

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

VGMS ANNUAL SHOW ROCKS FOR THE 62ND TIME!!



Our club's annual celebratory photo after another amazing show

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The Ventura Gem & Mineral Society proudly hosted its 62nd Annual Show on March 1-2 at the Ventura County Fairgrounds. THANK YOU to everyone who attended, our dedicated dealers and demonstrators, and all our club members who generously contributed their time and efforts to make the event a success. You can find more details about the show, along with details of our 2025 scholarship recipients, in this issue.



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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 and 2nd Wednesday of the month

Federation Affiliation

California Federation of Mineralogical Societies (CFMS)

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Photo of the month credit

Photo of the month provided by Diane Cook

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	Jenifer Russell
Museum	Jim Brace-Thompson and Troy Schmidt
Library	Heather Seaton and Robert Seaton
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

I would like to thank all members who renewed their memberships, especially those who did so early! We are about 50 members shy of last year's final membership total, but we do gain new members throughout the year. We had 17 new members apply in late Feb and after the show! We will be sending an email soon with the new password to the member's only section of VGMS.org; please contact me if you do not get it by April 1st. The 2025 Member Directory will be available soon on the website!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

David Springer

Whew! Well a fantastic 62nd annual show was conducted over the first weekend in March, and my aching bones are feeling it! Lots of moving, loading and unloading, setting up and tearing down, and repeating it all over again, but we got her done just fine. We have yet to hear the final tally but from what our Treasurer Celia announced from our initial cash count, we did quite well once again. Congrats to the entire team who makes this possible from year to year! We are a well oiled machine when focused on putting on our show, and despite the hard work, it really goes far to forward fund all of our annual programs. Read further in this issue from our show chair Diane Cook and from the different leads for all the various fund raising activities we stage at our show as to how things went.

Moving forward, we have some cleanup and repair work at the clubhouse, some sorting to do, and some donated equipment to repair. As this process gets completed, keep your eyes out for lapidary equipment that will be going up for sale to members in the months to come. Tyrone LaFay has also been busy cooking up some fun field trips in the coming months, so as our weather improves, look to join in with these fun activities.

This month, if your dues have not been paid, you will no longer receive the monthly bulletin, access to the website members area, or use of the club's equipment. A thank you to all those who have paid their dues - we hope to see you working on projects at our clubhouse in the coming months.

Reminder to those who desire to display competitive and non-competitive cases at the upcoming CFMS show in Lancaster, your applications are due April 1st!

I am interested in hearing from you, and your ideas about how to make our club even better. You can reach me by e-mail: coastallapidary@gmail.com, or by phone at 805 450-5025.

Let there be Rocks! David

EDITOR'S NOTE

Monika Blackburn

If you have any articles, photos, or comments about the bulletin, please email me at vgmseditor@gmail.com. Thank you for reading!

PROGRAM REVIEW & UPDATE

John Cook, 1st VP - Programs

At our club meeting on February 26th, we honored Maria Tharpe and Emily Felder. Both recipients are geology students at local universities and were given scholarships. Both were highly recommended by their school professors. We wish them the best in their future geology careers.

In addition to our scholarship winners, we focused on the upcoming show details. Diane and all show chairs filled us in on where volunteers were needed and what each booth did.

The club meeting program on March 26th will be led by Mr. Lowell Foster, who will present "Agate Collecting A to Z, Cautionary Tales." An agate and rock collector, Lowell will look back over the last 20 years to ruminate on the highs and lows and lessons learned from being a part of the rockhounding hobby. There will be pretty stones to look at while Lowell prattles on and on. Lowell was a former VGMS club member and is very knowledgeable on agate collecting locations in our state. Lowell has also re-joined VGMS and we look forward to his contribution to VGMS. This talk promises to be very interesting and entertaining.

Future Programs

March Program

Mr. Lowell Foster will present "Agate Collecting A to Z: Cautionary Tales."

April Program

The program will be presented by our very own Jennifer Russell about "Sparkle Secrets: Your Crash Course in Diamonds." This program promises to be very interesting and informative.

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.

2025 SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEES

Nancy Brace-Thompson

I'm happy to announce our two 2025 scholarship awardees, Emily Felder from UCSB and Maria Tharpe from UCLA (*six applicants applied for our scholarship and it was a tough decision to pick just one, so the committee decided to give an extra scholarship this year using money from our CFMS/AFMS show profit*).



VGMS President David Springer and Scholarship Chair Nancy Brace-Thompson present the 2025 VGMS Scholarship to Emily Felder and Maria Tharpe

If you were at the February members' meeting, you were able to meet them and hear each talk about their work. Below are their essays:

Emily Felder – is a UC Santa Barbara graduate student in the Department of Earth Sciences. She's currently researching Apatitic Scale Microfossils (ASMs).

The advent of biomineralization by which organisms precipitate mineralogical skeletons, scales, shells, and other crystalline structures remains an unresolved evolutionary novelty in the history of life on Earth. We are tasked to imagine a world where microbial life—already billions of years old by the Neoproterozoic Era—at long last took hold of a terrestrial surface abundant with minerals. This enrichment and incorporation of minerals into life's very fabric revolutionized its domain, expanded its metabolic possibilities, and evolved into the eukaryotic world we know today.

The first trace of eukaryotic life's mineralogical innovation can—astonishingly—only be found in one locality: the Fifteenmile Group of the Yukon Territory in the Western Ogilvie Mountains. There, along the remote Alaska-Yukon border, lies an unassuming outcrop of 800 million years-old limestone that hosts fossiliferous chert nodules. These remarkably rare fossils of single-celled eukaryotes have scales made of apatite, eponymously named Apatitic Scale Microfossils (ASMs). The mineralogical origin of ASMs remains unknown, and if we broaden our view to contextualize them within the Tree of Life, they were constructing with a very perplexing building material: phosphate. Biologically controlled mineralization has evolved within the eukaryotic clade many times, but it has predominantly been carbonate, such as calcite and aragonite, or silica, which accounts for most modern day biomineralization. Phosphate is rather exclusively found in the internalized skeletons of vertebrates, and no modern day protists use phosphate to build their scales.

As a UC Santa Barbara graduate student in the Department of Earth Sciences, I'm currently researching ASMs in Dr. Susannah Porter's lab with the intent of characterizing their complex morphology within a mineralogical framework. The Fifteenmile Group hosts at least 38 taxa, making them the most diverse group of pre-Ediacaran eukaryotes. Since ASMs represent a critical transition in the history of life on Earth, I seek to investigate why apatite was evolutionarily selected as the first biomineral and employed so diversely before ASMs' total disappearance from the geologic record. With the generous support from the Ventura Gem & Mineral Society Scholarship Committee, I would hope to continue to unveil this mineralogical mystery via imaging analysis and prospective fieldwork. Thank you for this opportunity and your consideration.

Maria Tharpe – is a lab assistant at UCLA Earth Planetary and Space Sciences labs. She is working towards a Geology degree with a minor in Environmental Science.

As an adult learner it was difficult to overcome self-imposed fears of age and financial security to return to school full time. I was a single mother of two boys at an early age, I nurtured their strengths and passions in school while foregoing my own, I was never sure if I would reach a time where I myself would be able to pursue a continued education. My children are now grown adults, my oldest graduated from the University of Santa Cruz with a Chemistry Degree and my youngest is pursuing his artistic talents with his clothing line as the owner and artist. They have been my inspiration, biggest fans and supporters to return to school to achieve a degree.

