

The Ventura Gem & Mineral Society presents:
Rockhound Rambling
The Official Bulletin of the VGMS

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HAPPY NEW YEAR!



The Poinsettia Pavilion banquet hall was filled for our annual Holiday Party.

IN THIS ISSUE

- President’s Message
- Programs
- Show
- Workshop
- Federation News
- Meeting Minutes
- “Rockhound Ramblings” (Editorials)
- VGMS History
- Outreach
- Just for Fun
- Committee Updates (Museum, Historian, Pebble Pups)
- Club Business
- Calendar

VGMS Celebrated its 80th Birthday in style in December at our annual Holiday Party. We had delicious food brought by our members, some tough holiday trivia questions from our Membership Secretary Erin Valenzuela, a gift exchange, and the chance to win prizes. We also installed our 2025 Board. Here’s to 2025!

2025 DUES PAST DUE

Please pay your 2025 renewal dues. They are due annually on January 1. The membership list is updated at the end of February, so if you haven’t renewed by then you will no longer receive club communications or be on the Membership Directory list. Please help us have everyone renewed before our Show. Thanks!



VENTURA GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY (VGMS)

P.O. Box 1573, Ventura, CA 93002

Purpose of the VGMS

In a welcoming club environment, VGMS encourages interest in the earth sciences, mineral and fossil collecting, field trips, and the lapidary arts, including jewelry making. Our monthly meetings feature interesting lectures by amateurs and experts. Via facilities in our clubhouse, we offer workshops and opportunities for crafting polished stones, in addition to maintaining a museum and library for educational use. We also sponsor an annual show for members to share their collections and jewelry with the community, during which we award a student scholarship in the Earth sciences.

Club Essentials

Contact

Email: info@vgms.org
 Website: www.vgms.org
 Annual Membership Dues
 First adult member in a household: \$20
 Subsequent adult member(s): \$10 each
 Children ages 6-18: \$10 each, with adult member
 Children ages 5 and under: free with adult member

Regular Meeting

7:30-9:30pm at the Poinsettia Pavilion
 Santa Paula Room, 3451 Foothill Rd., Ventura, CA 93003

January-October: 4th Wednesday of the month
 November-December: 2nd Wednesday of the month

Anyone may attend and is welcome. The December meeting is normally a holiday party.

Board Meeting

7pm via Zoom
 First Thursday of the month
 Members who wish to attend may write to info@vgms.org to request the Zoom link.

Field Trips

Announced in the bulletin and the regular meeting.
 RSVP for field trips at whoscoming.org/vgms

Annual Show

The Club's Annual Gem Show is held the first full weekend in March at the Ventura County Fairgrounds.

Workshop/Museum

11969 N. Creek Rd., Ojai, CA 93023
 Open Workshop Day: 3rd Saturday of the month
 Certified Member's Workshop: 1st Sunday of the month

Federation Affiliation

California Federation of Mineralogical Societies (CFMS)

Permission to Reprint

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Photo of the month credit

Photo of the month provided by Jim Brace-Thompson

Club Colors

Blue and gold

2025 Elected Officers

President	David Springer
1st VP, Programs	John Cook
2nd VP, Field Trips	Tyrone LaFay
3rd VP, Show	Diane Cook
Recording Secretary	Sheri Hultman
Treasurer	Celia Churchill
Bulletin Editor	Monika Blackburn
Membership Secretary	Erin Valenzuela
Web Director	Troy Schmidt
Federation Director	Jim Brace-Thompson
Parliamentarian	Nancy Brace-Thompson

2025 Committee Chairs

Ways & Means	TBD
Museum	Jim Brace-Thompson and Troy Schmidt
Library	TBD
Historian	Jim Brace-Thompson
Hospitality	Susan Slyker
Pebble Pups	Erin Valenzuela
Junior Rockhounds	Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick
Facilities	Robert Seaton
Stewards	John Cook, Tyrone LaFay, David Springer, and Ron Wise

Note from the Membership Secretary

It's your Membership Secretary Erin here, giving you a reminder that it's time to renew your Membership Dues! Your 2025 VGMS dues were due January 1, 2025. They will be considered late at the end of February.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

David Springer

Happy New Year to all Ventura Club members and welcome to 2025! We start off the new year first with cold weather, then warm sunny weather, and then dry and windy and now parts of Los Angeles are on fire! I know of a few impacted individuals as I expect many others may as well. It is very sad when someone's entire home is lost. We send our thoughts and prayers to those impacted, and remind all that with this extremely dry weather with strong winds, fires become an extreme hazard.

We held our December Holiday Party this past year at Poinsettia Pavilion to a great turnout, a fun gift exchange, awards, and with lots of tasty treats brought in by our club members. Congratulations to both Skyla Zuniga and Jim Brace-Thompson for winning the Rockhound of the Year awards for Pebble Pups/Juniors, and adults, respectively!

Already this year we have completed some much needed raking and removal of fall leaves as well as tree trimming by a local professional, which included addressing some overhead hazards and removal of dead/dying trees and tree limbs. Camp Comfort will look a bit more open on your next visit. We are in the process of continuing our lease with the county for another two years, but our search for an alternative clubhouse will continue! We continue to receive offers to pick up donations and this month we will be looking at a lot of really nice lapidary equipment, so look for some silent auction sales in the near future!

We also are in the final few months before our big annual show the first weekend in March. This event will require many hands to effectively run it so please consider throwing your hat into the ring and helping out! We are a very "well oiled machine" when it comes to running the show so come join the fun. Sign up at <https://volunteersignup.org/LYWR4>.



Our club meeting this month will be held on Wednesday, January 22nd at Poinsettia Pavilion, where we will be doing our traditional Show and Tell for the program. You are encouraged to share with the club something rock/mineral/fossil related you have done over the past year; and remember to bring visual aids with you, if possible.

A reminder that your membership fee are now due for 2025. Please renew your membership if not already done so to keep our club going strong. I want to make myself available to club members to listen to your ideas/opinions and answer questions you may have, so please do not hesitate to reach out to me by e-mail at coastallapidary@gmail.com, or by phone at (805) 450-5025. Let there be Rocks! David

EDITOR'S NOTE

Monika Blackburn

Happy New Year everyone! Celia Churchill is now your club Treasurer and I have taken over as Bulletin Editor. Celia is a hard act to follow so please bear with me while I learn the ropes. As always, if you have any articles, photos, or comments about the bulletin, please E-mail me at vgmseditor@gmail.com. Thank you for reading!

PROGRAM REVIEW & UPDATE

John Cook, 1st VP – Programs

I hope all club members had a safe and joyful holiday season. On December 11th we had our annual Holiday Party. We had Christmas trivia to earn raffle tickets and a rock-related gift exchange along with a great meal – a fun evening.



Fun gifts were revealed in the annual Gift Exchange!



Rockhound of the Year Jim Brace-Thompson and VGMS President David Springer



Skyla was recognized as our Junior Rockhound of the Year for 2025!



Left: Our 2025 VGMS Board was sworn in by Michael Rittenberg at our Holiday Party.

For our club meeting program on January 22nd, the theme will be You. In January we do our annual "Show and Tell." This is your time to tell us what you did in 2024. We would like to hear about your field trips, visits to Rock shows like Tucson or Quartzite, and other rockhounding adventures. Please feel free to bring specimens you bought, collected or self-created lapidary treasures.

Future Programs

February Program

For February we will be discussing the upcoming March 2025 show. Show chairs will discuss the show such as the kid's booth, silent auction, demonstrators, exhibits, etc.

