

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

Monika Blackburn, Editor
 P.O. Box 1573
 Ventura, CA 93002
 vgmseditor@gmail.com

IN THIS ISSUE

- President's Message
- Programs
- Field Trips
- Workshop
- Federation News
- Meeting Minutes
- "Rockhound Ramblings" (Editorials)
- Outreach
- Committee Updates (Pebble Pups)
- Club Business
- Calendar

"SILVER PICKING" WITH VGMS

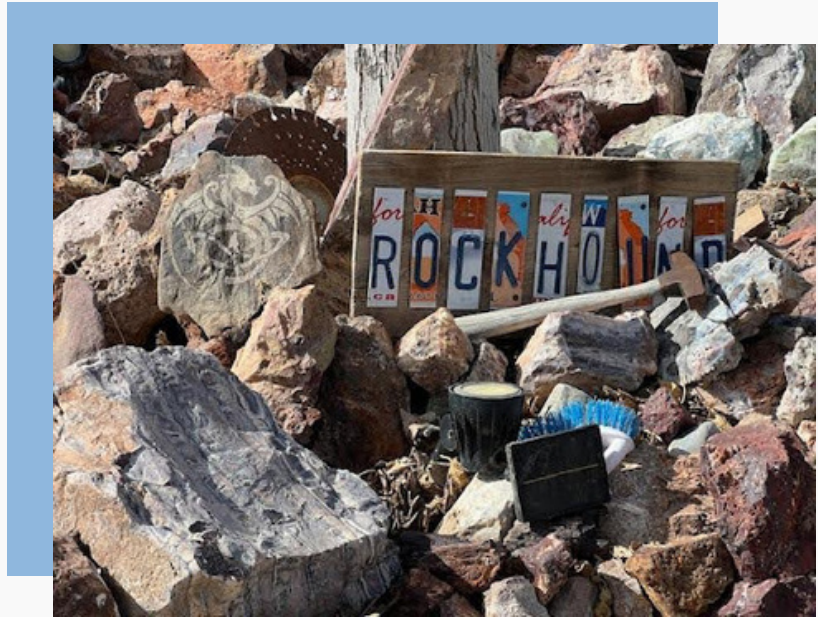


Photo courtesy of Tyrone LaFay

Rockhounds, rejoice! Imagine a sun-soaked spring morning, barrels overflowing with treasures, and the thrill of discovery buzzing in the air—that's exactly what unfolded on March 22nd in Barstow, California. Members from three gem and mineral clubs came together for a unique "Rock Yard Rendezvous," where friendships were forged, gems were unearthed, and the love of lapidary arts brought people together. From the legendary Diamond Pacific yard to the eclectic collections of the Two Sisters, and even salvaged treasures with stories to tell, this trip was a rockhound's dream come true. The full trip report, plus a recap of our March speaker, a trip to the AFMS convention in North Carolina, and a stinky challenge, are just some of the gems you will find in this issue.



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)

Permission to Reprint

Permission to duplicate materials in this newsletter is given by authors. Please email vgmseditor@gmail.com to request an author's contact information.

Photo of the month credit

Photo of the month provided by Tyrone LaFay

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

David Springer

We had a great speaker and record attendance at our March membership meeting with Lowell Foster walking us through his antics and experiences with agates. His great resource, named the Lowell Foster Agate Guide, was recently linked to on our website by Webmaster Troy Schmidt—take a look, it is very useful!

With daylight savings time we are seeing longer days, so we will be extending the hours for our “Summer Nights” workshop sessions (a bit early admittedly, as we are still in spring.) We will open our workshop at Camp Comfort to certified members from 2 PM through 6 PM on the second Wednesday of each month. This is a way to provide more opportunities for our certified members to access and utilize our club equipment. If you are not yet certified, please consider filling out the certification form on our website to get started. I think you will be glad you did so!

Our club trim saw we put up for sale at last month's meeting was sold the next day to member and fearless Club Secretary Sheri Hultman; we wish many happy trimmings to Sheri and Dennis. Our stewards are working through restoring some other equipment that we expect to post for sale soon, so stay tuned. We also recently acquired a substantial donation from Eileen Negus from Lompoc, CA, of over 200 pounds of jade, much of it from British Columbia.



