

04/18/06 West side board meeting minutes

Meeting was opened by Mike Messenger

The meeting was held outside since no one had the key to the building

Kathy gave the treasurer's report.

A bill was submitted for newsletter expenses. Kathy reported that the once the paperwork was filled out the Council's bank accounts will finally be transferred.

Wagonmaster:

- The Racehorse Creek field trip was well attended. On the way to the collecting area, a number of stragglers nearly got left behind. All field trip leaders are encouraged to discuss "convoy etiquette" with their group. Make sure that some one is assigned to "take up the rear" to prevent people from getting lost or left behind.
- The First Creek collecting area will definitely have limitation on the number of vehicles that will be allowed per trip. The land owners have made this clear to a number of clubs in the past and it looks like they will be making good on their position.
- Mike sent off the insurance information to the Mt Higgins area land owners.
- Mike also stated that the Cherry Creek is gated about 3 miles from the petrified wood locality.

Old business:

A Secretary and 2nd Vice President are still needed for the board. Send in your nominations

New business:

- Ed Levesque sent the Council a letter telling us that the DNR wants to make a catalog of the various minerals in the state. Mike will send information to the appropriate people.
- The Council needs to come up with a written policy on how to handle the "field trip reservation fees" of no shows. One suggestion was to place the money in the general fund. It was also felt that if someone asked to reserve a spot on a trip but had not paid the fee by a week (or so TBD) before the that they would lose their spot. The fieldtrip leaders could then contact people on the waiting list. Comments on these suggestions are welcome.
- If anyone is not receiving the newsletter via e-mail after requesting the electronic version please contact the editor Glenn Morita.

Meeting adjourned,

Submitted by Glenn Morita, Secretary Pro-tem

Where Did the Word Come From?

The word "Lapidary" comes from the Latin word Lapis, meaning Stone. Lapidaries flourished in Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt more than 6,000 years ago. Lapidaries (craftsmen who cut, polish, and engrave stone) used a sapphire point in cutting until about 3,000 BC when the Assyrians and Babylonians introduced the bow drill. Before the 1300s, most gems were cut en cabochon, that is, they were polished smooth and closely retained the original size and color of the stone.

The word "Gem" comes from the Latin word "Gemma" meaning bud. The story of precious stones is much like that of the blooming of flowers. Like tiny buds that burst into beautiful blossoms, dull lumps of mineral matter can be cut and polished into brilliantly flashing of beautifully glowing gems. Gems may be cut in a number of different ways, depending on changing fashions in jewelry and on the particular type of gem. Hardness, color, brilliance, rarity, and demand determine the value of gems.

In recent years, synthetic gems of good quality have been produced in the laboratory. The Egyptians made simple imitation of costly stones by coloring glass.

from The Rear Trunk & others via The Petrified Digest 2/06

Oldest Snake Fossil Shows a Bit of Leg

19 April 2006

NewScientist.com news service

Scientists have found fossils of a legged snake with "hips" – a specimen that could be the most primitive snake ever unearthed. The find suggests early snakes were not creatures of the sea and has re-ignited the debate over how snakes evolved.

Sebastián Apesteguía at the Argentine Museum of Natural History and his team found the snake fossil in a terrestrial deposit in the Río Negro province of north Patagonia, Argentina, in 2003. Unlike a handful of legged fossils found in marine deposits and identified as snakes over the

past decade, the new fossil, named *Najash rionegrina*, has a well-defined sacrum supporting a pelvis and functional hind legs outside of its ribcage.

The creature's skeletal structure suggests it was evolutionarily closer to its four-legged ancestor than previous fossils. And since the scientists found it in a terrestrial deposit, it is near certain that the animal lived on land.

"This snake is an important addition because it is the first snake with a sacrum. This represents an intermediate morphology that has never before been seen," says Hussam Zaher, curator of herpetology at the University of São Paulo in Brazil, and part of the research team.

The burrowers

The fossil was found in a deposit from the late Cretaceous period and Zaher says the snake is at least 90 million years old. "This fills an important morphological gap of information regarding the early evolution of snakes," he says.

Zaher and Apesteguía argue that the *Najash* fossil supports the hypothesis that snakes evolved on land, eventually losing their limbs as they became soil burrowers.

That idea was popular for most of the 20th century, but when legged fossils found in marine sediments in and around Israel were identified as snakes around the turn of the millennium, a group of scientists resurrected an older, alternate theory. They say snakes lost their limbs in the oceans and seas rather than on land, and that they evolved from now extinct marine lizards called mosasaurs.

Fins and paddles

Zaher told *New Scientist*: "We can now reject the hypothesis of marine origin. This *Najash* snake fossil suggests that mosasaur lizards were not the most closely related group of lizards to snakes." He says the marine legged snakes are of a more recent lineage and probably represent the first invasion of the sea by snakes.

Blair Hedges, an evolutionary biologist at Pennsylvania State University, US, says: "In one fell swoop, this new fossil kind of casts doubt on the aquatic hypothesis."

His DNA sequencing studies suggest a terrestrial origin for snakes. And he says that, looking at evolutionary history, it is difficult to find examples of limb loss in an aquatic environment. "We see many cases where animals that walked on land eventually evolved lineages that invaded the oceans. Almost all of them kept their limbs and turned them into fins or paddles," he says.

Missing ancestor

Zaher admits that even if the new fossil does prove snakes did not lose their legs in the seas, there are many questions about snake evolution left unsolved. At the top of that list is the question of what lizard group is most closely related to snakes. "We do not have an undisputed hypothesis on that question," he admits.

