

NEWS

Florida Fossil Hunters

Volume 19, Number 4

April 2009



Prez Sez:

April showers bring May flowers, and then studies suggest grass evolved after that. Welcome to all of our new members and friends of the Florida Fossil Hunters! For those of you who were unable to make it to the March meeting, we introduced "fossil checks" – written vouchers to catch you up on any fossil bucks you may have been missing. Thanks to Melissa Cole for coordinating this effort with Dave Dunaway. Thanks to Sarah Morey for working so diligently to get our budget for the year. We had a great showing of some recent finds from the Tampa Bay Fossil Fair, as well as a few fascinating finds of our own.

Special thanks to John Jelks, for all his hard work on our great new nametags, as well as the new 3"x3" window stickers. It's a great way to represent your fossil faction on windows, notebooks, and other flat surfaces. See John at the next meeting if you'd like to buy one!

Be sure to join us at our April meeting on the 18th, for Kids Blast at 2:00 pm. The topic is dinosaurs, and the presentation "Debunking Jurassic Park" will contrast the two great predators of the late Cretaceous, and will be given by our own Ms. Miranda Maio!

To continue on that theme, please bring in any dinosaur fossils, models, etc. you have to the meeting, in addition to any recent fossil finds you have.

Russell will be giving a quick "how-to" on making your own seiners (sifting screens). Seinners are used when looking for fossils in rivers, creeks, on beaches and even on dry land sites. He'll be bringing in various types and sizes of screens used for sifting fossils.

Good luck, and Happy Hunting!

JIMMY WALDRON
President

ANNUAL PEACE RIVER CAMPING TRIP
Friday, May 1st through Sunday, May 3rd
(see page 3 for more information)

Coming Events

MEETINGS
SATURDAY
at the Orlando Science Center

April 18th

2:00 pm Kids' Fossil Blast
3:00 pm Meeting

May 16th

3:00 pm Meeting

For more info...

www.floridafossilhunter.com

Table of Contents

Fragments	2
Piece on the Peace	2
Kids FossilBlast	2
Annual Peace River Camping Trip..	3
Mini-Dinosaurs Prowled North America	4
Who Owns Fossils?	6
The Panama Connection	6
2009 Budget	6
Code of Ethics.....	6
Supersized Lions Roamed Britain ...	7
Time to Renew	
Membership Application	7
Calendar	8

Fragments

Field Trips

Graves Mountain, Lincolnton, GA. Mineral Collecting

The caretaker in charge of Graves Mountain, Clarence Norman, Jr. has announced plans to hold two 3 day digs and rock swaps on the Mountain this year. The first will be the weekend of Friday, April 24th through Sunday, April 26th. The second will be Oct. 2-4.

All participants must stop at the welcome table in the Hospitality tent to sign a liability release and make a small contribution to defray the costs of opening the mountain and for the port-o-lets.

For further information on collecting rules, suggested equipment, directions, etc., go to www.gaminal.org/commercial-gravesmountain.htm or Contact Shelley at 407-891-1260 for more info.

Vulcan Mine Field Trips

There will be field trips to the Vulcan Mine on the 2nd Saturdays of the month: **April 11th, May 9th**, etc. Be there before 9 am to be escorted into the mine. Remember...only members of the fossil clubs that have made arrangements are allowed in. *Check our website for further information and directions.*

Peace River Day Trip, Saturday, April 25th

Meet at the Payne Creek Historical Park around 8 am. You can launch your boat/canoe/kayak at the ramp and park your vehicle there for \$2. If you arrive later, paddle downstream until you meet up with Dave and the rest of the folks. Contact: Dave Dunaway, 407-786-8844

Bring the usual stuff: equipment for digging and sifting, buckets or other containers for your finds, food, drinks, hats, sunscreen, etc.

Directions: Take Route 17 south through Fort Meade to Bowling Green. Turn left when you see the sign for the park and head east on Lake Branch Rd. The park will be on your right before the bridge.

Brevard Zoo Field Trip...tentatively scheduled for Sunday, April 19th. Call Dave Dunaway for more info at 407-786-8844

Piece on the Peace

Checked out the water level at the Zolfo Springs gauge station after our "big" rain event of March 29th. It spiked up to a whopping 4.05 ft. Then it started coming back down. So we still have plenty of areas we can access for fossil hunting.