March Program

For our March program, our speaker will be Lowell Foster who will be talking on a subject to be determined.

April Program

For our April program, our speaker will be our very own Jenifer Russell who will be talking on a subject to be determined.

If you would like to do a program or have seen or know of any programs appropriate for our club, please let me know and I will be happy to contact them for future programs.

SHOWS

VGMS Demonstrators Shine at the Gold Coast Show!

Jim Brace-Thompson

At the Gold Coast Gem Show on December 7 and 8, VGMS provided a bevy of demonstrators to highlight different aspects of our hobby. David Mautz demoed fossil cleaning and prep. I demoed silver work with precious metal clay. Dick White and Rylee Jones demoed soft-stone carving with soapstone. And Phyllis White demoed wire-wrap jewelry making.



David educates folks about fossil cleaning and prep at the Gold Coast Show.



Dick and grandson Rylee turn soapstone into sculptures.

We were joined by members from other clubs, like Tony and Sandy Fender with silver work and jewelry making and Lisa Murphy with dichroic glass. Thank you, one and all, for sharing aspects of our hobby with the general public in ways that really draw them in!



Phyllis fields questions about wire wrapping.

The 62nd Annual Gem, Mineral, Fossil & Jewelry Show is coming up - Raffle donations are needed!

The 62nd Annual Gem, Mineral, Fossil & Jewelry Show of the Ventura Gem & Mineral Society (VGMS) takes place March 1 and 2, 2025 (10:00 AM–5:00 PM, Saturday; 10:00 AM–4:00 PM, Sunday) at the Ventura County Fairgrounds. We are asking for donations for the raffle. You can bring your donation to the next two member meetings or contact Sheri Hultman at 805-256-5272.

Also as always the club needs your help! Please visit the sign-up page at <https://volunteersignup.org/LYWR4> and join the fun!

Conejo Gem & Mineral Club (CGMC) hosts their 48th annual show: "Pageant of a Thousand Gems" in April

Conejo Gem and Mineral Club will be hosting their 48th Annual Show: "Pageant of a Thousand Gems". April 12-13, 2025. Saturday: 10am-5pm; Sunday: 10am-4pm. Free admission and free parking. At Borchard Community Center, 190 N. Reino Road, Newbury Park, CA 91320.

For more information see their Website: www.CGAMC.org

The event includes: Exhibits; Vendors of minerals, fossils, gems, jewelry; Silent Auction; Youth Room with games for prizes; Plant sale; Demonstrators of our hobby; Hourly raffle. Come and be awed at this Event!

WORKSHOP HAPPENINGS

Ringling Out the Old Year; Ringling in the New

Jim Brace-Thompson

Our final workshop day of 2024 took place December 1. Shop Steward John Cook arrived in the morning hours to hold a certification session with Emily De La Torre and Judy Weigand.



Emily and Judy took initial steps at joining our workshop parties by becoming certified on December 1.



Jake dropped by for a workshop visit and took a spot alongside Michael.

As the day progressed, other members arriving at capping and flat-lapping stations included Jake Bailey (That's right! Jake was back in town!), Julie Cox, Rich Pisor, Michael Rittenberg, Robert Seaton, Robin Tan, and me, all under the watchful eye of Shop Steward David Springer. Robert set to work rehabbing the little front yard picnic table, sanding it and giving it a fresh coat of paint.

Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick made an appearance to gather supplies in advance of the next Pebble Pups/Juniors sessions while I picked up our traveling Fluorescent Minerals case and John picked up table cloths, signage, spinning wheel, and rocky prizes for the VGMS booth at the forthcoming Gold Coast Gem Show. Finally, two families visited our club museum and learned about us as David and I gave them a little tour.



Robert helped spruce up clubhouse grounds on December 1.



We saw a good crowd at our workshop studios on January 5!

The New Year started out with a bang. Not only did we see sunny weather more reminiscent of summer than winter, we also saw great turn-out at our first workshop of the year on January 5 with many more than the usual pretty faces. Participants included Shop Steward David Springer overseeing Julie Cox, Emily De La Torre, Rich Pisor, Michael Rittenberg, Robert Seaton, Erin Valenzuela, Sheri Hultman, Troy Schmidt, Teagan Groh, Robin Tan, and Nancy and me with pebble puppy Tornjak. With a New Year begun, here's hoping to see you, too, enjoying our workshop studios!



Rockhounds of all sorts enjoyed a sunny workshop day as we rang in the New Year.

FEDERATION NEWS

Jim Brace-Thompson, VGMS Federation Director

Keeping Up-to-Date with CFMS

Here's some of the latest from our umbrella organization, the California Federation of Mineralogical Societies:

- Get ready for the 2025 CFMS Convention! It takes place May 10-11 with set-up for exhibits on May 9. Sponsored by the Antelope Valley Gem & Mineral Club, the venue is the Antelope Valley Fairgrounds in Lancaster. If interested in entering a competitive display, go to the CFMS website for the Competitive Exhibit Entry Form: <https://cfmsinc.org/2020-cfms-show-forms/>. I'll also have copies on our take-one table at our January, February, and March meetings. The deadline is April 1.



Interested in exhibiting in competition at the upcoming CFMS Convention? Application forms are now available.

- I'm seeking applications from kids for the CFMS Junior Achievement Award. See my accompany article for full details. The application form is on the CFMS website, and I'll have them on our take-one tables at our next two club meetings. The deadline is March 1.
- CFMS still needs to fill two positions on its roster of committee chairs: Legal Advisor and Public Relations Chair. The legal advisor should be a lawyer or paralegal who can be on-call to address any questions of a legal nature by Federation officers or clubs (not to serve as a lawyer, per se, but to provide informed opinions and advice). If interested in either position, contact CFMS President Susan Chaisson-Walbloom: slchaisson@yahoo.com.
- Finally, a sad note: one of our most recent Past-Presidents, Bob Rush, passed away after a struggle with cancer. An in memoriam is in the January CFMS Newsletter. Bob had superior lapidary skills, which he shared via a monthly Bench Tips column in Rock & Gem magazine. He will be missed.

Encourage Kids to Go for the CFMS Junior Achievement Award

Jim Brace-Thompson, CFMS Junior Activities Chair

As noted previously, applications are now being accepted for the 2025 CFMS Junior Achievement Awards, which acknowledge outstanding achievement by kids in hobby-related areas and beyond. For the past couple months, I've had hardcopies of the application form on our VGMS take-one table at our monthly meetings, and I'll continue to place them there at our January and February meetings. It's also posted to the CFMS website (<https://cfmsinc.org/juniors-achievement-award/>) and in the December CFMS Newsletter (<https://cfmsinc.org/newsletters/>).

This award requires a formal application from the junior member that will be scored against other applications. At the CFMS Convention Awards Banquet, winners will receive a Certificate-of-Achievement and \$100. Applicants fall within two age groups: Pebble Pups (under age 12) and Juniors (ages 12-18). The child's age as of December 31, 2024 determines the group. If a child won last year, that child needs to sit out a year to enter again UNLESS s/he has moved up from Pebble Pups to Juniors. After completing the application, kids need signatures of two representatives from their society, e.g., President, Federation Director, Membership Chair, Youth Leader, etc. Applications should be accompanied by a short cover letter written by the child or dictated to a parent highlighting accomplishments to which s/he wishes to draw special attention; basically, "in your own words, tell us where you really shine." Kids then mail or email applications to the CFMS Junior Activities Chair, i.e., me! Questions? I'm happy to field them (jbraceth@roadrunner.com). The deadline is March 1.