Maria Tharpe (cont.) – *I reached a point in the summer of 2022 where I was mentally and physically exhausted by my job, being underpaid and overworked. The day I knew I was done with that life was the day I drove home crying the entire way feeling drained, that very night I looked through the course of classes offered at Los Angeles Mission College and researched financial aid and any other programs that would help me. I signed up for a few classes and one week later gave my notice of resignation to my employer. I switched my mentality of fear of failure and the unknown to the fact that I must do something to change my quality of life. I was aware of Los Angeles Mission College as I had taken a computer class in the spring of 2022, and I live close by. I chose to dive in as a full-time student in the fall of 2022 thinking it's all or nothing to make a difference in my life and that of my children. The welcoming and helpful staff in all areas of the campus increased my self-confidence and I excelled in my classes in my first semester completing it with a GPA of 3.82 putting me onto the Deans Honor list. This has given me major self-esteem, confidence and an exciting newfound drive to continue to pursue a higher degree for a better life for myself and my children. I will continue to strive for betterment and the accumulation of new knowledge, as I know this is the way towards a career that I will have a happy and fulfilling quality of life. I now know that the fear I had was an illusion, I know I can achieve more.*

I had originally chosen Biology as my major as I am a lover of the outdoors and the study of all living organisms at all levels interacting with our environment and sustaining each other was so interesting to me. To be sure this was the correct major for me, I decided to explore one other course offered at East Los Angeles Community College, that of Geology. This came about after finding a random video of the giant caves in China, unlike any other in size or system on this world. These wonders hold my curiosity as they are so unique, having their own ecosystems and even in some cases able to create their own weather, containing entire forests, rivers, and even lakes. The possibilities of new life unlike anything we have ever seen from plants to animals is waiting to be discovered. I was fascinated and chose to pursue Geology as it pertains to our environment, our planet's history and its unexplored formations. This has been further solidified by other courses I have taken at East Los Angeles Community College. I was very fortunate to come across a program called SeaGrant Pathways (renamed PIER Mentorship), during the summer of 2023. From this program I was offered an amazing opportunity to be a lab assistant at UCLA in their Geology building, specifically the Earth Planetary and Space Sciences labs. I learned how to work hands on in a laboratory environment, in the Paleo Oceanography and Microscopy lab, cleaning and preparing collected samples of 10,000-year-old foraminifera. This has further piqued my curiosity into our Earth's history, the amount of knowledge to be learned in my lifetime is awe inspiring.

My goal is to major in and obtain a Geology degree and work in a field that not only feeds my curiosity but gives me a higher purpose. I would also love to pursue a minor in Environmental Science, as our planet is going through changes with human pollution, and resource depletion, I have seen firsthand the effects here at home and in different countries. Leaving my footprint, no matter how tiny it may seem, will give me a sense of accomplishment and of positive productive contribution to our society, the world and most importantly my children.

Congratulations to both deserving recipients!

FIELD TRIPS

2nd VP, Field Trips – Tyrone LaFay

Trip Report: Tajiguas Beach

On February 23rd, just a few miles north of Refugio Beach in Santa Barbara County, twenty VGMS members enjoyed a beautiful sunny day at Tajiguas Beach searching for fossil whale bone and agates. The weather was so incredible that a number of attendees arrived early to make the most of the day. As folks were eager to make their way down to the beach and begin hounding, individual check-ins occurred and liability waivers were submitted. Once a safety review for the location took place and we went over examples of what to look for, directions were given as to how best to access the beach.



*(View from the parking area
on Highway 101 Southbound)*



This beach location is known for collecting excellent agatized whale and even dolphin bone. Other material that can be found here includes agate, brecciated jasp-agate, and even the rare find of petrified wood! Somehow it seemed appropriate that there was a very large whale carcass decomposing on the beach, to the delight of many seagulls.



Most folks were able to locate and go home with some nice pieces of whale bone and other fun finds. Some of us found more shells than whale bone, but we still had fun along this beautiful stretch of beach. VGMS member Dennis Hultman hounded an incredible gem bone quality piece which even had David Springer drooling while declaring that he'd never seen anything found in this location quite like it. Great eye, Dennis!

Upcoming Field Trips in the Works (all field trips are subject to change):

- Confirmed – March 22, 2025: Diamond Pacific Rockyard (Barstow); 2 Sisters Rockyard (Yermo); and Jeremy Berg's rockyard (Apple Valley).
- Tentative – April 2025: Paul Bunyan Agate Claim
- Tentative – May 2025: Aerial Acres & Castle Butte
 - Aerial Acres claim run by the Sierra Paloma Club near North Edwards for Banded Travertine Onyx.
 - Castle Butte for chalcedony agate.
- Tentative – June 2025: Ralph Bishop's Museum & Avila Beach
 - Ralph Bishop: tour of an extensive museum collection and possible rock sales.
 - Avila Beach: collecting DeeDeeite at low tide.

SHOWS

Diane Cook, 3rd VP and Show Chair

Thank You for a Fantastic 62nd Annual VGMS Show!

The Ventura Gem & Mineral Society's 62nd Annual Show on March 1 & 2, 2025, was a tremendous success, thanks to the dedication and hard work of our incredible chairs and volunteers!

A heartfelt thank-you goes out to everyone who contributed their time and talents to make this event possible. From planning and setup to hosting and cleanup, your efforts ensured a smooth and enjoyable experience for our vendors, exhibitors, and guests.



Special appreciation goes to our show chairs, who coordinated every detail in their booths, and to the volunteers who helped with demonstrations, the raffle, kids' activities, the silent auction, country store, t-shirts, teachers, plant booths and so much more. Your commitment to sharing the wonders of rocks, minerals, and fossils with the community truly makes a difference.

It is because of each and every one of you that the VGMS show continues to be a highlight for rockhounds and families alike. Thank you for your enthusiasm, teamwork, and dedication!

We look forward to another fantastic show in 2026!

Raffle- Sheri Hultman: This year's raffle was a great success! A huge thank you to David Springer and Richard Slyker for their invaluable guidance. I also want to express my gratitude to club members Dick White, David Springer, Ron Wise, Phyllis White, and Jim Brace-Thompson for their generous donations.

I couldn't have done it without Jen Russell and her business, Pawn Shop of Ventura. She contributed nearly half of the raffle items and was instrumental in organizing and announcing at the event. THANK YOU, JEN!



Great items made it hard to decide where to place a ticket at the Raffle.

I'm already looking forward to next year and seeing even more of our club members showcase their incredible lapidary skills!



Parents showed kids what was worth a bid at the Silent Auction.

Silent Auction - John Cook, co-chair: On March 1st and 2nd 2025 the Ventura Gem and Mineral Society had our 62nd show at the Ventura County Fairgrounds. The silent auction booth had lots of great slabs, rough rock specimens, and used lapidary equipment to either bid on or buy it now.

I would like to thank fellow club members who worked tirelessly to organize and work the silent action both. Also, I would like to thank all who helped set up, work and stayed late on Sunday to help load up rock onto the U-Haul trailer to unload at clubhouse. The auction was a great success and sold lots of material to help the club. Hats off to all.

Thank you so much for making the Silent Auction a great success.

Teacher Station & “Rock On” Kids Quiz – Jim Brace-Thompson: Our 2025 Show saw a steady stream at our Teacher Station and “Rock On!” Kids Quiz in the Welcome Booth. I don’t have an exact count of teachers, but based on the number of educational packets handed out, it looks like at least 50 stopped by to get a teaching packet and five free stones. The “Rock On!” Kids Quiz saw fewer kids. Per past figures, we’ve averaged 218 kids, but just 182 quizzes were turned in this year. Hmm. That’s some decline! As in past years, though, kids continue to say the darnedest things. Here’s a sampling of what kids liked about our show:

Try activities at the Kids Booth: What was your favorite? Spinning Wheel (31%). Why? “It was gambling!” Sand Sifting (21%). Why? “I got a penny!” Coloring Dinos (14%). Why? “I love to color!” Dig-a-Dino (11%). Why? “It was amazing and cool, and I didn’t know what it was going to be.”