The birds and plants are making their seasonal comeback, too, which makes the visits to the Peace River even more enjoyable.



Kids' Fossil Blast

DeBunking Juassic Park, Roar! Who doesn't love a good dinosaur movie? Sometimes, these flicks fall a little flat when it comes to accuracy though. We will watch



some short scenes from the movies and have fun discussing whether these clips are prehistoric phonies or closer to reality than you might think.

Our next kids' program will be at the April 18, 2009 meeting, 2:00pm.

This presentation will be made by Miranda Maio, one of our budding paleontologists.

Mineral and Fossil Shows, Exhibits and more...

Venice Shark Tooth Festival

The "Shark Tooth Capital of the World" is having its festival from April 17-19. There are LOTS of shark tooth and fossil vendors at this event. There are also arts and crafts vendors, food vendors and kids' activities. And if that's not enough to entertain you, you can always go walking on the beach looking for shark teeth.

Admission is \$3; children 12 and under are free. Hours: Fri 4 pm - 9pm | Sat 10 am - 9 pm | Sun 10 am - 5 pm.

Festival grounds of the Venice Municipal Airport: take I-75 south to Exit 193. Turn right onto Jacaranda Blvd. Turn right onto Center Rd and go 2.5 mi. Cross over bypass then turn right onto Tamiami Tr. After crossing the bridge, turn left onto Avenida del Circo. Turn left onto Airport Ave and follow the signs to the festival grounds.

FL Paleontological Society Spring Mtg, April 24-26

The Society's meetings are always part of a weekend of dinners, field trips, speakers and an auction with intriguing items to raise funds for their scholarship. This meeting will take place in Tallahassee and will include a tour of the Florida Geological Survey and their Antarctic storage facility and a field trip to Jackson Bluff as well as usual dinners and speakers. Reservations must be made by April 1st. *Anyone can become a member and participate in their activities. For more info go to www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fps*

Annual Peace River Campout

Annual Peace River Canoe, Camping and Fossil Hunt

Air out the tent and those sleeping bags. It's time to sleep under the stars and dig in the Peace. This is fun for adults and kids alike. It's a great opportunity for those of you new to fossil hunting to learn the tricks of the trade and how to identify what you're finding.

This year's trip is scheduled to run from Friday, May 1st through Sunday, May 3rd. You can launch your boat/canoe/kayak from the ramp in Payne Creek Historical Park after 8 am and park your vehicle there for just \$2 per day. Then paddle downstream to the island where Dave will have his gear set up.

For those of you who want to rent a canoe, contact Canoe Outpost at 800-268-0083.

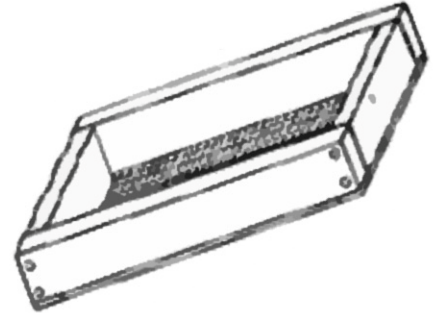
For digging: shovel, sifter, fanny pack (or bag with strap for collecting), bucket for larger items.

For your comfort: Food, water, other drinks, sunscreen, insect repellent, first aid kit plus personal hygiene supplies like toilet paper. This is primitive camping, folks. The "potty" is a bush over the hill or behind a tree.

Be sure to have a change of clothes, towels and dry shoes in waterproof packaging (canoes do overturn sometimes, so bag and secure all items). Wear a hat and water shoes or diving boots.

For camping: tent, sleeping bags, flashlights, cooler, extra water for washing, cups, plates, & eating and cooking utensils.

Optional: camera, fishing pole (and your license!) chair, mask and snorkel, wet suit, marshmallows.



Directions: Take Route 17 south to Bowling Green, turn east onto Main Street then turn right onto Lake Branch Road. Follow Lake Branch around curve. The park entrance will be on the right before the bridge. The park opens at 8 am and closes at sun-down. You can launch your canoe from the park area. Remember that fossil hunting is not permitted within the park boundaries, so make sure that you are downriver of the sign before hunting.