Our own Lucia won the CFMS Junior Achievement Award in 2022!

Notice of winners, with brief descriptions of accomplishments, will be posted in the CFMS Newsletter, and they'll be honored at the CFMS Convention Awards Banquet. If winners are unable to attend, certificates and checks will be mailed or passed along to an affiliated club member in attendance. Several VGMS pebble pups and juniors have won or been runner-ups since I began this program five years ago. Do you have outstanding kids in your household? Encourage them to go for it!

Two Easy Ways to Support the American Federation

Jim Brace-Thompson, CFMS Chair for AFMS Endowment Fund

The AFMS Endowment Fund supports new programs, the Future Rockhounds of America youth program (which includes the free badges that our VGMS kids earn), judges training for competitive exhibiting, and more. One way AFMS raises money for this fund is via an annual AFMS Endowment Fund Raffle. You can help! How so?

Make a purchase! Endowment Fund tickets are available at \$5.00 for one or \$20.00 for five. Please consider purchasing a batch of five for a good cause.

Make a specimen donation! We invite hobby-related items such as gem, mineral or fossil specimens, metal work projects, jewelry, stone carvings, bead projects, etc. I wish to thank Kelly Plumb (Antioch Lapidary Club and Contra Costa Gem & Mineral Society) for donating a wire-wrapped charoite pendant and several VGMS members who have donated: Diane Cook with a lapis pendant + silver chain, David Springer with a handcrafted sagenitic onyx sphere; and me with two handcrafted items—a silver sand dollar pendant + chain and a silver ammonite pendant + chain.



Buy a raffle ticket to get a chance at winning one of these, and consider donating a piece to add to the offerings!

I'm in charge of selling tickets and gathering items within the CFMS, and I welcome additional donations. Items should have a minimum value of \$75 and a maximum weight of not more than five pounds to keep postage at a minimum if necessary to ship the item to the winning ticket holder. Tickets will be drawn at the 2025 EFMLS-AFMS Show & Convention taking place March 27-31 in Hickory, North Carolina, and I'll be there to pick up prizes for any winning CFMS/VGMS members.

How to make arrangements to purchase tickets and/or to donate items? It's easy! Just call (805-659-3577) or email me (jbraceth@roadrunner.com). I'm happy to assist. Here's thanking you in advance!

MEETING MINUTES

VGMS Board Meeting, December 5, 2024 via Zoom

Called to order at 7pm PST, David Springer presiding

Attendees: David Springer, John and Diane Cook, Sheri Hultman, Robert Seaton, Jim and Nancy Brace-Thompson, Phyllis and Dick White, Tyrone LaFay, Erin Valenzuela, and Troy Schmidt

Old Business

- Nancy motioned to approve the revisions that Jim did for the youth operating regulations. Troy seconded. Motion passed. Jim will send to Nancy to add to the changes to the club's operating regulations.
- VGMS will have several tables at the Gold Coast show. We will be selling t-shirts and have a small kids booth.
- Erin will update David's information in the front of the directory.

New Business

- The county meeting went well, two people came.. They thought it looked clean. They are working on getting us a new 2-year lease. The long-term plan is to demolish the existing buildings. So, we still need to keep looking for a new place. They will come back with a new list of maintenance we need to do. For 2024 it will be the tree trimming (once it's approved. They also want us to fix the woodpecker holes, keep the weeds under control to prevent fires and get leaves off the roof (do not get on roof).
- With Jake being gone we need to find someone to take on facility maintenance. Robert said he would chair the committee. David and Tyrone said they would help the with woodpecker damage.
- We will have a display at the EP Foster Library to highlight the March show. Please bring items to the Holiday party, Jan. meeting or Sat. Feb. 1, 10 am (to the library).
- We have decided to discontinue the Pebble Pub Challenge. It was started during Covid, but postage continues to rise. Jim has spent over \$4,000 of his own money. Thank you, Jim for providing a way for the kids to stay connected during Covid!
- Celia to send another email about the Holiday Party to remind everyone.

Officer Reports

- 1st VP - Programs - John Cook
 - The December meeting will be our Holiday Party. We will be doing a gift exchange.
 - January meeting will be a members show and tell.
 - February meeting will be all about our March show.
 - March meeting will be a presentation by Lowell Foster.
- 2nd VP - Field Trips - Tyrone LaFay
 - Upcoming newsletter will have a write up about the Clear Creek fieldtrip.
 - December will not have a fieldtrip.
 - Tyrone is trying to schedule a meeting with the Conejo and Oxnard clubs to plan future field trips, sometime in January.

Officer Reports, cont'd.

- 3rd VP - Show - Diane Cook
 - Starting in Jan. show meetings will be held monthly. Vendor contracts are done.
 - Gold Coast show most demonstrator spots have been filled.
 - If you need a parking pass, Jen Russell at the pawn shop will have them.
 - Lisa is holding the Pebble Pup meeting in the McBride building at 10 am. David will attend and give out the Pebble Pup of the year award.
- Treasurer - Lauren Wideman (absent) - Diane Cook and Nancy Brace-Thompson
 - Just getting seed money for Gold Coast Show.
- Secretary - Sheri Hultman
 - Nothing to report.
- Web Director - Troy Schmidt
 - Troy will update new board members.
 - He will put up sign ups for Jan. workshop days. 1/5 and 1/25 (moved from 1/18 due to Pow Wow).
- Membership Secretary - Erin Valenzuela
 - Erin motioned to accept new members Nemo Buchmiller, Yipan Pan, Fang Yuan and Eli MacKay. Nancy seconded. The motion passed. All vetted through Megan's Law.
 - Please pay 2025 dues.
 - We currently pay \$8 in insurance and \$2 in dues to CFMS per member. Next year we may need to increase cost of memberships. We will discuss further at a later meeting.
- Federation Director - Jim Brace-Thompson
 - New officers & chairs were installed. CFMS is still looking for a legal advisor and public relations person.
 - The CFMS convention will be May 10 & 11 in Lancaster. At the same time as their show.
 - Jim is selling raffle tickets for their endowment fund. \$5 each or 5 for \$20. Also looking for donations.
- Bulletin Editor - Celia Churchill (absent) - David reported
 - Deadline for January newsletter is Jan 10, vgmseditor@gmail.com.
- Parliamentarian/Scholarship - Nancy Brace-Thompson
 - A few students have turned in applications (mainly UCSB)
 - Deadline is 1/9/25.
 - Nancy will send emails in beginning of January to remind students who showed interest to turn in the application. She will also nudge SBCC.

Committee Reports

- Pebble Pups - Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick
 - Holiday Party 12/7, 10 am at the VC Fairgrounds. At the party they will be making shadow boxes, plan for 2025 and celebrate the Jr. Rockhound of the Year.
- Ways and Means - Jenifer Russell (absent)
 - Nothing to report.
- Museum - Troy Schmidt
 - David reported that a family came by the clubhouse this weekend during a workshop day. They loved it!
 - David acquired a nice piece of petrified wood to possibly add to the museum.
- Educational Outreach - Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Walnut Grove Elementary School in Moorpark will be holding a science night in Jan. (Same night as our meeting), 5:30-7.
 - Sat. 2/1, 10 am at E.P. Foster Library, we will be putting in a display for our up show.
 - Wed. 2/18, 12-1:30 a lunch time Rotary Club has invited Jim to talk about our history and what we do.
 - Sat. 5/3, Los Padres National Forest is having an open house at Wheeler Gorge. More information to come.

