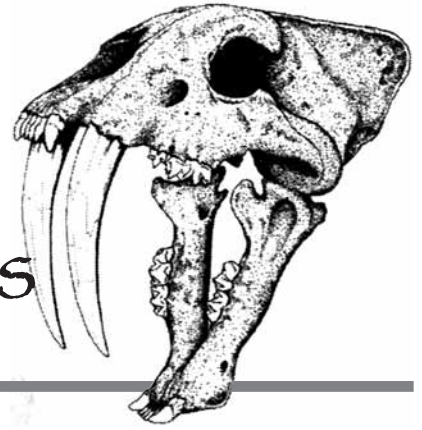


NEWS

Florida Fossil Hunters



Volume 16, Number 2

February 2006

Prez Sez.....

This month's meeting will be a display night. Bring your shells (fossil and modern) and fossil and agatized corals to share with everyone. Of course, bring any new stuff you've found fossil hunting recently so we can admire them.

Sara Morey will present the 2006 budget at February's meeting for us to discuss and approve. Speak now if you have any suggestions.

Most of you have renewed your memberships but for those that haven't, please mail your dues or bring them to the meeting.

We still need some volunteers for the Board and also for the Fossil Fair. Any time you can give will be appreciated.

Peace River is back up but keep those digging muscles in shape for when it goes back down.

See you at the meeting.

Dave Dunaway

You Might Be A Fossil Hunter.....

if you are not able to sit still at the beach long enough to watch a sunset.

if you think it's cool that the pterosaurs escaped from the island in the third Jurassic Park movie.

if you can touch coprolite without cringing.

if you think of 10,000 years as a short span of time.

if you have brought home a piece of asphalt (or rock or cement) just in case it was a fossil.

if your garden has various unidentifiable bone pieces.

Coming Events

February 15th:
6:00pm Kids' Fossil Blast
7:00pm Meeting

March 11th and 12th:
Tampa Bay Fossil Fest

March 11th and 12th:
Ruck's Pit

March 15th:
7:00pm Meeting

March 25th: Dr. Kelly Day
at Rock Springs

April 1st and 2nd:
Central Florida Mineral
and Gem Show

April 7th, 8th and 9th:
Venice Shark Tooth Festival

April 19th:
6:00pm Kids' Blast
7:00pm Meeting

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Fragments

Dr. Howard Kelly Day

The Ninth Annual Dr. Howard Kelly Day will be held on Saturday, March 25th from 11 am to 3 pm, at Kelly Park/Rock Springs. There will be ecological, cultural, environmental and historical exhibits as well as family activities.

Florida Fossil Hunters will have a booth displaying fossils and handing out information during this event. Please feel free to volunteer. (you can get some more of those fun fossil bucks) Sign up at the February or March meeting or email Ben Shaddrick at just2ofus@cfl.rr.com

Volunteers Needed

We need some volunteers to handle a table at the Backyard Habitat Fest at the Tibet-Butler Preserve on Saturday, March 4th from 9 am to 4 pm. The Preserve is located at 8777 County Road 535 in Southwest Orange County. For more information, contact Ben Shaddrick at just2ofus@cfl.rr.com

He has displayed fossils at this event for us in previous years but is unable to do it this year.

Venice Shark Tooth Festival

The Annual Shark Tooth and Seafood Festival in Venice will be held this year on April 7th through April 9th. This festival is a lot of fun and includes shark tooth and fossil vendors and well as artisans and crafts and good food. There are special exhibits and activities for the kids and you can take this opportunity to hunt for sharks teeth on the beach. Who could ask for more?

The festival is held near the municipal airport across from Sharkey's Pier. There is a small fee to get into the festival (can't remember exactly how much but I think it's \$3). Hours are as follows:

Friday, April 7th: 5 pm to 9 pm

Saturday, April 8th: 10 am to 9 pm

Sunday, April 9th: 10 am to 5 pm

For directions see the article on fossil hunting at Venice Beach.