Visit the Exhibits: What was your favorite? Nearly every exhibit earned at least one vote, so thank you to all who entered wonderful displays! But a few stood out. Rockhound’s Garage (10%). “It’s so mini & I liked the dust!” Enchanted Pebble Pals (6%). “It had Hello Kitty & Axolotl.” California State Symbols (5.5%). “It has a saber tooth tiger and it has long teeth.” Rose Quartz (5%). “Pink rocs.” Mosasaur & Auggie Skull Casts (5%). “They were big!”



These two have returned year-after-year to our Teacher Station.

Who liked the “Rock On!” prize more? Mother or son?

If you could be a dealer at a gem show, what would you sell? Again, answers were all over the map. Top contenders? Gems (9%). “Because I would get a lot of money. The fancier, the better.” Rocks—just Rocks (8%). “I like rocks. But they would be exotic rocks.” Jewelry (8%). “They’d sell out easily and they’re cool.” Fossils (7%). “Because I want to dig for fossils and get dirty.” Pretty Crystals (5.5%). Why? “Pretty crystals.” Diamonds (5%). “I’d be rich!” By the way, one anonymous respondent replied, “Well, I am a dealer. I sell Girl Scout cookies.” Any guesses who that girl is? One other kid says, “I would sell rainbow unicorn rocks” while two others went for “Ice cream!”

Who was your favorite demonstrator and why? There was pretty much no contest here for the top contender. Valley Prospector Gold Panning (36%). Why? “I got gold! And candy!” Soapstone Carving Man (13%). “Dick was very kind and let me and my sister actually touch the stone!” Tony & Sandie Fender Jewelry Makers (11%). “They were so kind and we go free necklaces. Besides, I just like watching it.” Finally, one child just couldn’t decide: “Well, I do not no.”

Country Store – Shirley Layton and Sue Slyker,

Co chairs: We had a good turn out for the Country store at our 2025 show. As always it was great to see our many return customers as they are always happy to see us!

I want to thank all the great help we had in setting up, servicing our friends and closing up on Sunday night. We are so fortunate for all the donations from our members in making the store a success. It is an important part of the club's fund raising functions for the coming year. I am always amazed at all the wonderful items that you share with us, we couldn't do it without you!

It is always fun working with my great co chair, Sue Slyker, each year and she joins me in thanking all our members who donated and helped make it a success.

Thanks, and we will see you next year!



There was a lot of selection at the Country Store.



Good lunch fixings make for happy volunteer workers.

Kitchen – Erin Valenzuela: Greetings from your Food Chairman aka Kitchen Boss! We had a successful year feeding volunteers, dealers, and demonstrators over the 4 days of the show. I love feeding people and it is a small way that we can thank everyone who helps our club have an amazing show! Thank you to the members who brought items to share- fruit, chips, cookies, meat trays, salads, and so many wonderful brownies and as always Janelle Thompson's spectacular carrot cake! Thanks also to those who left donations in our tip box, every little bit helps offset our costs. Thanks to Nancy Brace-Thompson and Jenifer Russell for their needed help in the kitchen and Sheri Hultman and Susan Lopez during Sunday nights' pizza dinner- couldn't do it without you ladies!



Girl Scouts fed the beast within us.



Our Welcome Booth saw a steady stream throughout the weekend.



Kids gambled with real money at the Kids' Booth.

Publicity & Show Photographer Report – Jim Brace-Thompson: What's involved in publicizing our annual show? It's a year-long effort that basically starts as soon as the last show concludes. Here's my checklist from this past year: 1) get show postcard printed; 2) submit to CFMS Newsletter Show Dates; 3) submit show info to Rock & Gem, Rocks & Minerals, and other national magazines with free calendar listings; 4) distribute flyers at Conejo show; 5) distribute flyers at CFMS show; 6) distribute flyers at Ventura County Fair; 7) assemble a club case at Ventura County Fair promoting club and show; 8) give our Dealer Chair show flyers to distribute to dealers; 9) distribute flyers at the November CFMS Directors Meeting; 10) distribute flyers at Carmel Valley show in September; 11) post show flyer to VGMS web site on the opening page; 12) line up a lobby display at E.P. Foster Library and pin flyers on their bulletin board and in a bin; 13) visit the Ventura Visitors' Center with our show poster and flyers and post to their website; 14) send a show notice to SoCal rock clubs within convenient driving distance asking to include us in their newsletters; 15) contact local youth groups (Scouts, Girls/Boys clubs, etc.); 16) send a letter and show postcard to college geology professors (VC, OC, MC, CSUCI, UCSB, SBCC, CLU, UCLA) inviting them and their students to the show and reminding them of our college scholarship program; 17) alert the 750 teachers on our Teacher Email List; 18) send show notices to area newspapers and other local publications with a Community Calendar section; 19) place an ad with The Ventura Breeze; 20) alert area radio/TV stations; 21) populate web sites and social media in coordination with Diane; 22) mail postcard reminders to the 800 folks who requested them at past shows; 23) email a show notice to folks who gave email addresses on raffle tickets at past shows; 24) gather a team to distribute show flyers/posters downtown and midtown, and to local museums, hotels, stores; 25) email members shortly before the show to email friends and family and to post notices to their social media accounts. Finally, 26) host show. Easy-peasy!

Oh yes, and as show photographer, I maxed out a memory card with some 344 photos. If you'd like a set, just give me a thumb drive!



Smile when your show photographer approaches!



Join the Show Publicity team in spreading word of next year's show.

Loading/Unloading Up at the Clubhouse

Jim Brace-Thompson

Richard Slyker rolled onto clubhouse grounds in a big U-Haul rental truck on Wednesday, February 26, where he was greeted by a crew including Ryan Canon, Robert Seaton, Ron Wise, Carrie Ellers, Lonnie Sutton, David Springer, and me to assist in loading up show supplies. He returned on Monday, March 3, along with Robert Seaton, Rich Pisor, David Springer, Carrie Ellers, Shirley Layton, Ron Wise, Lonnie Sutton, Michael and Terral Matsumoto, and Nancy and me to reverse the process and return supplies to their shelves. As they say, it's a hard job, but somebody's gotta do it! But why is the minimum age requirement 60+??



A Transport Crew of mostly elders gathered to load the Show truck for the trip to the Fairgrounds.



Hurry, Robert, to join next year's crew in returning Show stuff to the clubhouse!

WORKSHOP HAPPENINGS

Well Underway with Workshop Fun—and Work

Jim Brace-Thompson

Resumption of Wednesday afternoon workshops has been off to a slow start. February 12 saw only four tired old men (Michael Rittenberg, Rich Pisor, Robert Seaton, and me) accompanied by Workshop Stewards David Springer and Ron Wise. Low attendance, but high performance as rock after rock was slabbed, ground, and polished, and as Ron did a bit of maintenance work on a Genie.



Things were so slow on February 12, Show Stewards started manning the Genies.



Some slabs apparently are more interesting than others.