Committee reports, cont'd.

- Historian/Archivist - Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Jim found the old magazine he was looking for. It was from December 1961; it has a section about what the clubs were up to. He will write an article about what VGMS was doing.
- Clubhouse Search - Diane Cook
 - We are still looking. Geri did mention a possible idea near the end of Victoria. Most clubs partner with a school district or the county.
 - Diane talked about writing an article about it and that we need a grant writer.
 - Art is working through political channels.
- Librarian - Heather (absent) - Robert Seaton
 - The library is looking clean and organized.
- Nominating Committee - Erin Valenzuela and Celia Churchill
 - David will find someone to present the new (and returning) officers.
 - David verified that Tyrone and Jon will stay on as Stewards. Jim will stay on as Historian/Archivist and Educational Outreach. Troy will stay on as Museum coordinator. Erin and Lisa will continue with Pebble Pups and Jrs. Diane will continue to search for a new clubhouse home. Robert/Heather will continue to take care of the library and Robert will take on being the head of the new committee, Facility Maintenance.
- Stewards - John, Ron, Tyrone, and David
 - David replaced the oil in the 24 inch saw and will do the 14 inch saw next.
 - All other equipment in good shape.

Next Board Meeting: January 2, 2025 at 7pm

Next Member Meeting: December 11, 2024

With no further business, President David Springer adjourned the meeting at 8:30 pm.
Respectfully submitted on Dec. 7. By Sheri Hultman, Recording Secretary

VGMS Board Meeting, January 2, 2025 at 7pm

Called to order at 7pm PST, David Springer presiding

Attendees: David Springer, John and Diane Cook, Sheri Hultman, Robert Seaton, Jim and Nancy Brace-Thompson, Monika Blackburn, Erin Valenzuela, Celia Churchill, Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick, and Troy Schmidt

Old Business

- Now that we have met with the county and they said the trees are our responsibility.
- David will contact Arbor Artists and schedule them to come out in January.
- David again went and picked up some equipment from Steve Miller, it will either be for the clubhouse or silent auction.
- David has another lead on lots of clubhouse type of equipment from Blaze Itnear.
- David will see if it is worth it.

New Business

- We are putting together an ad hoc committee to look at raising membership fees next year. Currently most of the membership fee goes to CFMS. Nancy will chair the subcommittee and David, Diane, Erin and Celia will be on the committee. Doing this also entails a by-laws change. Nancy will send out the by-laws. This committee will make sure that our by-laws are up to date and sent to the state.

Officer Reports

- 1st VP - Programs - John Cook
 - January meeting will be a members show and tell.
 - February meeting will be all about our March show.
 - March meeting will be a presentation by Lowell Foster, topic to TBA.
- 2nd VP - Field Trips - Tyrone LaFay (absent) David reported
 - Upcoming newsletter will have a write up about the Clear Creek fieldtrip.
 - January will not have a fieldtrip.
 - Tyrone is scheduling a meeting with the Conejo club field trip leader, Juan Devera to plan future field trips.
- 3rd VP - Show - Diane Cook
 - Diane talking to fair, we may get the big building back.
 - Next meeting scheduled for 1/8 (maybe rescheduled to 1/14) at 7:30 pm.
 - Diane picking up a large bag of tumbled stones at Quartzsite and other supplies for kids' booth.
- Treasurer - Celia Churchill
 - The club would like a monthly report about income and expense.
 - Diane Cook motioned that Celia Churchill be allowed to spend up to \$175 to purchase either Quicken or QuickBooks. Erin Valenzuela seconded. Motion passed.
- Secretary - Sheri Hultman
 - Nothing to report.
- Web Director - Troy Schmidt
 - Nothing to report.
- Membership Secretary - Erin Valenzuela
 - Erin Valenzuela motioned to accept new members Andrew Morgan and Pebble Pub Bowie. Celia Churchill seconded. The motion passed. He has been vetted through Megan's Law.
 - 50 Adult members, 6 Pebble Pups and 4 Junior members. Total 59 members. Everyone please pay your membership!
- Federation Director - Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Jan. newsletter out, it will be sent to our members.
 - We need to send in our dues before March 1. And Officer change forms due March 31. (Treasurer is responsible for this)
 - Applications for the Junior Achievement Award are being accepted.
 - Bob Rush passed away Dec. 13.
 - CFMS is still looking for a legal advisor and public relations person.
 - The CFMS convention will be May 10 & 11 in Lancaster. At the same time as their show.
 - Competition exhibitor applications will be up soon.
 - Jim is selling raffle tickets for their endowment fund. \$5 each or 5 for \$20. Also looking for donations.
- Bulletin Editor - Monika Blackburn
 - Deadline for January newsletter is Jan 10, vgmseditor@gmail.com.
- Parliamentarian/Scholarship - Nancy Brace-Thompson
 - 7 students have shown interest (all UCSB)
 - Deadline is 1/9/25.
 - Subcommittee to decide will be Nancy (chair), David Springer, Troy Schmidt and Sheri Hultman.

Committee Reports

- Pebble Pups - Erin Valenzuela
 - Erin will send out a welcome on the Band app.
 - The first meeting of the new year will be 1/18 at 10 am. It will be on rocks & minerals.
 - Will work on getting tentative dates for the year picked.

Committee Reports, cont'd.

- Junior Rockhounds - Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick
 - Diane and John Thank you for helping clean up all the Pebble Pup stuff at Lisa's house.
 - Lisa, Erin and Diane need to sort and organize all the supplies they have for the program.
 - Possible 1st meeting 1/18, will work with Erin to see if that works.
 - Lisa does want the Juniors to help support and help Erin with the younger children.
 - Lisa wants the Juniors to put together a case for the show, separate from the Pebble Pups.
 - The Juniors have requested to go whale bone collecting. She will reach out to Ty to see if they can make that happen.
 - Lisa has plans for guest speakers and bigger projects.
- Ways and Means - Jenifer Russell (absent)
 - Nothing to report.
- Museum - Troy Schmidt
 - David acquired a nice piece of petrified wood to possibly add to the museum.
- Educational Outreach - Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Walnut Grove Elementary School in Moorpark will be holding a science night in Jan. 22 (same night as our meeting), 5:30-7.
 - Flory Elementary school Feb. 6 (same as our next board meeting).
 - Jim will have an email blast sent out to find volunteers.
 - Sat. 2/1, 10 am at E.P. Foster Library, we will be putting in a display for our up show.
 - Wed. 2/18, 12-1:30 a lunch time Rotary Club has invited Jim to talk about our history and what we do for the community.
- Archivist/Historian - Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Nothing to report.
- Clubhouse Search - Diane Cook
 - We are still looking.
 - During this discussion, a concern was brought up about the keys at our current clubhouse. Celia will be taking over assigning and keeping track of keys. We need to replace the lock box outside the clubhouse that holds the key. A lock should be added to the fuse box. We should have some extra locks. Also, the battery in the lock box in the clubhouse will be replaced this weekend.
- Librarian - Heather Seaton (absent) Robert reported
 - Heather will be doing some organizing.
 - Magazines still need to be gone through.
 - Robert is going to start to bring a selection of books to the member meetings, to make it easier for people to check out books. The loan is for 2 months.
- Facilities Maintenance - Robert Seaton
 - This Sunday Robert and David will look at preparing the woodpecker holes to have the flashing put over them.
- Stewards - John, Ron, Tyrone, and David
 - Diane will let Ron know that our 20" blade could be replaced.

