



Paleo Footnotes

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September 2018

President's Note

Erich Rose
PSoA President

As I write this the rain outside my house is coming down strong. Along with the landscape I had been suffering a drought. A collecting drought. I haven't had any free time to go collecting. But as I write, somewhere out there, amazing new fossils are being washed free. The question is: will they wait for me or will one of you get there first? Looking forward to either.

September will be a busy month for the club. We have a bunch of outreaches and we start full swing into the season of club shows. AGMS Gem Capers in October and our own **Fossil Fest** in November. We will begin with the annual "Fossil Stuffing". If you can, please come early (6pm) to the next meeting and we will spend an hour putting together the giveaway bags for Gem Capers and other pre-Fossil Fest events. It's always fun as we get to sit around the big table and catch up as we fill the zip-locks with fossils and flyers.

Last I heard we had a good speaker lined up. Something about elephant birds if my memory serves me. As far as the September field trip goes, I am not sure at all what Ed will have planned. Clifton was on the calendar, but our last visit to that quarry was not as good as in the past. Ed may pick another local. Wonder if the Brazos might cooperate, despite the rain?

We are putting together the details for **Fossil Fest** and we will be asking members for help. One thing we want is displays of Texas marine fossils. Our theme is the more general this year. Do you have some great ammonites, echinoids, corals or just plain awesome oysters? This is your chance to show them off. If you have never displayed before don't be shy. I would be happy to help any member set up a case. Talk to me at the meeting or send me an email. Take care and see you all soon.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, September 18 – 7 p.m.
Pre-meeting Stuffing Party, 6 p.m.
Austin Gem and Mineral Society Building
6719 Burnet Lane Austin, Texas

Next Field Trip

Saturday, September 22 – meet at 8:00am
Possibly Clifton
Meet: tbd

Upcoming Meeting Program

Paul Hammerschmidt
Programs Chair

Synopsis: The elephant birds of Madagascar were the largest birds that ever lived, but were also some of the most mysterious. Although they coexisted with humans for nearly 1,500 years before going extinct sometime in the 15th-17th centuries, we understand precious little about their biology, including when during the day they were active, where they lived, or even why they went extinct! Using digital imaging techniques, we are able to reconstruct the external of anatomy of the elephant bird brain and compare it with brains from their relatives. These comparisons allow us to predict what elephant birds were like when they were still alive, and the results have totally changed the way we imagine them and their environment.

Bio: Chris Torres is a PhD candidate in the Department of Integrative Biology at UT Austin. He studies the evolution of bird morphology and ecology using data from both living and extinct birds. For his PhD, he is investigating the ways that palaeognath birds (ostriches, kiwis and relatives) interact with their environments have changed over time. He's focusing especially on elephant birds, an enigmatic, recently-extinct Malagassy group whose numbers included the largest birds that ever lived. He also studies flamingos, which are pretty cool, too. He got his bachelors in geology from North Carolina State University and his master's in biology from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

July Meeting Minutes

Gary Vliet
PSoA Secretary

[courtesy of Emelia R.]

Dr. Sprinkle gave a presentation on new or more complete echinoderms discovered since 1982 from the bromide formation of southern Oklahoma.

Mike Smith reported the finances are about the same minus a little bit due to Fossil Fest expenses.

Emelia Rose mentioned upcoming outreach events, and what to expect in preparation for Fossil Fest.

The field trip schedule has not changed.

Meeting concluded at 8:50.

Fossil Fest Update

Emelia Rose

PSoA VP/ Show Chair

Pre-meeting Stuffing Party, 6 p.m., Tuesday, September 18

Before the September meeting starts, we will be stuffing 800 sandwich-sized bags with a Fossil Fest flyer and a fossil. We need 800 clean and recognizable fossils.

Fossil Fest Update

Fossil Fest is coming up soon on Saturday and Sunday, November 3 and 4. Show hours will be from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The theme is 'Cretaceous Sea.' The sign-up sheets have time slots of 3 hours, but please sign up for multiple shifts in a day. To make Fossil Fest a success, it is important to have help from as many members as possible.

Needed: Fossils from the Cretaceous period for display cases. Please email showchair@austinpaleo.org or contact Erich at the upcoming meeting if you have fossils to display.