Mineral & Gem Show

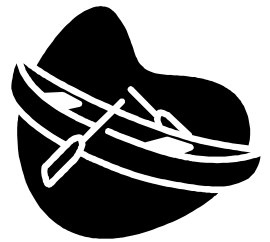
The Central Florida Mineral and Gem Society will hold its 37th annual show on Saturday, April 1st and Sunday, April 2nd from 9 am to 5 pm at the Central Florida Fairgrounds on West Colonial Drive. There will be custom jewelry, beads, mineral specimens, fossils, artifacts, books, etc. There will also be demonstrations, silent auctions and children's activities. Cost is \$4 for adults, \$2 for students and kids under 12 are free with paying adults. See the membership table at our club meeting for discount flyers.

To Whom it May Concern,

We are Ranchers in North Western nebraska, we have approximately 250 acres of badlands rich with fossils from what we are told, we have allowed a few hunters on the property several years back but are considering starting back up this summer. I know there are lots of turtles, years ago there was a saber tooth scull found and oriadant(excuse the spelling) found, I am not sure what else. You would probably know more then I about what is found here then I would. Anyway if your club would be interested in hunting, we will open around the first of may and are going to be charging 40.00 a day per hunter and this could possibly include novernite camping and meals for a little extra charge. Heard about your club from a friend and thought I would let you know. Sincerly, Sallie Quintard For reservations call (928) 768-5490 or e-mail me at salliesueq@yahoo.com

A Piece on the Peace

Well, it was nice and low for about two weeks. (sigh) But the rain that drenched Central Florida on Feb. 3rd and 4th dumped a lot of water into the drainage basin. We'll have to give it some time to go back down. Do not give up hope. The weather folks have detected a La Nina this season which means our weather should be dryer for the next few months. Bad news for the water table; great news for fossil hunters.



Kids' Fossil Blast

While the rest of what is now the United States was recovering from the event that destroyed the dinosaurs, the land we call Florida was a shallow sea basking in the tropical sun. We will be studying some of the creatures that make that type of environment their home - corals and sponges. So join us at our next Kids' Fossil Blast on Wednesday, February 15th at 6:00 pm.

The Kids' Fossil Blast is a fun, hands-on way to find out about fossils for kids mainly ages 4 to 14 yrs. Each meeting we focus on a different type of fossil using real fossils, replicas and printed materials. Sometimes the kids even get to take real fossils home. We meet every other month at 6 pm in the cafeteria at Lee Middle School before our regular club meeting.

Bonnie Cronin

Field Trips

Ruck's Pit, Ft. Drum Crystal Mine

When: Saturday, March 11th and Sunday, March 12th, 8 am to sundown

Cost: \$20 per adult per day; \$8 for kids 15 and under (must be accompanied by an adult at all times)

Directions: Take the Florida Turnpike (or 441 south) to Yeehaw Junction. Turn right off the exit ramp and then turn left onto 441 and continue south to Ft. Drum. Turn left and go east on 304th St. After approximately 3 miles, you will see the mine on your left.

What you will need: rock hammers, shovels, buckets and materials and containers to wrap fragile specimens. Wear long pants, sturdy shoes, hat, and gloves. *Protective eye-wear is recommended.* Expect to get muddy and bring a change of clothes. You'll need lots of water and your own food.

The hunting is surface and shallow digging although some people do brave the wall of the pit and dig into the layer where the crystals are found. Some even use picks. This is a working mine and the sides can be steep and the water is deep in some places so keep a close eye on those kids.

What you can find: fossil shells, calcite crystals, fossil coral, and occasionally shark teeth and vertebrate material.

Sign up at the February mtg or call Shelley at 407-891-1260.

For additional information you can contact Eddie Rucks, the owner, at 863-634-4579 or email: fortdrumcrystalmine@yahoo.com

Fossilizing in Florida.....

a few places you can hunt on your own

Apollo Beach

This is a short stretch of beach near the Ramada Inn at Apollo Beach. When we have hunted there, we have stayed at the Ramada. I do not know how they feel about non-customers walking through to the beach and using their parking area. There are no public accesses that I know of. During low tide, fossils can be found on the beach or sifted through screens from the shoreline. Vertebrate and invertebrate fossils have been found here.