Michael Caldwell, from the University of Alberta, Canada, and one of the researchers who reintroduced the marine hypothesis, told *New Scientist*: "These specimens provide important new information on the anatomy of Cretaceous snakes." But he is also critical of the interpretations of the new fossil's anatomy.

He argues that without identifying a closest ancestor, there is no robust way of gaining insight into the origin of snakes and says the new study's assessment of the *Najash* snake only takes into account snakes rather than all the snakes and lizards in the squamate order, which includes mosasaurs.

Furthermore, he argues, calling the specimen the most primitive may be incorrect because the fossils identified in marine environments are at least 8 million years older.

Advice for New Members on Collecting Minerals and Fossils

So, you've joined the mineral club and you want to start accumulating vast troves of treasures. Great! Collecting is for many, the main reason they joined a club. The chance to affiliate with people of like interest and learn some information is also foremost in the motivation to join an organization. Before you start building your specimen pyramid, cairn, or Matterhorn, think about where you will put all your specimens. Will they end up in boxes, in your garden, on bookcases—what will you do with them? More importantly, what will your family say when you bring home 90 pounds of mica or calcite?

Of course, you can keep accumulating stuff until you end up in divorce court or you fall through the floor into the apartment below yours from the sheer weight of your bounty. Better yet, you can build an indoor stone wall!

All kidding aside, collecting minerals, fossils, bottles, or any kind of collectible requires both space and organization. Organization includes labeling, sorting, inventorying, and displaying the best stuff.

Consider specializing—collecting only one family of minerals (Phosphates, oxides, halides, carbonates, etc.) or minerals from New York State, Europe, or a specific location. Possibly you might collect just fluorite, barite, or tourmaline crystals. If you are a fossil collector, you might want to specialize in trilobites, vertebrates, or insect amber.

Space is always a factor in collecting, especially if you live in an apartment. Restricted space can be worked with by selecting a specimen size that fits the parameters. Specimens can range from gig undo, massive, monumental, to cabinet size, palm size, thumbnails, to micro mounts. Smaller specimens often have the best crystallization.

If you purchase items, consider buying on exceptional specimen at a shop or show rather than ten ho-hum pieces. The object is to enjoy your purchase, while maintaining a quality collection. Don't be the Imelda Marcos of rock hounding. A good quality specimen is more likely to maintain or increase in its value.

Obtain a nice display case to show off your finds and purchases. Make Earth's treasures a part of your living space, not consigned to the basement, attic, or garage, in crates and tattered boxes.

When you go into the field (on a field trip), keep only the best specimens; donate the others to schools, members who missed the trip, or people you might want to interest in joining the club.

Finally, don't listen to any of this garbage, as the writer doesn't take any of his own advise. I have over 6000 labeled specimens in my collection and a good deal more in bulk. That's how I know. Good luck, and enjoy collecting.

from Breccia 12/04, Shin Skinner News 10/04, and Capital Rockhounder, 7/04 via Carny Hound 04/06

Field Trip Report Beaver Valley Quarry March 12, 2006

The field trip to Beaver Valley Quarry had wonderful weather. The sunshine was shining, as were the people. If you were one of the ones who took a ferry ride, then that would have been another opportunity for some good site seeing. About 12-15 people showed to dig for treasures. The warm weather made the day enjoyable and the earth had the treasures hidden quite well. This is what I heard about the trip, as I was not there.

The next Field Trip is scheduled for April 9th at Racehorse creek, for fossils, followed by mushroom collecting, with a finale at the Mt. Baker show. I have not been to Racehorse Creek yet, although the collecting has been discussed as easy and plentiful.

We enjoy venturing out into the wilderness, hiking where few have walked before, digging and finding what no other has seen. Over my years of backpacking and rock hunting, the most annoying thing I have ever seen is garbage. Wrapper here, cigarette butt there, plastic bottle, pop can, napkin, dog crap, straw, broken glass, toilet paper, etc..

Let's keep it simple, Pack it in, pack it out. It is hard to say, but I do not want to have to pick up after others when they should themselves. I always try to leave an area better than I found it. If everyone has an extra plastic bag and picks up a few pieces of trash wherever they go, it will make a difference. Refer to the "rock hound code of ethics" or any outdoor organization and they believe the same thing. This is a great example of where "actions speak louder than words". So now I wrote it and I feel better.

Respectfully submitted by Ken Metz

from Stone Age News 04/06

The California Poppy

Plants have been used by prospectors searching for minerals since the Middle Ages. Some plants favor soils that contain or have abundance of a particular element. Many prospectors use the desert trumpet as a gold indicator, even though it has not proven to be a true gold indicator. Plants of the mustard family excel in absorbing uranium and may be of use to the geobotanical prospector who is searching for uranium minerals. The California Poppy is a known indicator of copper as it requires copper to exist. Since copper compounds are soluble in water, so the presence of poppies does not necessarily indicate that there are copper minerals in the immediate area. Roadside occurrences of poppies should be ignored because of the presence of various contaminants from passing cars and trucks.

The presence of poppies in the open desert is much more meaningful. Near San Manuel Mines, north of Tucson, poppies grow in profusion on the ground known to be mineralized ground. Against non-mineralized, the poppies terminate abruptly, and the fault line can be traced by the poppies. Often, dumps at copper mines are completely covered by poppies.

Since gold, silver and other metals are frequently associated with copper, the presence of the California poppy can be a clue to the possible

presence of valuable metal deposits. For the rockhound, many of the primary and secondary copper minerals are of interest. They include chalcopyrite, turquoise, malachite and many more.

via eTumbler 02/06; via Gneiss Times, 2/06; via Rockhound Ramblin', 8/05; via The Petrified Log, 4/05; from Rockonteur, 7/04