With our normal first-Sunday-of-the-month workshop falling smack in the midst of our annual show, that workshop date was rescheduled to March 9, kicking off a tightly spaced schedule of workshops on the 9th, 12th, and 15th. Those showing up on the 9th included Stewards John Cook, Ron Wise, and Tyrone LaFay overseeing Julie Cox, Emily De La Torre, Rich Pisor, Michael Rittenberg, Robert Seaton (who also conducted facilities maintenance), Shirley Layton, Robin Tan, Judy Wiegand, and me. I broke off early to do some dusting and vacuuming of the museum rooms ahead of a visit from a home-schooling group while John had arrived earlier that morning to provide a training and certification session for Kristin Kennedy and Val Darts, who both crafted their first gleaming cabs and are now ready to attend future workshops with many projects to come. We invite you to come, too!

Our Saturday workshop on February 15 was more like it! Stewards David Springer, John Cook, and Ron Wise oversaw Michael Rittenberg, Shirley Layton, Ryan Canon, Rich Pisor, Robert Seaton, Lonnie Sutton, Belinda Poore, Judie Weigand, Emily De La Torre, and me. We saw so many attendees, in fact, we had to start doubling up on the Genies. In addition to overseeing projects, the Stewards worked on selecting and sorting rocks for the Show silent auction and Richard Slyker arrived to perform maintenance on our display cases for our March show.



You had to be an early bird on February 15 to nab a spot at the Genies.



More and more folks got workshop-certified on March 9. Are you certified yet?

FEDERATION NEWS

Keeping Up-to-Date with CFMS

Jim Brace-Thompson, VGMS Federation Director

Here's the latest from our umbrella organizations, the California and American Federations of Mineralogical Societies:

- The 2025 CFMS Convention, sponsored by Antelope Valley Gem & Mineral club, takes place May 10-11 with set-up on May 9 at Antelope Valley Fairgrounds, 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/>. But hurry! The deadline is April 1. As of this writing, we have just 4 entries.
- Five kids from two clubs (including VGMS) have submitted applications for the CFMS Junior Achievement Awards. After the CFMS Convention concludes, read here to see who won!
- Leading into the AFMS Annual Show & Convention, I served as judge for juniors articles in the national bulletin contest. I can't say who scored what, but I think it's safe to say that some of our VGMS pebble pups and junior members should be proud!
- The AFMS Show & Convention takes place March 27-30 in Hickory, North Carolina. Nancy and I are going, along with Diane Cook. I hope to have a report in our April newsletter.

Thank You for Supporting the American Federation!

Jim Brace-Thompson, CFMS Chair for AFMS Endowment Fund

Thank you to all VGMS members who showed support for the American Federation Endowment Fund in recent months. Several members purchased raffle tickets, helping to raise \$550 for AFMS on behalf of the California Federation. In addition, several VGMS members donated items to the raffle: Diane Cook (lapis pendant); David Springer (sagenitic onyx sphere); and me (two handcrafted silver pendants). Other items donated to date from other clubs and Federations include a K2 granite pendant, "dog bone" sterling silver necklace, a wire-wrapped charoite pendant; two ocean jasper pendants, a cabinet mineral specimen of fluorite, a large amethyst slab on a stand, and two sets of Murano pearl necklaces with earrings.

Again, thank you to all within VGMS who contributed to the success of this year's raffle! Tickets will be drawn at the 2025 EFMLS-AFMS Show & Convention taking place March 27-31 in Hickory, North Carolina. I'll be there to pick up prizes for any winning VGMS members.



These items for the AFMS Endowment Fund raffle were all donated by the CFMS, including several from VGMS members.

MEETING MINUTES

VGMS General Meeting, February 26, 2025, at the Poinsettia Pavilion

Called to order at 7:29 PM PST, David Springer, Presiding

Attendees: There were 48 members and 7 guests.

Announcements

- Membership due now. After February 28 any member not paid will lose access to all benefits.
- Clubhouse- the first Sunday will be moved to March 9th Clubhouse will be open Wednesday 3/12 (2-5pm) and Saturday 3/15 (9-12). Please remember to sign in at the clubhouse and you can purchase saw/usage cards tonight from Celia.
- We officially signed a two-year lease with the County of Ventura to keep our clubhouse open. We are still on the lookout for a new home but have more time.
- Scholarships- Nancy introduced our scholarship winners- Emily Felder and Maria Tharpe. They were presented with a certificate, their membership cards, and a check for \$1000. Then each gave a presentation on their areas of studies. You can read more about these amazing ladies in Nancy's article.

No Old or New Business.

Officer Reports

- 1st VP - Programs - John Cook
 - Tonight's meeting is a final push for the show this weekend! All the chairs will discuss what still needs to be done and where we need help.
 - March meeting will be Lowell Foster and some new material he has.
 - April meeting will be a presentation from Jen Russell on Diamonds.
- 2nd VP - Field Trips - Tyrone LaFay
 - February 23 was a field trip to Tajiguas Beach. We collected whalebone, Shells and beach rocks.
 - March 22 will be an urban rockhounding trip to the Diamon Pacific Tool Company yard and the 2 sisters' yard in Yermo. Fun trips digging through treasure piles others have already collected! Sign-ups on whoscoming.com/vgms.
- Treasurer -Celia Churchill
 - Buy your usage cards.
- Membership Secretary - Erin Valenzuela
 - 145 Adult members,30 Pebble Pup and 10 Juniors for a total of 185 members. Friday is the last day to renew without having to be revoted in and losing. benefits until you are reinstated. Erin mentioned that if members find prospective members at the show- ask them to apply before next Wednesday so they can be voted in at the March Board meeting.
- Secretary.- Sheri Hultman (absent)
 - Erin is taking notes for the minutes.
- Bulletin Editor - Monika Blackburn (absent) - David Springer reported
 - Deadline for March newsletter is March 10, send to vgmseditor@gmail.com.
- Federation Director - Jim Brace-Thompson
 - 2025 CFMS show will be with the Antelope Valley club, near Lancaster on May 10 and 11. Jim is in charge of the competitor cases and the applications are due soon.
 - Jr. achievement award application open, deadline March 1. It is for outstanding under12 and 12-18-year-olds.
 - CFMS newsletter went out.
 - Jim is doing the raffle for AFMS show in March in Hickory, North Carolina.

Officer Reports (cont.)

- Web Director – Troy Schmidt
 - Sign up for show volunteer spots
- Parliamentarian/Scholarship – Nancy Brace-Thompson
 - Nancy thanked our Scholarship winners for attending and presenting at the meeting.
 - The Bylaws committee will be meeting soon.

Committee Reports

- Pebble Pups – Erin Valenzuela
 - We had 9 members attend on Feb. 16 for the “Gemstones: Lore & Legends” badge. That class led us to our pup case for the show about birthstones. March meeting will be on the 3rd weekend not sure date and time yet.
- Juniors – Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick (absent)
 - Erin read Lisa’s report. The Junior field trip to Tajiguas Beach went well- everyone found or was gifted a whale bone fossil! The Juniors are working on their case for the show and are looking for guest speakers and someone to host a silver class. Reach out to Lisa for more details or to help.
- Ways and Means- Jenifer Russell
 - Thank you, Jim, and Audrey for the donations! The raffle made \$84.
- Museum – Troy Schmidt
 - Nothing to report.
- Educational Outreach – Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Outreach is starting to pick up- a few events in February plus a presentation at the Ventura Rotary with The Whites, David Springer, Erin Valenzuela and Nancy Brace-Thompson.
 - Homeschool group coming to clubhouse and Science night on 3/27 Erin will be doing the California Dinosaurs display.
 - Sat. 5/3, Los Padres National Forest is having an open house at Wheeler Gorge. More information to come.
- Historian/Archivist – Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Nothing to report
- Hostess – Susan Slyker
 - We still have some meetings in the summer to be signed up for.
- Librarian – Heather & Robert Seaton
 - Nothing to report
- Facility Maintenance – Robert Seaton
 - Working on fixing the wood pecker holes.
- Stewards – Ron Wise (absent), John Cook, Tyrone LaFay and David Springer:
 - We received a donation of some saws that need to be evaluated and cleaned up/fixed.