Directions: I-4 to I-75. Take I-75 south to 672. Go west on 672 to 41. Turn left and go south on 41 until you see the road for the Ramada Inn.

Low tides: Mar. 4th and 5th around 8:15 am High tide: around 2:45 pm

Mar. 18th and 19th around 7:50 am around 1:15 pm

You can check saltwatertides.com for other days and times.

Venice Beach

Venice Beach is fun to visit. They have shell shops in their downtown area and you can find fossil shark teeth on the beach. We have had the best luck walking the beach near Brohard Beach. This is across from the airport and near Sharkey's pier. Of course, if you dive you can check out the fossil layer offshore. Tip: The fossils are usually black there.

Directions: Take I-75 south to the exit for Venice Beach.

Honeymoon Island

This is a state park where you can collect fossil and modern shells and corals and sponges as well as agatized rock/coral. It has adequate parking, a snack shop and restrooms.

Check saltwatertides.com for low tide dates and times.

If you have time, check out the shell and sponge shops in Tarpon Springs. You can find treasures there as well.

Directions: Take 50 west to I-75. Go south on I-75 to 52. Take 52 west to 19. Go south on 19 to 586. Go west 586 and this takes you right into the park.

Cost is \$3 for a car with a single person. \$5 for a car with maximum of 8 people.

Yankeetown

This site has LOTS of echinoids that were dredged up to clear a boat channel. The echinoids can be found at low tides on 3 small islets that you can reach by canoe or small boat. There are a variety of species...some quite small. Look on the islands and in the shallow water.

Check saltwatertides.com for dates and times for low tides.

Peace River

This river is a fossil hunters dream. You can hunt the river anywhere from Bowling Green (once you get south of the Paynes Creek State Park) south to Arcadia. There are numerous bridges and boat ramps to put your canoe in at. You can even just walk to a shallow area at Wauchula (south of the bridge near the park) and at Arcadia. Just find a reasonably shallow area with gravel and start digging and sifting. You should bring a sifter with floats attached as well as a rope to tie it to you, a pack to put your fossils into as you find them and a bucket for the big pieces of bone. Of course, you'll need the usual supplies for a day on the river: food, water, sunscreen, hats, etc.

Directions: Take 17 south out of Bartow to the spot of your choice. Canoes can be launched from Bowling Green, Wauchula, Zolfo Springs, Gardner and Arcadia.

Researcher: Early man was hunted by birds

By Alexandra Zavis, Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — An American researcher believes he has solved the mystery of how one of the most important human ancestors died nearly 2 million years ago: An eagle killed the 3 1/2-year old ape-man known as the Taung child.

The discovery suggests small human ancestors known as hominids had to survive being hunted not only by large predators on the ground but by fearsome raptors that swooped from the sky, said Lee Berger, a senior paleoanthropologist at Johannesburg's University of the Witwatersrand.

"These types of discoveries give us real insight into the past lives of these human ancestors, the world they lived in and the things they feared," Berger said in documents accompanying a presentation at a conference Thursday.

"These are the stresses that formed the human mind and made us one of the most successful animals on the face of the planet."

The discovery of the partial skull of a juvenile ape-man in South Africa's North West Province in 1924 revealed a human ancestor species called *Australopithecus africanus*, which was proposed to be the "missing link" between apes and humans. It also gave evidence that early humans evolved in Africa, rather than Europe and Asia, as most scientists believed at the time.

The child's death has been blamed on a leopard or saber-toothed cat, which are known to have preyed on hominids. But 10 years ago, Berger and fellow researcher Ron Clarke submitted the theory that the hunter was a predatory bird, similar to today's African crowned eagle.

Berger and Clarke argued the skulls and bones of monkeys and other animal fossils found at the Taung site, about 300 miles southwest of Johannesburg, showed evidence of damage by eagles. Other

researchers agreed eagles were likely preying on small animals at the site, but contended ape-men were too large, sophisticated and organized to be taken by a bird.

"The one big problem was the lack of multiple areas of damage on the Taung child itself that could be linked to a bird of prey," Berger said. "We had one little flap of bone on the top of the skull that looked like some of the damage we see made by eagles and nothing else. ... It was the ultimate 2 million-year-old cold case."