With no further business, Celia Churchill motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:19pm. Troy Schmidt seconded. Motion passed.

Next Board Meeting: February 6, 2025 at 7pm

Next Member Meeting: January 22, 2025

Respectfully submitted on Jan 7. By Sheri Hultman, Recording Secretary

ROCKHOUND RAMBLINGS

Establishing Provenance from a Recent Estate Donation, and Revisiting a Legend

David Springer

Responding to opportunities to pick up donations from estates and persons desiring to clear out space is always full of surprises. On a recent opportunity in January 2025, I responded to a general inquiry to our VGMS e-mail, and discovered that a residence in Sylmar, CA was desirous of ridding itself a variety of old school lapidary items to make room in the household. It is worth mentioning also that Tara had a strong desire to see that this equipment to be donated fell into hands that would appreciate it for years to come. After exchanging information and receiving some photos of the goodies, it was clear that some unique items were being offered. I made arrangements to visit as soon as possible. Once again, it turns out we were the first to respond, and were therefore in a position to take a first peak at what was available. Despite historic fires occurring in the LA Area during this time, we checked the reports and maps and determined we could safely make it to the residence which was positioned between the Hurst and the Archer fires in Sylmar. I topped off my trucks fuel tank, brought plenty of water, and picked up my associate Robert Seaton who added two face masks to our protection arsenal. Although our drive was uneventful, seeing no action associated with the Hurst or Archer fires, we did spy ominous gray and orange smoke plumes arising over the coast ranges from the Palisades fire. At this sight, I made my silent prayer to all those affected.

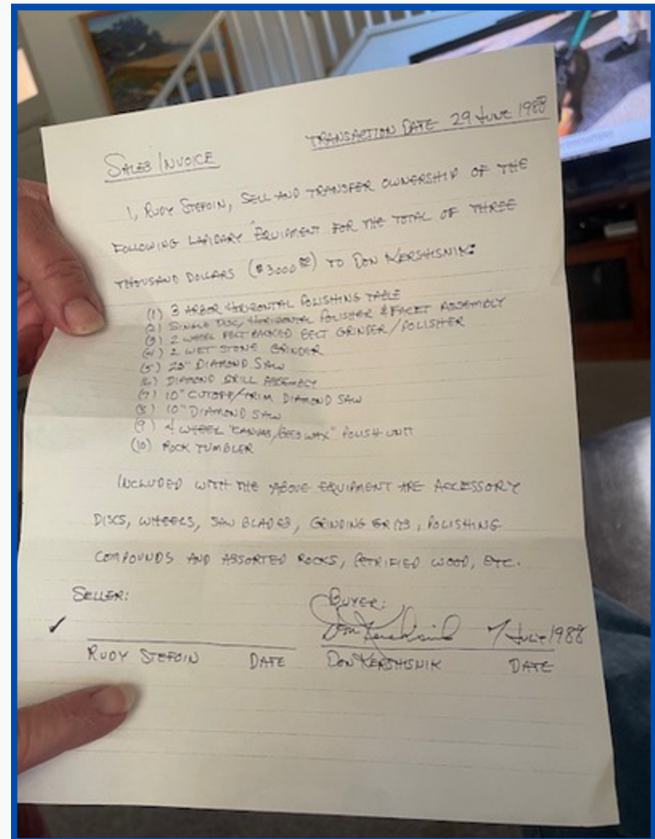
Upon arriving at the residence, we met with the couple Blaise and Tara, who had taken the time to uncover and clean the area out to make it easier to view and access all the equipment. A variety of old school equipment lay before us, much of it "homemade" from the days of yore. It was fun trying to discern the function of some of the pieces of equipment. Other than the obvious slab and trim saw or arbor with wheels, we did spy one item that had its own integral cast iron base with a surface that had three plates designed to spin upon switching on the motor. A box of nearby Silicon Carbide sandpaper of a similar diameter help establish its was some sort of high output three armed polishing unit; complete with water distribution pipes directed to each plate! I had never previously seen anything like it! I always learn plenty about lapidary equipment and its history from these visits.

After going over the available equipment while chatting with the owners, we learned that it all came from some old timer rockhounds. Upon inspecting a huge cylinder half full (about 50 pounds) of silicon carbonate grit, the shipping label listed the shipper as Ed's House of Gems located in Portland, Oregon (where my grandpa, another old timer rockhound used to frequent for supplies), which sadly closed down in 2023. The ship to was addressed to a Rudy Stefoin of Rock Creek, Wyoming.

I have long been a fan of some of the "lost" lapidary materials in rockhound lore and one such material is known as Stefoinite, and I always recalled that it came from a "secret" location in Wyoming. I explained to Tara after reading the label that Rudy Stefoin on the shipping label may be associated with the jasper variety named Stefoinite, and I would look into that idea after I returned home.

Upon returning home, a few Google searches brought me to the following: "Legend has it that back in the 1950s or possibly earlier, Rudy Stefoin and a couple of prospecting friends discovered this gorgeous silicified mudstone with distinct dark veining somewhere in Wyoming. They never revealed the location to anyone. Some have tried to work it out, but so far it remains a lost bit of prospecting history" (www.hillcountrylapidary.com/stefoinite-jasper). This same link provides pictures of this very interesting variety of jasper.

Now with a story like that, who could resist not probing a bit more! So I sent a note to Blaise and Tara stating that I believe the addressee on the grit label was a famous rockhound with a mineral named after him, and Blaise's response e-mail knocked me out of my chair. He sent me a photograph of the original hand written Bill of Sale dated June 1988 for the various lapidary items they were donating as originating from Rudy Stefoin and conveying them to Rudy's neighbor at that time, a Don Kershinik. Rudy according to records passed away later in November 1988. So, we now understood that this equipment all once belonged to a famous rockhound who lived in Wyoming! I don't know about you, but I would always prefer a piece of equipment, typically made in America back in the day from a famous rockhound, than something new out of a box from a factory in China!



Original hand written Bill of Sale dated June 1988

I next received a wonderful e-mail missive from Tara who explained her relationship with Don Kershinik. Don was Tara's best friend's father, who it turns out just passed away last year. When Don was in better health, Tara would visit once a week bringing over dinner or dessert and care for Don and his ailing wife while spending time with them. She learned from Don that his old neighbor was named Rudy, who used to make his own lapidary equipment. Tara realized that this same "Rudy" of her younger years was in fact Rudy Stefoin shown on the shipping label, and from which Don subsequently acquired Rudy's equipment per the Bill of Sale. Tara ended up purchasing the entire lot from Don before he passed having at one time intending to take up lapidary as a hobby. This completed the documentation establishing provenance of the equipment. On the Bill of Sale, it also states the sale included assorted rocks and petrified wood. Blaise had sent two photos of rough rock that came from the load that when compared to internet photos were clearly the extremely rare Stefoinite jasper from Wyoming in rough form. Wow, what a fortunate find for Blaise and Tara, the long lost variety of jasper known as Stefoinite was in their possession all these years!