Mini Dinosaurs Prowled North America

ScienceDaily (Mar. 17, 2009)

Massive predators like Albertosaurus and Tyrannosaurus rex may have been at the top of the food chain, but they were not the only meat-eating dinosaurs to roam North America, according to Canadian researchers who have discovered the smallest dinosaur species on the continent to date. Their work is also helping re-draw the picture of North America's ecosystem at the height of the dinosaur age 75 million years ago.

"Hesperonychus is currently the smallest dinosaur known from North America. But its discovery just emphasizes how little we actually know, and it raises the possibility that there are even smaller ones out there waiting to be found," said Nick Longrich, a paleontology research associate in the University of Calgary's Department of Biological Sciences. "Small carnivorous dinosaurs seemed to be completely absent from the environment, which seemed bizarre because today the small carnivores outnumber the big ones," he said. "It turns out that they were here and they played a more important role in the ecosystem than we realized. So for the past 100 years, we've completely overlooked a major part of North America's dinosaur community."

In a paper published March 16 in the scientific journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Longrich and University of Alberta paleontologist Philip Currie describe a new genus of carnivorous dinosaur that was smaller than a modern housecat and likely hunted insects, small mammals and other prey through the swamps and forests of the late Cretaceous period in southeastern Alberta, Canada. Weighing approximately two kilograms and standing about 50 centimetres tall, *Hesperonychus elizabethae* resembled a miniature version of the famous bipedal predator *Velociraptor*, to which it was closely related. *Hesperonychus* ran about on two legs and had razor-like claws and an enlarged sickle-shaped claw on its second toe. It had a slender build and slender head with dagger-like teeth.

"It was half the size of a domestic cat and probably hunted and ate whatever it could for its size – insects, mammals, amphibians and maybe even baby dinosaurs," Longrich said. "It probably spent most of its time close to the ground searching through the marshes and forests that characterized the area at the end of the Cre-



taceous."

Fossilized remains of *Hesperonychus*, which means "western claw," were collected in 1982 from several locations including Dinosaur Provincial Park. The most important specimen, a well-preserved pelvis, was recovered by legendary Alberta paleontologist Elizabeth (Betsy) Nicholls, after which the species is named. Nicholls was the curator of marine reptiles at the Royal Tyrrell Museum in Drumheller and earned her MSc and PhD degrees at U of C. She passed away in 2004. The fossils remained unstudied for 25 years until Longrich came across them in the University of Alberta's collection in 2007. Longrich and Currie focused on fossilized claws and a well-preserved pelvis for their description.

"The claws were thought to come from juveniles- they were just so small. But when we studied the pelvis, we found the hip bones were fused, which would only have happened once the animal was fully grown", Longrich said. "Until now, the smallest carnivorous dinosaurs we have seen in North America have been about the size of a wolf. Judging by the amount of material that was collected, we believe animals the size of *Hesperonychus* must have been quite common on the landscape."

Currie and Longrich last year described the previous record-setting small North American dinosaur, a chicken-sized insectivore named *Albertonykus borealis*.

The discovery of *Hesperonychus* is the first sign of small carnivorous dinosaurs in North America and also extends the timeframe of small, birdlike dromaeosaurs known as the *Microraptorinae* in the fossil record by approximately 45 million years. Specimens from China have been found dating to 120 million years ago, while *Hesperonychus* appeared to have thrived until the end of dinosaur age in the late Cretaceous.

Who Owns Fossils? The argument continues....

In April's issue of the Smithsonian Magazine there is an article titled "The Dinosaur Wars", that once again addresses the conflicts over who should be able to excavate, sell and own fossils. On one side are those who want all fossils to be reserved for the scientific community and none in the possession of private collectors. On the other, are those who dig or deal in whatever fossils they can ...legally or illegally ..for profit only and ignore the scientific value.

In the middle area between is the largest group of people who are intrigued by the past and the creatures that lived then. They learn much about them and value the knowledge. They also enjoy collecting fossils and displaying them in their homes. They acknowledge that some specimens are too rare to be owned privately. However, they know there are an untold number of fossils which just erode into dust while waiting for some university to get funding.