Show meeting

- 3rd VP- Diane Cook
 - Show Chair Diane started the report with a reminder for Volunteers to sign in at the Hospitality booth. We are tracking our members’ volunteers’ hours for report to the County- this will help.
- Schedule-
 - Thursday morning 9 am- unload the truck, set up cases, set out tablecloths, finish hospitality booth and items, start to set up VGMS areas. Workers receive lunch.
 - Friday- finish setting up VGMS areas, check in vendors/dealers and exhibitors set up their cases. Lunch will be provided for volunteers and dealers.
 - Saturday and Sunday- show days! We still need lots of volunteers- register online or on the back table sheets.

- Chair reports-
 - Logistics- will be unloading truck Thursday 9am. Sunday night back up and unload Monday at the clubhouse- could use help then.
 - Exhibits- 46 cases for display
 - Raffle- we have 3 cases to fill, have some items would love some more. Dick White made a gorgeous spirit bear for us to raffle.
 - Hospitality Booth- T-shirts, mugs, and new totes. Will have member shirts if needed.
 - Teacher Booth/Scavenger hunt could use some more volunteers- and be on the lookout for returning teachers- Jim has pictures of them at previous shows he wants to give them.
 - Country Store will be setting up and pricing on Thursday and Friday. It is not too late to bring items to donate.
 - Plants- Donations gladly still accepted. Cuttings are fine and preferred over freshly planted (not rooted yet)
 - Silent Auction- working on slip- might need more printed... bids go up by one dollar unless the item starts at 20- then increase by \$5. No buy it now's.
 - Kids booth- everything good to go. Spinning wheel, grab bags, adopt a rock, sand sifting, coloring and more. Grab bags are \$3 or 2 for \$5.
 - Kitchen- Pasta bar on Thursday, Sandwiches Friday, Hot dogs Saturday and leftovers/sandwiches on Sunday. Pizza will also be provided Sunday for those that stay to pack up. We can always use and appreciate snacks and desserts!
 - Print- get everything to Celia by Friday
 - Thanks to Jim for all his publicity and Robert for setting up the signs. Take some show cards tonight for last minute handouts. See you all at the Show!

Next members meeting is Wednesday, March 26 at 7:30 at the Poinsettia Pavilion. Jim motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:34 pm. Robert seconded. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted on March 10th, 2025, by Erin Valenzuela (acting Secretary)

MEETING MINUTES

VGMS Board Meeting, March 6, 2025, via Zoom

Called to order at 7pm PST, David Springer presiding

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

Erin Valenzuela motioned to approve the February 6 Board Meeting minutes. Troy Schmidt seconded. Motion passed.

Old Business

- The 10" and 20" saw that was picked up, it will be refurbished and then used at the clubhouse or sold.
- The Highland Park equipment didn't sell at the show. David will try Craigslist.

New Business

- We will sell the excess grit at the clubhouse.
- David reread the lease and suggests we get another picnic table. Erin will look into it.
- Diane will look at posting some information at the clubhouse directing them to the website.

Officer Reports

- 1st VP - Programs - John Cook
 - March meeting will be a presentation by Lowell Foster, topic to be The ABC's of Agates.
 - April meeting will be Jen Russell talking about diamonds.
- 2nd VP - Field Trips - Tyrone LaFay
 - The Tajiguas Beach fieldtrip was well attended.
 - March 22 field trip will be to Diamond Pacific, Two Sister's private rock yard and Jeremy Berg's rock yard.
 - The April field trip will possibly be to the Paul Bunyan agate claim or Aerial Acres and Borax Visitor Center. (possibly one for May).
 - The June field trip will be to Avila Beach to find Deedeeite and a stop at Ralph Bishop's house in Santa Maria.
 - In October Tyrone is planning on leading a camping field trip to Clear Creek.
 - He has not had any luck with the Conejo or Oxnard club leading trips.
 - Jim offered to do a field trip in June or July to Pine Mountain for fossils.
- 3rd VP - Show - Diane Cook
 - Thank you for a great show!
 - Post show wrap up will be 3/19 or 3/20.
- Treasurer - Celia Churchill (absent), David Springer reported
 - Turn in receipts from the show, asap.
 - RRFL report has been sent in. It is a 6-8 week waiting period
 - Celia will email treasure report to the Board.
- Secretary - Sheri Hultman
 - Nothing to report.
- Web Director - Troy Schmidt
 - April 1st Troy will change the password. It will be emailed out to current members.
 - Troy will have Terry looking into having our sign-ups on whoscoming.com not come up in google searches. If we are not able to change that then we will maybe send out emails with the trip information, so non-club members do not show up.

Officer Reports, cont'd.

- Membership Secretary - Erin Valenzuela
 - Troy Schmidt motioned to accept new members Molly Brolin, Bevelyn Esparza, Shaele Baker, Ryan Baker, Ryan Baker Jr. (PP), Havard & Helen Horiuchi, Heidi Mauer, Scott Tompkins, Stephaie & Ernest Brody, Holly Green, Kaylee Cole, John Obraza, Benicio Obraza (PP) Tracy Olson, Lowell Foster and Thomas Godecki. John Cook seconded. The motion passed. They have been vetted through Megan's Law.
 - After the above were voted in, we have 173 Adult members, 34 Pebble Pups and 12 Junior members. Total 219 members.
 - Erin is working on the directory and will update quarterly.
- Federation Director - Jim Brace-Thompson
 - The 2025 CFMS convention will be May 10 & 11, at the Antelope Valley Fairgrounds. Deadline for competitive exhibits is April 1. Competitive exhibiting info. & updated Rules are posted on the CFMS website.
 - 5 kids have applied for the CFMS Junior Achievements Awards, 3 from VGMS.
 - The AFMS Show & Convention takes place 3/27-30 in Hickory, NC. Nancy, Jim and Diane are going.
 - Thank you, David, Diane and Jim, for donating items to the raffle.
- Bulletin Editor - Monika Blackburn(absent) - David Springer reported
 - Deadline for the newsletter is Jan 10, vgmseditor@gmail.com.
- Parliamentarian/Scholarship - Nancy Brace-Thompson
 - Emily came to the show on Saturday.
 - Will send out an email about updating our Operating Regulations and our By-Laws. The Committee will be Nancy, Celia, David, Erin and Diane.

Committee Reports

- Pebble Pups - Erin Valenzuela
 - We had a case at the show about birthstones.
 - Feb. 16, meeting was "Gemstones Lore and Legends".
 - Erin is going to try and not hold meetings at the same time as the workshops.
 - March 16 "Stone Age Tools". Jim has a great tub for that badge.
- Juniors - Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick
 - We had a case at the show.
 - The Tajiguas Beach was a great success, minus the random people who showed up.
 - She has some concerns about adults from other clubs that aren't vetted. Conejo and Oxnard do not do a Megan's Law vetting. She will rethink about including other clubs.
 - In April Jrs. may be getting a behind the scenes tour of the L.A. Natural History Museum.
 - Jrs. are interested in doing some sand/silver casting. Richard said he would do something.
 - Lisa talked to Micheal Santos of StarStruck Meteoritics and he will do something around one of the other show, either in May or November.
 - Lisa has plans for guest speakers, researching colleges and internships.
 - We are not meeting in March.
 - Working with Erin to do a joint case for CFMS. They don't want to compete against each other.
- Ways and Means - Jenifer Russell (absent)
 - Nothing to report.
- Museum - Troy Schmidt
 - Nothing to report.
- Educational Outreach - Jim Brace-Thompson
 - 2/19, Jim gave a PowerPoint history of VGMS and our community engagement efforts to the
 - Rotary Club of Ventura. David got contact information from a real estate person and someone who knows Pat McMann, she might have some minerals for the club.