Rough rock that turned out to be rare Stefoinite jasper

I sit here wondering on the story related from the HillCountry lapidary website around the discovery of Stefoinite. With this new information. I wonder whether the trio were indeed Rudy and his neighbor and friend Don, and one other rockhound from Rock Creek, Wyoming, wearing much younger man's clothes in mid 1950s which would have put them in the mid forties. They were driving out to rockhound Wyoming one day and stumbling across their historic find of unusual brecciated, silicified mudstone which we now referred to reverently as Stefoinite! The excitement they must have shared over the find, the long held secret between them. Who was that third person with Don and Rudy, and did they leave any clues behind regarding where exactly they found this elusive material, or as the legend suggests, is that simply lost to history?



Another piece of rare Stefoinite jasper from Wyoming in rough form

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

Can You Help with a VGMS Library Exhibit?

Jim Brace-Thompson, Educational Outreach Chair

At the beginning of each year, VGMS installs an exhibit in the glass display case in the main reading room of downtown Ventura's E. P. Foster Library. Can you help with our 2025 display?

The exhibit both promotes our March show and educates the community about our society and the many facets of our hobby. Thus, we want to show off a wide range of specimens: fossils, rocks and minerals, and lapidary and jewelry work. We want the exhibit to have a real "Wow!" factor, so we're seeking relatively large specimens of high quality that will catch eyes and turn heads. Also, because this will be in a library, we always include a small array of books about minerals, fossils, and lapidary arts.

If you can help, we will meet at the library (651 E. Main Street, Ventura) at 10:00 AM on Saturday, February 1. Bring specimens along with labels with basic identification info. (The label need not be as detailed as ones used for competition, but it should have large print that's legible to viewers on the other side of the glass.) If you can't make it to the library that day but will be at our January meeting, bring it then and drop it off with me or Nancy, or make other arrangements for a hand-off. (My email address is jbraceth@roadrunner.com.) Here's to promoting our show, serving the library with a nice display, and educating our community about all the fun things we do!



Loan your mineral, fossil, or lapidary wonders for an educational display at E. P. Foster Library.

Educational Outreach is Off-and-Running for 2025! Can you help?

Jim Brace-Thompson, Educational Outreach Chair

Requests for educational outreach from teachers and youth groups slowed during the fall, but we're back to a frenetic pace already for 2025. Here's what on the docket so far:

- Wednesday, January 22, 5:30-7:00 PM: running a "Magic Magnetic Minerals" booth for Science Night at Walnut Grove Elementary School in Moorpark. (Note: This is the same evening that we'll be holding our monthly VGMS meeting starting 7:30 PM.)
- Saturday, February 1, starting 10:00 AM: installing a display illustrating the varied aspects of our hobby at E. P. Foster Library in downtown Ventura.
- Thursday, February 6, 6:00-8:00 PM, with set-up starting between 5:00/5:30: running a "Magic Magnetic Minerals" booth for Science Night at Flory Elementary School in Moorpark. (Note: This is the same evening that we hold our monthly VGMS Board Meeting starting 7:00 PM.)
- Wednesday, February 19, Noon-2:00 PM: giving a luncheon presentation to the Rotary Club of Ventura on the history of VGMS and our outreach efforts and events within the community.
- I've heard from a third grade teacher in Camarillo requesting a classroom visit; details to come.

As you can see, the year is already getting busy! If you can lend a hand volunteering at our educational outreach events, I welcome hearing from you. Email me at jbraceth@roadrunner.com.



Finally, great news from one of our very active Pebble Pups! Skyla has been pursuing some educational outreach efforts of her own with her award-winning exhibit on Mary Anning, the “Fossil Girl of Lyme Regis.” She had her exhibit on display (along with VGMS Youth Program flyers) at the Camarillo Public Library September 28 to November 18, 2024, and she’ll soon install it for public display at Oxnard’s Main Public Library and South Oxnard’s Branch Library. Congratulations and thank you, Skyla! I urge everyone to check it out.

Left: Skyla appears as Mary Anning reincarnated alongside her display at the Camarillo Public Library!

A BLAST FROM THE PAST

Collecting Calico

By Jim Brace-Thompson, Historian/Archivist

In going through old club newsletters and our collection of old 35mm slides, it’s clear that collecting in mine tailings surrounding Calico Ghost Town near Yermo in the Mojave Desert has been a mainstay of VGMS field trips going back to our early days. It’s easy to see why. Calico Silver Lace Onyx is a beautiful lapidary material that’s soft and thus easily worked. Plus, although not very colorful, its banded layers contain interesting patterns and dendrites. And takes a fine shine. Not a silent auction goes by where you won’t see at least one chunk or slab of this great stuff that graces backyard rock piles all across the county.

As you can see in the accompanying photos—one from 1959; one from 2014—VGMS members have been field-tripping here for decades. And not just VGMS. Here’s an ad from the December 1973 issue of *Gems & Minerals*, the precursor of *Rock & Gem* magazine:

“The Calico Museum, Calico Road outside of Calico Ghost Town, Yermo, is now open and taking reservations for digging tours in the Calico Silver Lace Onyx Mine. The mine was opened some years ago but never worked on a high commercial basis. It is now operated mainly for rock hobbyists. The fee is \$4.00 per person for 20 pounds of calcite onyx and 25¢ for each additional pound. The minimum charge per trip is \$20.00, whether it is one person or a group; however, collectors are entitled to the full value in the lace onyx. Camping facilities and other services are nearby. For more information write to Calico Miners Museum, P.O. Box 686, Yermo, California 92398.”



A 1959 VGMS trip to Calico as recorded on a vintage 35mm slide.



A 2014 Calico trip recorded on an iPhone; the view of backsides remains the same!

I'm not sure whatever happened to the Calico Miners Museum. Although there is the Lane House & Museum at Calico Ghost Town, I don't think that's the same thing. Also, it's no longer a fee trip. Anyone can go there for free. More likely than not, VGMS and/or our sister clubs in the area will do another field trip to Calico in the coming year or so. If not, head out on a trip of your own! Directions to rockhounding sites in the Calico Mountains are found in the guidebook Gem Trails of Southern California, or you can consult our VGMS Field Trips Chair, Tyrone LaFay. I also found directions by googling, "Where can I collect Calico silver lace onyx?" It's an easy, fun trip with the added bonus of an authentic ghost town right nearby from the Wild West days of California silver rushes. Check it out and keep a VGMS tradition alive!



These polished cabs show why Calico Silver Lace Onyx has been beloved by generations of VGMS members ever since our founding.

JUST FOR FUN

January's Rockhound Holidays

Jim Brace-Thompson

Last year, we ran a series on little-known Rockhound Holidays, but I didn't begin that series until March, so I have some catching up to do. Here's what Rockhounds celebrate in January!

The entire month is, apparently, National Black Diamond Month, founded in 2015 by jewelry designer Carole Shoshana and subsequently registered by National Day Calendar TM. Meant to promote meditative calm and harmony, as well as mystery and elegance, it was originally dedicated to Shoshana's "Black Diamond Collection" incorporating Feng Shui images of mountains and streams. So is it a holiday, or a month-long commercial? You decide!

Some two weeks after the Winter Solstice comes Perihelion Day. That's January 4 this year. This day marks the moment Earth is closest to the Sun in its orbit. Maybe that's why we've had some unseasonable warm, sunny days this month. (Don't tell that to folks back East, or they may go crazy and stab themselves with an ice cycle!) "Perihelion" derives from two Greek words: peri (close) + helio (sun). As noted by Johannes Kepler in 1596, our orbit around the sun is not a perfect circle but somewhat elliptical, and that ellipse brings us closer to the sun in the winter and further from it in summer. I hope you enjoyed some solar rays on January 4, when we were "only" 91,402,500 miles away!