It is a messy issue. Hopefully sane minds will win out and a solution will be found saves the knowledge and the fossils and lets all of us participate.

For the entire article, get the magazine or go to smithsonian.com.

The Panama Connection

Contrary to previous evidence, a new Florida Museum of Natural History study shows the Isthmus of Panama was most likely formed by the Central American Peninsula colliding slowly with the South American continent through tectonic plate movement over millions of years instead of being formed by rising and subsiding ocean levels or existing as a string of islands.

The fossil evidence uncovered during ongoing maintenance of the Panama Canal shows that Panama was a North American peninsula as early as 19 million years ago. These fossils are closely related to the North American mammals, such as rhinos, horses, peccaries and dogs.

The most difficult part has been trying to date and understand the stratigraphy, or layering of sediments, because of numerous geologic faults resulting from tectonic plate movement that continues even today. With modern alternative methods of dating deposits they now have been able to reconstruct some of the history and have concluded that the peninsula joined with South America roughly 4 million years ago.

For the full article on this study (which was co-authored by Michael Kirby, Douglas Jones and Bruce MacFadden) go to www.flmnh.ufl.edu/sciencestories.

2009 Budget

The budget for this year was approved by the members at our March meeting.

\$700.00	Speakers
\$700.00	Insurance
\$2,000.00	Newsletter
\$1,000.00	Fair start-up
\$65.00	State filing fee
\$150.00	Banner
\$50.00	Library
\$750.00	Auctions
\$100.00	Lotto
\$100.00	Membership
\$50.00	P.O. box
\$250.00	Website
\$50.00	July picnic
\$100.00	End of year party
\$6,065.00	Total

Code of Ethics

This is the Code of Ethics adopted by FPS (Florida Paleontological Society). It's a good standard to use whenever you're fossil hunting.

1. Members of FPS are expected to respect all private and public properties.
2. No member shall collect without appropriate permission on private or public properties.
3. Members should make a sincere effort to keep themselves informed of laws, regulations, and rules on collecting on private and public properties.
4. Members shall not use firearms, blasting equipment or dredging apparatuses without appropriate licenses and permits.
5. Members shall dispose of litter properly.
6. Members shall report to the proper state offices any seemingly important paleontological and archaeological sites.
7. Members shall respect and cooperate with field leaders or designated authorities in all collecting areas.
8. Members shall appreciate and protect our heritage of natural resources.

Supersized Lions

Lions Roamed Britain and North America

By Natalie Hancock, BBC News, Oxford

Giant lions were roaming around Britain, Europe and North America up to 13,000 years ago, scientists from Oxford University have found.

Remains of giant cats previously discovered were thought to be a species of jaguar or tiger but after DNA analysis they were proved to be lions.

They were 25% bigger than the species of African lion living today, and had longer legs to chase their prey.

They would have lived in icy tundra with mammoth and sabretooth tigers.

It is thought these animals would hunt over longer distances, and their longer legs would help them chase down their prey as opposed to the modern-day species which tends to ambush its victims.

The Oxford team analysed DNA from fossils and other remains gathered from Germany to Siberia, and Alaska to Wyoming.

Dr Ross Barnett, who conducted the research at Oxford University's department of Zoology, said: "These ancient lions were like a super-sized version of today's lions and, in the Americas, with longer legs adapted for endurance running.

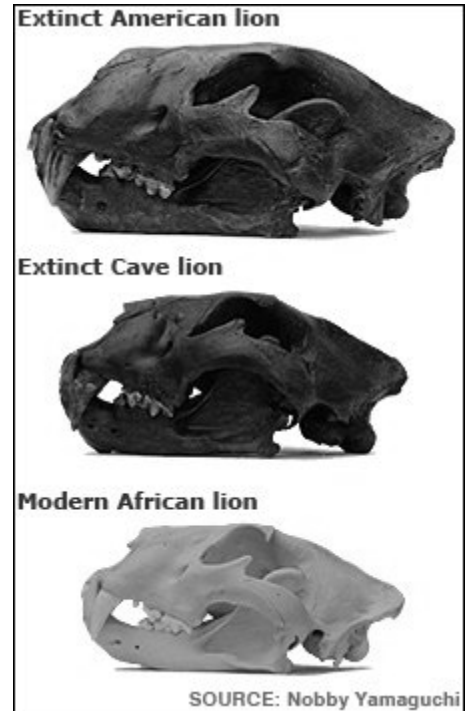
"What our genetic evidence shows is that these ancient extinct lions and the lions of today were very closely related.

