hallucinogenic trips poisoned a community 5,000 years ago

Bridget Alex, [Smithsonian Magazine](#), March 5th 2024

#### **These Ancient Celts Were Buried With Their Animals**

Some remains found in the 2,000-year-old graves were likely food offerings, but others may have been much-loved companions

Brian Handwerk, [Smithsonian Magazine](#), February 14th 2024

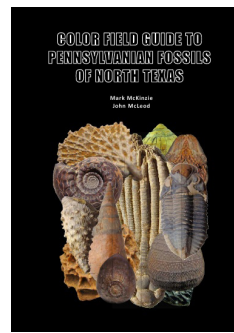
### 2024 Field Trip Schedule

March	<b>Whiskey Bridge</b>
April	<b>Club Auction + Picnic</b>
May	<b>Oklahoma (2 days)</b>
June	<b>Austin Loop 360 <i>Lower Brazos</i></b>
July	<b>Johnson City</b>
August	<b>Ross Perot Museum Dallas</b>
September	<b>Texoma <i>Moody / Evant</i> (2 days)</b>
October	<b>Brady / Santa Anna</b>
November	<b>Brownwood</b>
December	<b>White Mammoth and Pot Luck</b>

*Locations in italics are alternates depending on weather and availability of sites.*

**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.

### Great Resource for Jacksboro Fossils!



#### **Color Field Guide to Pennsylvanian Fossils of North Texas by Mark McKinzie and John McLeod 2021**

This is a spiral bound field ready version of their seminal volume available for \$22 from Lulu.com. The book includes descriptions of the exposures at Lake Bridgeport, Wilson Claypit, Jacksboro and other Texas Pennsylvanian sites frequented by PSA members with color images of specimens.

### 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>
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