Five months ago, researchers from Ohio State University submitted what Berger called the most comprehensive study to date of eagle damage on bones. Berger was among those asked to review the paper for the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*.

The study by Scott McGraw, Catherine Cooke and Suzanne Schultz of primate remains from modern crowned eagle nests in Ivory Coast's Tai forest showed

raptors routinely hunt primates much larger than themselves by swooping down and piercing their skulls with their back talons. There is even a documented case of an eagle killing a child, Berger said.

The Ohio State paper identified key features that distinguished damage caused by eagles from that of other predators. They include the flaps of depressed bone on top of the skull caused by the birds' talon and keyhole-shaped cuts on the side made by their beaks, noted by Berger and Clarke in their 1995 paper.

But they also identified features previously never described: puncture marks and ragged incisions in the base of the eye sockets, made when eagles rip out the eyes of dead monkeys with their talons and beaks to get at the brains. Large predators can't reach inside the tiny sockets and instead crack open the skulls, Berger said.



FOSSILFEST 2006 BRINGS the ICE AGE BACK to Florida!

The ICE AGE returns to Florida when the Tampa Bay Fossil Club presents the 19th annual FossilFest! On March 11th and 12th, 2006 the Florida State Fairgrounds Special Events Center will go back in time to an era when mammoths, saber-toothed cats, giant wolves, sharks the size of school buses, and cavemen ruled Florida's peninsula.

FossilFest features educational activities for both children and adults geared towards teaching the public about Florida's wonderful prehistoric past. Vendors will be on hand to sell and trade fossils found here in Florida and from all over the world. Artifacts from Florida's prehistoric people, gems, minerals, and shells will also be displayed.

"Our goal is to teach Floridians about the animals and prehistoric people that were here long before us," says president Michael Searle. "These mammoths and lions and camels lived right here where we live today. Their fossil remains are everywhere in Florida."

There will be presentations both Saturday and Sunday on Florida's Ice Age and Florida's cavemen, the prehistoric people. There will also be seminars on hunting for Florida fossils and collection, identification, and preservation techniques.

One of the highlights of FossilFest is the children's "fossil mine." Kids will have the opportunity to dig through a sand pit to recover authentic fossils donated by club members.

But it doesn't end there, club members will then accompany the children to a "learning table" where they will have their fossils identified and bagged for the ride home. That's right, the kids will get to keep everything they find! "It's a wonderful learning experience for the children," says Tampa Bay Fossil Club Director and Hillsborough County school teacher, Patrick McGirk. "You just can't believe how excited these kids get over fossils."

There will also be door prizes, raffle prizes, and a silent auction.

"So many people these days are hooked on the Discovery Channel and the History Channel and the Learning Channel. Well, that's what we're all about," says Dr. Bob Sinibaldi, a former president of the Tampa Bay

Fossil Club and Pinellas County school teacher. "FossilFest will appeal to anyone who frequents the Discovery Channel, loves science and nature, or has a penchant for history and adventure."

The Tampa Bay Fossil Club is a family oriented organization focused on paleontology, archaeology, and the natural sciences. Meetings are held monthly at the University of South Florida and feature prominent speakers from many areas of science. The Tampa Bay Fossil Club awards two annual scholarships to University of South Florida students working in the field of paleontology and geology. The 19 year old club hosts numerous field trips and gatherings throughout the year.

FossilFest will host Florida Blood Services who will be on hand to accept donations for the community's blood supply on Saturday, March 11th.

FossilFest hours are from 9am until 6pm on Saturday, and 9am until 4pm on Sunday. Admission is \$5.00 for adults, children 12 and under are free.

The Tampa Bay Fossil Club brings the ICE AGE back to Florida!

Please visit us at www.tampabayfossilclub.com

Members of the media can take a "sneak peak" of FossilFest on Friday evening, March 10th.

Contact Information:

Michael Searle, President

Tampa Bay Fossil Club

(813) 909-9358

FOSSILNERD@MSN.COM

Florida Fossil Hunters is a fun and educational group whose goal is to further our understanding of the prehistory of Florida. We encourage family participation and welcome explorers of all ages.