"Cave art also suggests that they formed prides, although the males in the pictures would not have had manes and they are depicted very realistically."

Lions appear to have been very important to early man with many depictions of them in their cave paintings, as in seen in the pre-historic cave complex at Chauvet in France.

Other archaeological finds in Germany include figurines which are half man, half lion, leading to the theory that lions may even have been worshipped by ancient humans.

The team found that these remains from the Pleistocene Epoch (1.8 million years ago to 10,000 years ago) could be divided into two groups: the American Lion which lived in North America, and the Cave Lion which lived in north-



It is thought the ancient lions would not have had manes

ern Europe, Russia, Alaska and the Yukon.

These ancient cats would have lived in an environment that was more like an icy tundra and would have shared their habitat with herds of other large animals such as mammoth, woolly rhino, sabre tooth tigers and giant deer.

About 13,000 years ago these species died out in a mass extinction. Figuring out the reason behind this, Dr Barnett said, was one of the last great scientific mysteries.

He said: "There are a couple of different schools of thought. It could have been climate change or something to do with humans. Humans could have been killing off their prey or killing the lions themselves.

"The extinction is a big question that remains unresolved. More research and more advanced genetic analysis may help answer it."



A mammoth mystery: Many large animals disappeared about 13,000 years ago

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, check the website for the location.

Officers:

President	Jimmy Waldron	(386) 212-5814
Vice President	Russell Brown	(352) 429-1058
Secretary	Glory Kerr	
Treasurer	Sara Morey	(407) 353-8675

Chairs:

Education	Melissa Cole	(407) 834-5615
Field Trips	Shelley Zimmerman	(407) 891-1260
Fossil Fair	Valerie First	(407) 699-9274
Fossil Auctions	Dave Dunaway	(407) 786-8844
Fossil Bucks	Dave Dunaway	(407) 786-8844
Fossil Lotto	Ed Metrin	(407) 321-7462
Auctioneer	Roy Singer	(407) 645-0200
Historian	Valerie First	(407) 699-9274
Librarian	Kathy Munroe	(407) 846-7382
Membership	Joanne Maio	(407) 375-3635
Newsletter	Bonnie Cronin	(352) 429-1058
	Elise Cronin-Hurley	(407) 929-6297
Photography	John Heinsen	(407) 291-7672
Webmaster	Elise Cronin-Hurley	(407) 929-6297
	elise@liseydreams.com	

Board of

Paul Bordenkircher

Directors:

Russell Brown	(352) 429-1058
Melissa Cole	(407) 834-5615
Dave Dunaway	(407) 786-8844
Ed Metrin	(407) 321-7462
John Jelks	(407)568-5558
Roy Singer	(407) 645-0200

Membership Application

Names: _____

Associate Members: _____

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

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

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 in the e-mail or in Microsoft Word files (*.doc).

Florida Fossil Hunters Mark Your Calendar

April 11, 2009

Vulcan Mine Field Trip (see page 2 for more info)

April 17 - 19, 2009

Venice Shark Tooth Festival

April 18, 2009

Kid's Fossil Blast 2:00pm
3:00pm FFH Meeting

April 25, 2009

Peace River Day Trip

May 1 - 3, 2009

Annual Peace River Camping Trip

May 9, 2009

Vulcan Mine Field Trip (see page 2 for more info)

May 16, 2009

3:00pm FFH Meeting

More information on these events on page 2

Newsletters Going Green

We are gearing up to *email* the newsletter each month. If you want to participate, just email Bonnie at bjrb48@netzero.com or sign up at the meeting. If you want to continue to receive a paper newsletter in the mail, you don't have to do anything.



Visit us online at www.floridafossilhunters.com

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

Florida Fossil Hunters

Post Office Box 540404

Orlando, Florida 32854-040



Florida Fossil Hunters News