Committee reports, cont'd.

- 3/5, Walnut Canyon Elementary School Science Night. Thank you, Monika & Beatrice Blackburn, for helping.
- 3/10 A homeschool group coming for a tour of our museum.
- 3/27, Ocean View School District Night in Oxnard, 5:00–7:00. Erin will coordinate and Monika and Beatrice Blackburn will help her.
- 4/24 Mountain View Vista Elementary School Open House. Possibly wants VGMS to attend.
- 4/27, The Annual Ventura Eco fest sponsored by Ventura Charter School is an all-day event. We will have a California Dinosaur booth. We need volunteers.
- 5/3, Wheeler Gorge Visitor Center, open house day. Details TBD.
- Rescheduling Jim's talk about "Fakes & Phonies" to the Conejo Gem & Mineral Club.
- Historian/Archivist - Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Jim has been working on compiling a list of all past Rockhounds of the Year awardees.
 - Still working on digitizing photos.
 - 2 new binders in our archive's cabinet.
- Clubhouse Search - Diane Cook
 - Nothing to report.
- Librarian - Heather(absent) - Robert Seaton
 - Nothing to report.
 - David suggests labeling shelves by subject.
- Clubhouse Maintenance: Robert Seaton
 - Woodpecker holes will be filled in the next few months.
 - Lisa suggested that the first aid kits need to be refilled and checked.
- Stewards - John, Ron, Tyrone, and David
 - David won't be there Sunday. Tyrone, Ron and John will be there.

Troy Schmidt motioned to adjourn the meeting. Erin Valenzuela seconded. Motion passed.

Next Board Meeting: April 3, 2025 at 7 pm

Next Member Meeting: March 26, 2025 at 7:30pm

Respectfully submitted on March 11, by Sheri Hultman, Recording Secretary.

ROCKHOUND RAMBLINGS

Continuing to Celebrate VGMS!

Lisa Batchelder and Lucia Hetrick



Let's keep the celebration going of VGMS and our place in the fabric of our community. Art Lopez led the charge to have our club and the Pebble Pup and Junior Member program recognized and I couldn't agree more with Art about how we are deserving of the Ventura County of Supervisors recognition. Over 80 years, the love of this hobby, Earth Science, and sharing it with our community have always been top of mind and the driving force behind all we do. It was never for the outward recognition, rather for the passion we all share. We all deserve a pat on the back for what we have accomplished and how it has changed our community.

Lucia and I took this opportunity to reflect on our time with the club and interview each other about how we feel the club has changed us and how we may have changed the club.

Question: "Mom, what do you think about VGMS? Do you like teaching? And what has been something you will hope to pass on to the next 80 years?"

Lisa: "I have always known what a special organization Ventura Gem and Mineral Society is for the community and for my personal family experience. To have the County Board of Supervisors recognize us for our 80 years of service to this community, and to acknowledge the important role the youth programs have played in that, is truly an honor. I have also taken part in volunteering in the Educational Outreach program led by Jim from time to time, been involved in helping with the annual show (Kids booth), served on a variety of committees, and worked on the social media marketing for the club.

But, where I have found the most joy is combining my love of teaching and working with kids. I have been blessed to be a part of the growing Pebble Pup and Junior program since 2016 as a parent and its program Director since 2018. Leading these enthusiastic and inquisitive young people through our AFMS badge program and beyond has been a joy. Our club has supported this program and helped to foster a unique opportunity of mentorship between these incredible young people and the more seasoned, knowledgeable members of our club, and experts in the field.

The next 80 years and beyond depend on this next generation and I am honored to help to be a guide for the future of our program and our club. This will truly be a group effort legacy that we all can leave the next generation of VGMS members and provide new opportunities for our youth to grow in the fields of Earth Science, Geology, Paleontology, and beyond. Together we can keep the interest in these fields alive and inspire others through our club, programs and community offerings for all.

Many thanks go to the Ventura County Board of Supervisors for this recognition, our VGMS Board and club members for your continued support, and to the children who want to learn more about Earth Science, Geology, and Paleontology. Together we will educate one rock and fossil at a time."

Question: "Lucia, how did you feel about the Ventura County Board of Supervisors recognition? Where do you think this can help you and the club?"

Lucia: "To be recognized by our Ventura County Board of Supervisors for our major accomplishments, both individual and collective, is such an incredible honor. It was interesting to listen to their work and to learn about fellow awardees before we were recognized. It was such a fun experience being celebrated by the Board of Supervisors, and it was extra special for me personally since it was being awarded to us by a fellow Villanova Alumni, Supervisor 1st District, Matt LaVere.

I think as the club and youth programs grow to serve our community, we will impact so many kids and inspire them to learn more. I've always loved collecting things. When you found this club I was able to learn more about rocks, geology, minerals, fossils, dinosaurs, lapidary arts, and so much more. I have had great mentors throughout my time with the club including Raul, Jim, John, Diane, Nancy...almost too many to list. I really have learned something from everyone. Some of the skills I have learned are how to speak in front of others, ask thoughtful questions, display my collections, help where needed, and share what I know with others. These are all great life skills that I already use in high school and I know it will be helpful for college and any job I have in the future.

I'm most excited to have a true Junior program. I think it's important to fill the gap between the Pups program and being an adult member. I like that you are giving us a voice in how the program is being developed since high school is a busy time for us, but we all still love what we do at this club. Going on special trips, having a guest speaker series and learning about careers and college programs will be so helpful.

Thank you for this amazing celebration. I loved being a part of it, representing our club and the accomplishments we all have achieved."



Lucia pictured with her award

Slim Pickings Down at the Beach

Jim Brace-Thompson

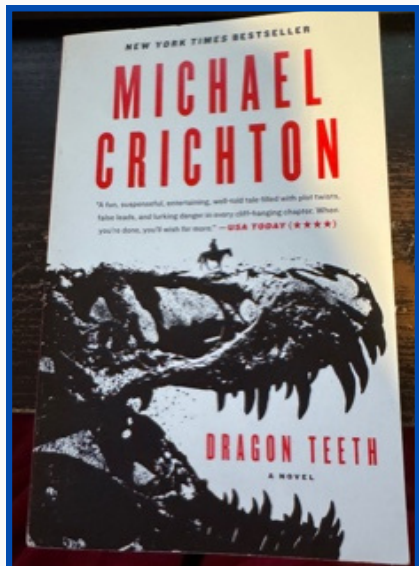
Without any really big, big winter storms this year, I've seen relatively few cusps crammed with gravel and cobble shingle on our Ventura beaches, so it's not been a great winter for local rock collecting. But rocks are still there! Pictured here are two examples of our typical "catsup and mustard" jaspers plucked while walking my dog just last week. The pickings may be slim this year, but it's still worth the hunt for our own home-grown jasper cobbles, fractured and imperfect as they may be.



Find your own catsup and mustard jaspers on our local beaches!