Finish combing through your fossil collection and start pulling out the ones you want to use to create an exhibit case at Fossil Fest this year. We have a lot of display cases to fill in the Hall! If you're in need of exhibit case ideas, please consider:

- Collection of fossils from a specific locality around Texas and surrounding area
- Collection of a specific type of fossil from localities all around Texas and surrounding area
- Display of how a plant or animal becomes a fossil
- Examples and a brief description of changes to an organism over time
- Collection of a particular organism and their structures
- One organism - the characteristics used to identify it with samples and diagrams
- Fossil and display showing what we were able to learn about that fossil

Outreach Update

Emelia Rose

PSoA VP/ Show Chair

Upcoming Outreach

We have three large events that we are going to be at before Fossil Fest. Pioneer Day, TMM's ID Day, and Gem Capers are great venues to help us get the word out about Fossil Fest. All members are encouraged to volunteer, as it's a great way to give back to the Club. New members have the added advantage of learning new things about fossils at a fun event. All of our activities, such as the dig pit and spinning wheel, will have one veteran member, so please don't think that you may not know enough to volunteer. I have created sign-up sheets, and will be bringing a spreadsheet to the next meeting if you prefer to sign up that way. Thank you!

Pioneer Day at the Dr. Pound Historic Farmstead in Dripping Springs on Saturday, September 22 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. If you would like to volunteer from 1-4 please email me at showchair@austinpaleo.org. For more information, visit www.drpoundhistoricalfarmstead.org/pioneer-day.html.

ID Day is on September 23 from 1-5pm. It is hosted by the Texas Memorial Museum. For more information, go to: <https://tmm.utexas.edu/events/3>.

Gem Capers is October 19-21 at the Palmer Event Center in Austin. Please sign up at <http://signup.com/go/scnRSQJ>. We will be needing volunteers Friday through Sunday, as well as setup on Thursday. For more information go to: <http://agms-tx.org/gem-capers/>.

Fossil Fest is November 3 and 4 at Old Settler's Heritage Center in Round Rock. Sign up to volunteer at <http://signup.com/go/RtUJzqjm>. For more information, go to: <http://austinpaleo.org/fest.html>.

Upcoming Field Trip

Possibly Clifton Quarry

Ed Elliott

PSoA Field Trip Chair

We're awaiting permission. We'll discuss at the club meeting..

Field Trip Report

Fossil hunting in Harker Heights and Surrounding Vicinity, August 2018 (Ed Elliott)

Driving in to the meeting site I had the thought, "What a wonderful day for collecting!" The crowd in the parking lot was full of new faces, most collecting for the first time. With me were Grady Parks, John Hinte, Robert Saxelby, Scott, Mary, and Angie Steelman, Ed Walston, Terry Czerwien, Cathy and Gary Rylander, Robert Peterson, Karen Stone, Aaron Collier, Valerie Kruchko, Jon and Jonah Lundy, Scott and Erika Kala, Vaughn Nelson, and Di Gazdar.

Our two sites are both Walnut Formation, Fredericksburg Group. Quite a few of us spent the first part of the morning making sure all of the "newbies" were doing well. We showed examples of everything that was there and gave specimens to the kids. Though it felt a little picked over, there was still lots to pick up. There was a variety of urchins, with *Phymosoma* being most sought after, some corals, crab material, lots of different bivalves, several different ammonites with a couple of nice *Engonoceras* found. By the time we left it was getting hotter and most of the families with children left for home. All said they had a good time. Our next site had fewer heart urchins and seldom a *Phymosoma*, but *Salenia mexicana* are common. Lots of pretty detailed gastropods, a billion *Texigryphaea* and abundant corals. Some nice ammonites have been found here but only nice pieces this day. After a couple of hours it was getting quite warm and most headed for home. John and I headed for a small site south of Copperas Cove. The main draw for us was a small gastropod with original shell called *Semineritina apparatus*. They are quite pretty and we both found some nice ones. From the fauna, I believe that this is upper Glen Rose Formation. We were kneeling on drop cloths and wearing gloves to keep from burning our hands on the rocks so we decided to head out. It was August in Texas but we still had a wonderful day collecting. Hope to see you at the next one.

Odds and Ends

Newly Discovered Turtle Ancestors Chomped With Beaks But Bore No Shells

In the journal *Nature*, a group of scientists reported the discovery of an ancient turtle in Southwestern China, sporting some pretty not-so-turtle features: Not only was this foregone reptile over six feet long, but it also swam shallow waters completely barebacked..



Read more at <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/newly-discovered-turtle-ancestors-chomped-beaks-bore-no-shells-180970111/#TYhj69dYcQixxJLq.03>

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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