Finally, Old Rock Day takes place January 7. How did it begin and who started it? Apparently, nobody knows, but we're told to take a moment to consider just how old the Earth is. Before Scotland's James Hutton ("Father of Modern Geology") theorized about Deep Time, folks leafed through the Bible, calculated the many generations mentioned, and came to the conclusion Earth had reached the ripe old age of 6,000. To be precise, Archbishop James Ussher calculated the Day of Creation to be October 23, 4004 BC. Using scientific methods, today that age is estimated at 4.543 billion years (more-or-less). That's old! On this day, we're told to "enjoy and appreciate old rocks," but the means of celebrating are up to you. Per one source, the day's anthem should be Simon and Garfunkel's "I am a Rock."



At 1.7 to 3 billion years old, Scotland's Lewisian gneiss is always included in discussions of Earth's oldest rocks, but meteorites from space often are even older! What's the oldest rock in your collection?

Tiny Gems on Ventura & Santa Barbara Beaches: A Rockhound Mystery

Jim Brace-Thompson

Last February, I took us up close to brecciated Ventura beach jasper with a little photo gallery of several brightly colored specimens as viewed through a microscope. Recently, I turned my scope to another natural wonder from the beach: gemstone sand!

Looking through 65-year-old issues of the defunct magazine *Gems & Minerals* (the precursor to today's *Rock & Gem*), I saw a passing reference to the presence of garnet, zircon, epidote, spinel, tourmaline, and sphene as "flawless specimens of great beauty" in black sands from Santa Barbara beaches. It referred readers to their December 1960 issue and an article by the eminent Robert Norris and C. Douglas Woodhouse entitled "Minerals from the Beach at Santa Barbara." (Side note: as I began tracking down that issue of the magazine, little did I know Troy Schmidt was also seeking it! We both found it more-or-less simultaneously. Anyone else out there interested in sand?)

The article noted most beach sands in our part of California are composed of "relatively uninteresting and unspectacular" quartz and feldspar grains and contain perhaps just 1% "heavy minerals." However, at spots along the beach you may observe dark streaks. I've seen them myself all the time on Ventura beaches and always assumed they were patches of mud and vegetative debris or perhaps oil tar residues. Wrong! Per Norris and Woodhouse, these little patches are where waves have sorted sand grains, and those patches may consist of as much as 90% heavy minerals: a large quantity of magnetite grains supplemented with "a surprising number of perfect, doubly terminated crystals, often gemlike, clear and flawless." Well, now they had my attention!



Fin and Tor sniff out smudges of black sands on a Ventura beach.

For anyone interested in collecting such sands themselves, I've had best success on days of exceptionally high tide. I search the high-water line as the tides are receding, particularly near breakwaters where the energy of ocean swells is concentrated. Here and there, like dark bruises on the beach, I'll find an ultra-thin frosting of sparkling black sand that I skim into a baggie with a plastic scoop like a credit card. Back home, I'll swoosh my sample around in my gold pan to concentrate it still further and once it's dry...well...the accompany photo speaks for itself.

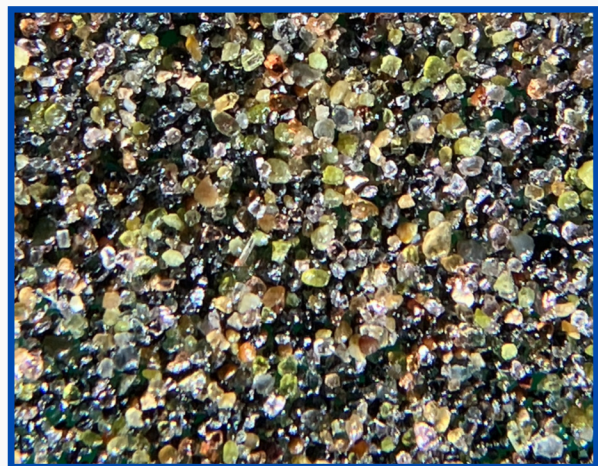
They went on to note that anyone with a gold pan and a microscope could concentrate such black sands for better viewing of material that is "well worth a look." Well, I have a gold pan. I have a microscope. So look I did! The accompanying photos reveal what I found at Loon Point in Santa Barbara County and here along Pierpont Bay at the end of Seaward Avenue in Ventura.



Use a plastic card to skim the ultra-thin frosting of black sand into a baggie.



Concentrate your black sand sample with a gold pan back at home.



Voila! Lovely tiny beach gems against a black background of magnetite grains as viewed through a microscope.

We end on a mystery. Norris and Woodhouse note that these gem-laden sands “suggest the streams in the region have been eroding igneous or metamorphic rock and carrying the debris to the beaches, yet no geologist has so far found such an occurrence of igneous or metamorphic rock in the Santa Ynez Range.” The ultimate source of our little gems? Nobody knows!

PEBBLE PUPS

Erin Valenzuela, Pebble Pups

Happy New Year from the new Pebble Pup Director. If you haven't heard yet, our Pebble Pup and Junior program is going to look different this year and moving forward. We are splitting the Pups and Junior aged members into two separate groups. Each group will have their own leader, meeting dates, (possibly) fieldtrips and meeting/badge content. Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick will be leading the Juniors, and I will take over the Pup group. Lisa and I will work together to plan things together when it is appropriate for both age groups- especially for shows, volunteer opportunities and fun activities. The Pebble Pups will continue to host most meetings at the Clubhouse, hopefully on the 3rd Saturday of the month. As the mom of a high school and college senior, I have a crazy, busy end to this school year, so bear with me for flexible dates. I plan on having the tentative calendar available at the first meeting and I will try my best to give plenty of notice if meetings/dates/things have to change. The first Pebble Pup meeting will be January 18th 10 am at the Clubhouse. We will be starting with the oldie but goodie- Rocks and Minerals!

I am setting up a meeting with interested volunteers to help plan lessons/badges, field trips and fun throughout the year. Please let me know if you would be interested in attending the planning meeting and let us know if you have any questions, comments, concerns... We look forward to an amazing year learning and growing in this hobby we all love!

Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick, Junior Members

On December 7, the Pebble pups and Juniors met at the VC Fairgrounds in conjunction with the GCGS to celebrate our year, honor our Junior Rockhound of the Year, and enjoyed holiday treats. Thanks goes to Jim and VGMS for creating holiday goodie bags for each child who came to add to their collections.



(Left to right) Ian S., Ellis L., Lucia H., Skyla Z., Valerie C., Silas R., and Julia R. enjoying the celebration

We put together a great spread of food and hot chocolate for the kids and enjoyed some fun company and group holiday fun. We started the event by honoring the kids who have volunteered throughout the year and our big award of the day Junior Rockhound of the year, Skyla. Next we created a fun project celebrating the treasures we find locally at our beach (not collected at State beaches). The results were beautiful and a unique way to celebrate a collection that can live on their wall instead of a shelf.

Lastly, we were all able to enjoy the Gold Coast Gem Show at the VGMS booth volunteering and sharing about our club and program to the visitors who stopped by. It was a great day and fun to partner/piggy back on this event so we could really enjoy it all. Thanks Diane for having us.