Dragon Teeth by Michael Crichton

Book review by Erin Valenzuela



Just a few years after the masses flocked to California to find their fortunes in gold, another type of “rush” hit the West— this time it was the Dinosaur Rush or Bone Wars. In the early 1870’s large dinosaur fossils were being uncovered in Wyoming, Montana, Colorado and Nebraska. Two American paleontologists, Edward Drinker Cope and Othniel Charles Marsh, had a heated rivalry that led to unparalleled scientific value but also extreme negative effects that are still being sorted out by today’s Paleontologists.

It is in this world, that author Michael Crichton sets his historical fiction tale, “Dragon Teeth” Published in 2017, 9 years after his death, the manuscript was found by his wife Sherri while setting up the Michael Crichton Archives. Started well before his other famous Dinosaur books, Michael wanted to share with the world the history and dangers of early American paleontology.

The story follows fictional college student, William Johnson who heads west with Dr Marsh. Not a geology student at all, he fights to go on the expedition because of a dare, Johnson learns photography to be a useful member of Marsh’s team. During the trip to Colorado or Wyoming— Marsh was paranoid and kept everyone guessing where they were actually headed, Johnson is left behind in the middle of nowhere. He meets Marsh’s rival, Cope and finishes the journey with him. Wild West antics ensue— train rides and robberies, “Indian” skirmishes, gunslingers, chuck wagons, buffalo stampedes, brothels and saloons aplenty and Cope and Marsh’s antagonistic rivalry. We meet historical figures like Charles Sternberg, Louis Stevenson, Wyatt Earp and hear about General Custer, Sitting Bull and others of that time. Of course, there is also the fossil hunting. Lots of bones were found, especially remarkably complete set of Brontosaurus teeth— not actually found by fiction William Johnson but by Cope himself in the Montana badlands in 1876.

I had read some bad reviews of this book when I first discovered it while researching the Bone Wars. I have loved every Michael Crichton novel I’ve read, and movie and tv show watched. So I was leery going into it, but I can say that I enjoyed it. Mr Crichton says himself in the Author’s Note, “I would not read this novel as history.” And I followed his advice— I enjoyed the trials and hardworking stories of William Johnson and his teammates. He was a spoiled rich kid who didn’t really know what he was getting into but in the end cared about the fossils and their fate. It was a good quick read about an important time in our history, especially for those of us who love dinosaurs!!

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

Jim Brace-Thompson, Educational Outreach Chair

A Presentation, a Science Night, and a Home-schooler Visit: A Lot Happening with Educational Outreach!

The Rotary Club of Ventura—"The Friendliest Club in Rotary"—invited us to their February 19 luncheon meeting at Poinsettia Pavilion. Thus, as the clock struck noon, David Springer, Erin Valenzuela, Dick and Phyllis White, and Nancy and I all gathered round a table to enjoy some great eats. I'd been invited to give a presentation on the history of VGMS with emphasis on our outreach efforts and events benefiting the community.



A happy VGMS contingent enjoys the Rotary Club luncheon on February 19.

Thus, after the Rotary folks held a brief meeting, I rolled out a PowerPoint focused on our community engagement, from our annual show to school visits, science nights, club museum room tours and more, as well as things we offer for our fellow members—from field trips, to educational lectures, a youth program, fun social gatherings, and lapidary workshops. I also put in a shameless pitch on our need to find a new clubhouse, but no one came rushing forth offering us their property. Oh, well. Next time, we need a better pitch man?

Walnut Canyon Elementary School invited us to our second Science Night of the year in Moorpark. It was rescheduled from January 22 to March 5 due to a "smoke-delay" caused by giant plumes from the Hughes Fire in Castaic. Building on the success of our "Magic Magnetic Minerals" booth, we went with that once again, with a few tweaks and a new hands-on activity involving moving hair onto a bald man's head with a magnetic wand. (If only it were that easy...) Monika and Beatrice Blackburn joined Nancy and me, making for a perfect team for the number of activity stations we had. Thank you, Monika and Beatrice! It was a pretty intense and steady flow of parents and kids for the entire 90 minutes, so the help was needed and appreciated.



We saw a lot of action at Walnut Canyon Science Night on March 5



Beatrice wowed one little girl with the power of magnetism at Walnut Canyon.

Next up, on March 10, Robert Seaton, Nancy, and I arrived mid-morning at the clubhouse to get everything arranged in time to greet 14 students and an almost equal number of adults for a tour of our clubhouse museum rooms. The group came courtesy of Kristen Moreno, the Home School Coordinator of Ventura Charter School, and our two little museums rooms were pretty packed. We started in the Dinosaur Room with an overview of our little-known California dinosaurs and marine reptiles then moved to the Ice Age California display where Martha Moran's mural brought ancient animals of the Ojai valley to life and where we held a vote for our State Fossil: the trilobite versus the sabertooth cat. Guess who won. We then moved on to our mineral collection, where the fluorescence case was the big hit, before moving outside to blast off a volcano and to line everyone up for Goodie Bags and polished stones from our Treasure Chest before bidding a fond farewell.



Almost as many parents as kids arrived at our museum rooms as part of a field trip for home schoolers arranged by Ventura Charter School on March 10.

Next up for Educational Outreach—and a Call for Volunteers!

The start of the year has been busy with educational outreach, and it looks to get busier still with ever more requests jostling for space on the calendar. To wit:

- March 27: Ocean View School District will hold a Science Night in Oxnard. Erin Valenzuela has stepped forward to lead and coordinate a booth on dinosaurs. I'll be out of town but will work with Erin on assembling materials from our club museum. Erin seeks volunteers!
- April 24? (exact date TBD): We've just received a query from second grade teacher Kelly Myer of Mountain Vista Elementary School in Fillmore to possibly have a booth at a school open house night. I'm seeking details.
- April 25: Just in! A request to participate in another Science Night at Dos Caminos in Camarillo. That'll take place 6:00–7:30 PM on a Friday night, and we need volunteers to help!
- April 27: Ventura Charter School is once again sponsoring the Annual Ventura Ecofest, and we'll likely do a repeat of last year's all-day event with a California Dinosaurs Booth. Volunteers are needed and welcomed for this event that will take place all day that Saturday.
- May 3: We've been invited to the annual Open House of the Wheeler Visitor Center for Los Padres National Forest. Time frame, topic, and exact sort of event TBD.
- TBD: I was asked to give my talk on "Enhanced & Synthetic Gemstones" to the Conejo Gem & Mineral Club at their monthly meeting on February 13, but the meeting was canceled due to heavy rains that night, and I'm waiting to hear back about rescheduling.

If you can lend a hand volunteering at our educational outreach events, I welcome hearing from you. Email me at jbraceth@roadrunner.com.

PEBBLE PUPS

Erin Valenzuela, Pebble Pups

Our February pebble pup meeting focused on the badge Gemstones' Lore and Legends. We learned about birthstones, anniversary metals, gems myths and legends from the Bible, other religions, and cultures. They made keychains of the 12 months of birthstones- it was fun to see who put them in order, some put their birthstone first and some had their own pattern in mind. The pups filled out a worksheet about their birthstone- used magazines to cut out photos or drew pictures of their stone. Which led us to working on our case for the annual show. We went with a birthstone theme- some pups (a junior and regular members helped also) donated a piece of their birthstone for the case and we used their worksheets to fill in the bottom. Proud of Pups' Valerie and Ian who entered cases in the show- it was Ian's first time and he did great! March's meeting is March 15th at 12:30pm at the clubhouse. We'll be starting Stone Age art and tools badge, which will be finished up on our fieldtrip in May! Stay tuned for more details.