Membership is \$17 per year. Other household members may be included at no charge.

Meetings are held the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00pm, Lee Middle School Cafeteria (Maury Road, two blocks West of Edgewater Drive, Orlando).

Officers:

President Dave Dunaway (407) 786-8844
 Vice President Paul Bordenkircher (407) 687-3843
 Secretary
 Treasurer Sara Morey (407) 834-0281

Chairs:

Education Melissa Cole (407) 834-5615
 Field Trips Shelley Zimmerman(407) 891-1260
 Fossil Fair Valerie First (407) 699-9274
 Sharon Reagan (407) 246-8848
 Fossil Auctions Dave Dunaway (407) 786-8844
 Fossil Bucks Dave Dunaway (407) 786-8844
 Fossil ID Table Andreas Kerner: intlfossils@msn.com
 Fossil Lotto Ed Metrin (407) 321-7462
 Auctioneer Roy Singer (407) 645-0200
 Historian Valerie First (407) 699-9274
 Librarian Bob Angell (407) 277-8978
 Membership
 Newsletter Bonnie Cronin (352) 429-1058
 Elise Cronin-Hurley (407) 929-6297
 Photography John Heinsen (407) 291-7672
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Board of Directors:

Dave Dunaway (407) 786-8844
 Jeremy Smith (407) 293-9391
 Roy Singer (407) 645-0200
 Ed Metrin (407) 321-7462
 Tom Tomlinson (407) 290-8474

Florida Fossil Hunters

Membership Application

Names: _____

Associate Members: _____

Associate members are people in the same household, included at no extra charge, 2 adult votes per household.

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

e-mail: _____

New Renewal

Please list any interests, experience, talents or just plain enthusiasm, which you would like to offer to the club:

Membership is \$17 per year. Our membership year runs from January to December. All renewals are done in December and January.

Please make your checks payable to:

Florida Fossil Hunters
 Post Office Box 540404
 Orlando, Florida 32854-0404

Newsletter Policy

Articles must be submitted by the first of the month to be included in that month's newsletter. These can be mailed to the above Post Office Box or e-mailed to: elise@liseydreams.com. Articles can be sent as text messages in the e-mail or in Microsoft Word files (*.doc).

Researcher: Early man was hunted by birds (con't)

The study prompted Berger to re-examine the Taung skull.

"I picked up this little face, and I almost dropped it," he said Thursday. There was a tiny hole and jagged tears at the base of the eye sockets that he and over two dozen other researchers had never noticed.

Berger checked a 1925 cast of the skull to confirm the damage was always there.

"I think ... that we have conclusively proven, beyond a reasonable doubt that that is the killer of the Taung child," Berger said, looking up at a slide of an African crowned eagle.

McGraw, a co-author of the Ohio State study, agreed "the evidence seems pretty compelling."

"There could be other agents responsible for a similar appearance, but I don't know what those are yet," he said by telephone.

McGraw, who did not participate in Berger's study, said the next step was to put the Taung skull next to the Tai monkey skulls and look at the break edges more closely. So far, only photographs have been used.

Berger presented his research at a conference celebrating the 80th birthday of retired South African professor Phillip Tobias, who did pioneering research on the evolutionary links between primates and humans. It is due to be published in the February edition of the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*.

Florida State Symbols

The State Stone: Agatized Coral

Coral is the outside skeleton of tiny ocean animals called polyps, which live in colonies attached to hard underwater surfaces. When alive, polyps combine their own carbon dioxide with the lime in warm seawater to form a limestone-like hard surface, or coral.

Agatized coral occurs when silica in the ocean water hardens, replacing the limy corals with a form of quartz known as chalcedony. This long process (20-30 million years) results in the formation of a "pseudomorph," meaning that one mineral has replaced another without having lost its original form. In 1979 agatized coral was designated the official state stone.

Agatized coral is found in three main Florida locations: Tampa Bay, the Econfina River, and the Withlacoochee/Suwannee river beds.



Mark Your Calendar

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Visit our website www.floridafossilhunters.com

Articles and comments should be sent to: elise@liseydreams.com

Florida Fossil Hunters

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Florida Fossil Hunters News