We are looking forward to 2025 and the upcoming changes in our program. I am excited to announce that Erin will be officially leading the Pebble Pups and I (Lisa) will be developing a true Junior Member program. Each group will have their own leader, meeting dates, (possibly) field trips and meeting/badge content. We will work together to plan things together when it is appropriate for both age groups- especially for shows, volunteer opportunities and fun activities. We will both use the Band app but will have separate posts for the Juniors and Pups (Band calls them sub-groups) and color-coded calendar events. Juniors who don't have the badge that the pups are working on at a certain meeting are more than welcome to attend that Pup meeting to complete their badge. However, unless specifically invited to a junior meeting/event, the Junior classes will be for Juniors only. the Band link is only offered to current members and is our primary way of getting information about the program to you so please ask if you need assistance getting set up.

For the Juniors- our focus this year will fall into 3 categories. 1) mentorship (including the badge program), 2) field trips & activities, and 3) future focused including guest speakers, internships, colleges and jobs.

Due to busy mid/high school schedules we will use zoom to discuss planning for events and shows. Our specific meeting dates will reflect on the activity (for example, show dates, tide at the beach, or an event opportunity).

Please share ideas for future topics or events so we can make it happen this year. This is an exciting time to expand this part of our youth program and tailor it to what your interests are for the hobby or your future in this field.

Our first meeting will be on zoom, date to come soon.

Please let us know if you have any questions, comments, concerns, and we look forward to an amazing year learning and growing in this hobby we all love! If you have time to volunteer in our program we welcome you to reach out. No experience necessary. Erin and I value your experience and opportunity to mentor our kids with your knowledge.

Happy New Year to our Pebble Pup and Junior members. Hope your 2024 was a memorable mineral year and we look forward to making many rockhounding memories in 2025. We can't wait to see you all soon.

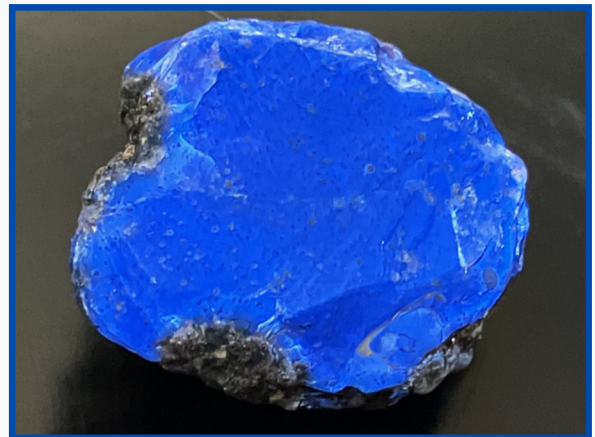
The Monthly Challenge

Jim Brace-Thompson

Our final Challenge of 2024 for Pebble Pups and Junior Members was tackled by Noah, Ian, Connor, Gabby, Izzy, and Skyla. Each successfully identified our featured stone as amber. And no ordinary amber! Under the rays of an ultraviolet lamp, it glows blue, and thus goes by "Blue Amber." Skyla really knows her stuff because she noted, "Sometimes amber glows green or yellow or blue, and it floats in salt water. I don't have any amber in my collection." Well, Skyla, now you do!

To all VGMS Pebble Pups and Junior Members: take The Challenge to test your knowledge while adding free mineral and fossil specimens to your collection. The Challenge is emailed to Pebble Pups and Junior members. If you have kids in the club and you haven't seen The Challenge, alert me (jbraceth@roadrunner.com) to get you on the email list.

Note: I pay for the Challenge out of my own pocket and because of ever-increasing postage costs, I need to cut back and will be issuing a Challenge once a month this year instead of every three weeks. It'll be sort of like the twelve days of Christmas. I hope everyone understands and has fun with the twelve Challenges of 2025.



We challenged kids this month with "Blue Amber" from the Dominican Republic.

CLUB BUSINESS

THANK YOU'S

from Jim Brace-Thompson

- Thank you to last year's officers and committee chairs for guiding us through a fun 2024, and thank you to all folks who have stepped up to guide us through 2025!
- Thank you to everyone who attended and contributed to another fun Holiday dinner party to close out 2024!

from Celia Churchill

- Thanks to everyone who contributed to the bulletin in 2024. It was a great year! I look forward to seeing the results of this year's Bulletin Contest.
- Thanks to everyone who helped me figure things out during my four years as Bulletin Editor. And thanks **so much** to Monika Blackburn for taking it over, with an excellent start.
- Thanks to Diane Cook for the Treasurer lessons this month.

SUNSHINE REPORT

Kathryn Davis – We all wish Kathryn a speedy recovery from her recent fall.

Ray Ritchey (1945–2024)

Ray Ritchey passed away on December 5, 2024, one month short of his 80th birthday. Ray was born in San Francisco, CA. He attended high school in Bangkok, Thailand while his father was employed with Pan American Airways. He served in the ROTC in Thailand, in a special unit for prospective medical students.

Ray was an avid rockhound and member of numerous gem and mineral societies throughout much of his life. He was instrumental in forming the Monrovia Rockhounds, Inc. (Moroks), and for many years was a dedicated member of the Ventura Gem & Mineral Society, Pasadena Lapidary Society, and numerous other organizations.

He led many rock collecting field trips with his wife Jo Anna for the last 50+ years and donated over 50 tons of rocks, minerals and fossils to numerous museums and mineral societies including the Jurupa Mountains Discovery Center, California Federation of Mineralogical Societies, Pasadena Lapidary Society, and Ventura Gem & Mineral Society. Ray also donated over 700 books related to the history of aircraft from World War II and related subjects towards the history library at the Commemorative Air Force, Southern California Wing, Camarillo Airport.

Ray began showing signs of serious medical symptoms in the mid-90s, probably related to his work with the ROTC in Southeast Asia during the 1960s. He did his best to continue to live with his difficult medical conditions. His effort at surviving gave him 30 extra years to share his knowledge about rocks, minerals, fossils, lapidary hobbies, collecting sites, field trip routes and most of all, teaching others about the hobby that he loved so much. He was always preparing and assembling necklaces and other types of jewelry to be donated for future sales as fund raisers at mineral shows.

Jo Anna says that they were to celebrate their 60th anniversary in just a few months. Services for Ray will be held at Rose Hills Memorial Park in Whittier, CA, on Wednesday, January 22 at 3:00pm. In lieu of flowers, please consider a cash donation to a gem and mineral society of your choice.

The data in this memo comes directly from his wife Jo Anna.
Written by Stephen P. Mulqueen, VGMS member

CLUB CALENDARS

JANUARY

2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
29	30	31	1 Board meeting, 7:30p	2 Board meeting, 7:30p	3	4
5 Member Workshop 12-3p	6	7	8 🎱 Bowie M.	9	10 Bulletin Articles Due	11
12	13	14	15	16	17 🎱 Andrew Morgan	18 Pebble Pups 10a
19	20	21	22 Member meeting, 7p 🎱 Fang Yuan	23 🎱 Matt Wyatt	24	25 Open Workshop 9a-12p
26 🎱 George Christianson, Val Darts	27	28	29	30	31	1

FEBRUARY

2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2 Member Workshop 12-3p 🎱 Janet Allaway	3 🎱 Karen King-Cantway	4	5	6 Board meeting, 7:30p 🎱 Mark Paul, Michael Kovacs	7	8
9	10 Bulletin Articles Due	11	12	13	14	15 Open Workshop 9a-12p
16 Pebble Pups 10a 🎱 Susan Cowlishaw	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24 🎱 Bill Allaway	25	26 Member meeting, 7p 🎱 Corey Accardo	27	28 Show Prep Membership Renewals Final Due Date	1 🎱 February 28th Namo Buchmiller, Andrew Isaac