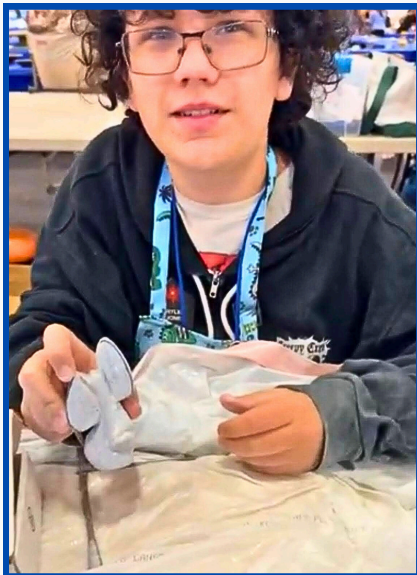
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Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick, Junior Members

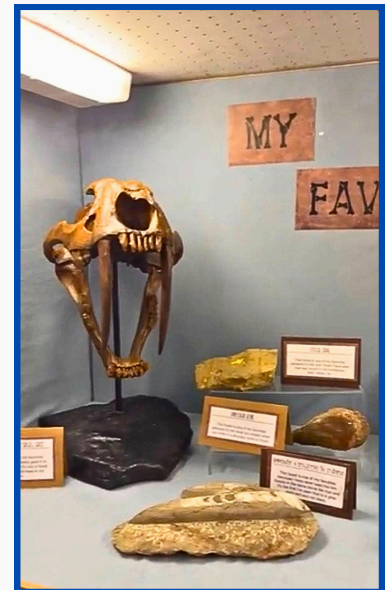
Show Time Success!

Our March show is always a popular, annual event for the community. This year the VGMS Juniors were shining bright in the demonstration booth, kids booth and displays! It was great to see so many people enjoy what they had to share throughout the weekend. We were excited to share what our Junior Program is planning this year.



I'd like to take a moment to celebrate them for their contribution to the weekend.

Rylee J. could be found in the demonstration booth showing off his skill in soapstone carving. On Sunday, he was making a carving of an elephant. I love his focus on his craft and how he has learned so many techniques from his grandpa (aka "Grump") and fellow club member Dick White. Additionally, Rylee displayed his love of his favorite fossils from his personal collections.



Elyssa J. displayed small carvings that she has collected over the years. She also beaded bracelets and volunteered throughout the weekend. (Pictured is happy customer and fellow Pebble Pup, Skylar Z.)





Lucia H. displayed her self-collected quartz specimens from her trip to the Diamond Hill Mine in South Carolina. She also spent the day in the kids booth volunteering her time talking to others about the club and the kids program.

It's always a great time at the show and so many people mark their calendars to come year after year to see what is new and exciting! Thanks to all who came to help and to the community for supporting our club.

The Monthly Challenge: The Mineral that Brightens Your Smile

Jim Brace-Thompson

Our February Monthly Challenge for Pebble Pups and Junior Members was tackled by Ian, Wren, Dasher, Skyla, Oliver, Shea, Benji, Ellis, Noah, Connor, Izzy, and Gabby. Each successfully identified our featured mineral of fluorite, which is used in fluoride toothpaste, fluorinated water, hydrofluoric acid, and other applications. It's also the mineral that gave rise to the term "fluorescence" when early scientists discovered it glowed under ultraviolet light. Said Skyla: "I know what this mineral is. It is fluorite. I have small purple, blue and green ones. Have you ever seen a pink or yellow one before? I am going to look at the gem show for one." Here's hoping she found one!



We challenged kids last month with green fluorite from China.

To all VGMS Pebble Pups and Junior Members: take The Monthly 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.

CLUB BUSINESS

THANK YOUS

A reminder: This "Thank You!" feature welcomes submissions from all club members. Know of someone who has helped the club or individual members in ways large or small?

Everyone loves praise. Look hard for ways to give it to them. Send your praise to vgmseditor@gmail.com.

from Jim Brace-Thompson

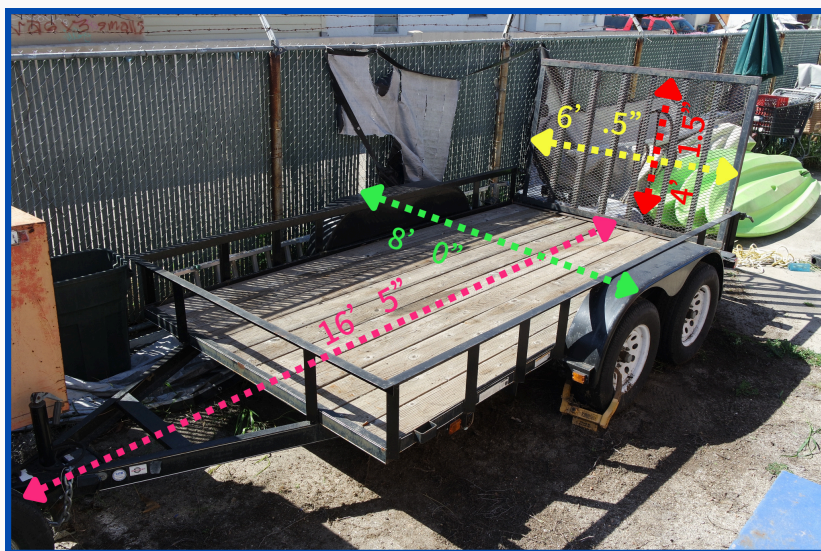
- Thank you to all who have been volunteering their time to help with educational outreach events as the New Year began! Special thanks this past month to Monika and Beatrice Blackburn, Robert Seaton, and Nancy Brace-Thompson.
- Thank you to all who helped at the Teacher Station and Scavenger Hunt at the show!
- Thank you to John Cook, Robert Seaton, and Nancy who helped me distribute show flyers all around downtown Ventura leading into our annual show; also thanks to Stuart Bloom for covering mid-town.
- Thank you, Barbra Mesienheimer, for sewing and donating two boxfuls of grab bags. We'll hold a grab-bag stuffing party in the coming year for next year's Show Kids' Booth, so these new bags were needed!

from Monika Blackburn

- Thank you, Jim Brace-Thompson, for your wonderful photos and excellent captions.
- Thank you, Celia Churchill, for showing me the ropes and for your eagle-eyed proofreading.
- Thank you to everyone who submits material to the bulletin!

CHIPS AND BOULDERS

Trailer for sale: 16 foot, dual axle, open top trailer with ramp. Good condition \$3500
Contact Jenifer @ 619-370-4340 if interested



CLUB CALENDARS

03 MARCH 2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2 Member Workshop 12-3p	3	4 David Springer	5	6 Board meeting, 7p	7	8
9	10	11	12 Member Workshop 2-5p	13	14	15 Open Workshop 9a-12p
16	17 Andrew Overton	18	19	20	21 Nolan P.	22 Rockyard Field Trip
23 Richard Petropoulos	24	25	26 Member meeting, 7:30p	27 Cyndy Treutelaar	28	29
30	31					

04 APRIL 2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3 Board meeting, 7p	4 Osiris A.	5 Natalie Irie
6 Member Workshop 12-3p	7 Cynthia Morris	8	9 Member Workshop 2-5p Anna Elledge Danny Jones	10 Bulletin Articles due Richard Bromser Alena Rieger	11	12
13	14	15	16 Heather Seaton	17	18	19 Open Workshop 9a-12p
20	21 Dashed E.	22 Frank Boulch	23 Member meeting, 7:30p	24	25	26 Kevin Grizzard Dimitri T.
27	28	29	30			