Lowell Foster put on a great program at our March meeting

It is truly beautiful material! We are working through estimating value but be on the lookout for some of this material to be available at our upcoming silent auction and at the Rockhound Rendezvous, which is coming up in the next few months.

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

Is there something you would like to see in the bulletin? 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

On March 26th, our speaker was Lowell Foster with his presentation “Agates from A to Z,” during which he elaborated, ruminated, and prattled on and on about his agate searches and secrets. Lowell has spent twenty years traveling, collecting, and polishing many varieties of agates. He shared with us his adventures, including lessons learned with many great finds and glorious failures. Lowell had many photos along with the stories he shared. Very knowledgeable about his subject, Lowell has been quoted and referenced in books about agates. He even brought with him some of his agate collection to give to club members. The talk was great—very informative and entertaining. I would like to thank Lowell for a great program and extend to him a warm welcome back to VGMS.



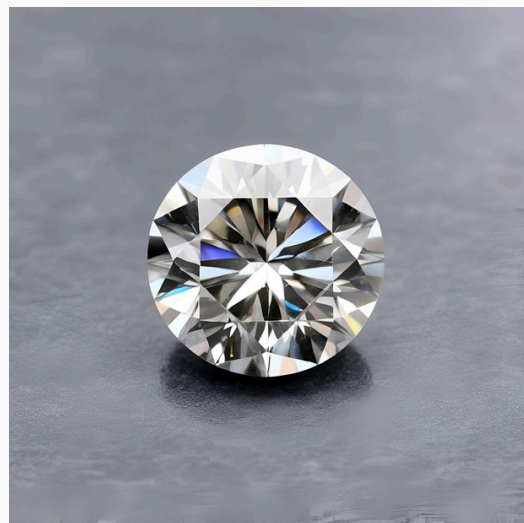
Lowell Foster presents “Agate Collecting A to Z”

Future Programs

April Program

The program for April will feature our very own Jenifer Russell, with her talk “Sparkle Secrets: Your Crash Course in Diamonds.” Jenifer will explain about the buying of and caring for diamond jewelry. She will discuss what to look for when buying diamonds, including pricing, with lots of great material, slabs, and special mineral specimens from recent donations. The talk will also include shopping locations such as private collections and she will share some diamonds from her private collection. This program promises to be a great one about diamonds.

If you have seen or know of any programs appropriate for our club, please let me know or if you want to do a program talk, I will be happy to include you in a future program.



Jenifer Russell will present a talk about diamonds at the April meeting

FIELD TRIPS

2nd VP, Field Trips – Tyrone LaFay

Rock Yard Rendezvous

On the morning of March 22nd, and to the delight of many rockhounds from three different clubs, we gathered in the parking lot of the famed Diamond Pacific Tool Corporation in Barstow, California. Eager members from the Southern Nevada Gem & Mineral Society (SNGMS), Victor Valley Gem & Mineral Club (VVGMC), and your very own Ventura Gem & Mineral Society (VGMS) mingled about introducing themselves to one another and checking in with their respective field trip leaders.

Once all of the pleasantries and waivers were completed, folks excited to find that perfect material they've been dreaming about made their way through the gates and up to the expansive and legendary Diamond Pacific rock yard. Barrel after barrel, this rock yard is home to decades of collected material. If you have the patience and determination, you may just find that rare gem at the bottom of the barrel. Some folks fluttered about skipping from barrel to barrel, while others hunkered down to focus on one or two barrels for the entire time that they were there. Each strategy has its benefits and disadvantages.

What a treat it was to coordinate this trip with other gem and mineral clubs. It's not very often that we get to connect with members from other clubs, so this was a blast. VVGMC had about 8 members attend while VGMS represented with 12, and SNGMS showed out with a whopping 37 members! I had never seen so many people in this rock yard at once; it was so much fun just watching people's excitement and listening to folks share their finds with each other.

Pictured right: Lauren Wideman (foreground) digs through a barrel while the hunt begins.



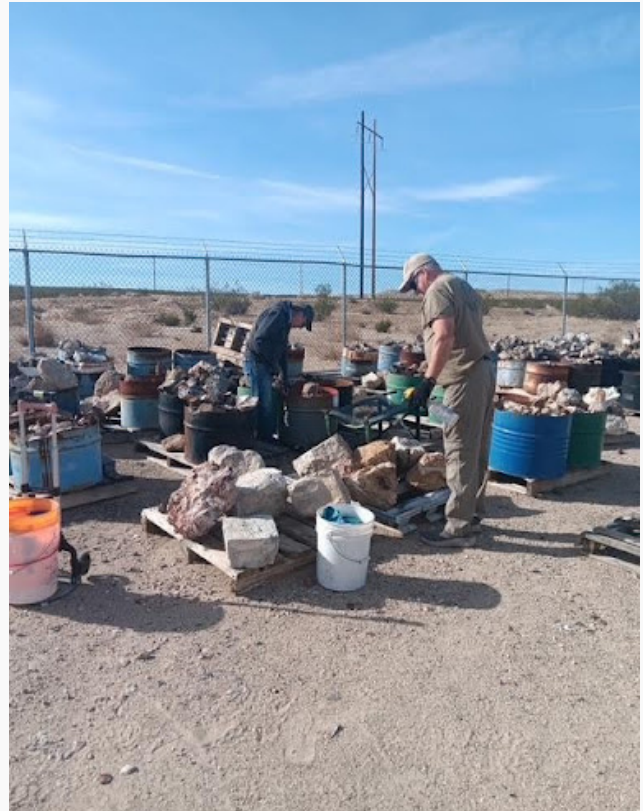
Diamond Pacific Tool Corporation in Barstow, CA

Brian Depue set up his scale near the entrance of the rock yard and kindly offered all members \$2/pound (normally \$3/pound). Throughout the morning, folks lined up for their found treasures to be weighed and settled up in support of Diamond Pacific. If you missed out on this opportunity, don't worry, Diamond Pacific is open to the public Monday – Friday 8am to 3pm. Rumor has it that if you plan to go by on a Friday, it's best to call ahead to ensure that you will have access to the rock yard. And while you're there, you can also pick up any lapidary equipment and accessories that you need while saving on shipping!





Julie Cox searching for that perfect piece of Silver Lace Onyx.



David Springer and Troy Schmidt contemplating how much material they can fit in the truck.

After about two and a half hours of silver picking at the Diamond Pacific rock yard, it was time to head over to Yermo and visit our next rock yard and home of the Two Sisters. I had the pleasure of meeting them at the Pow Wow in Quartzsite three years ago, and they graciously offered to open up their home rock yard to us. Now this isn't your average rock yard, as the Two Sisters have not just one collection...and not just two collections...but THREE collections all in one location! They of course have their own collection, along with some of the local Mojave Desert Gem & Mineral Society's collection, as well as a large portion of the personal collection from Danny Watts (who used to vend at the Pow Wow in Quartzsite as well). Can you imagine having three large rock collections in your backyard? Maybe you're saying to yourself right now as you read this, "I already have that many rocks in my yard." Well, then lucky you and why haven't you invited me over?! Oh the hours and days I imagined I could spend digging through those endless rock piles.



Troy Schmidt admiring cut slabs at the Two Sisters.

After getting our collecting instructions, including various pricing on the different collections, we wandered off once again to find those perfect treasures to take home. Some folks enjoyed looking for specific material to complete a lapidary or jewelry project, while others enjoyed finding and learning about new material that they had never seen before. While the hunt was on, I nearly had to settle a simultaneous rock claim with a round of Rochambeau between two silver pickers. It's always an adventure and a fun learning experience going on field trips with this community.

After about two hours of exploring and sifting through rock piles, many folks began to get hungry and were ready to head to EddieWorld (the self-proclaimed 'biggest gas station in California' featuring three restaurants) for a cold drink and lunch. Now this was important because we still had one more rock yard to go to in Apple Valley.



EddieWorld façade in Yermo, CA.

Arriving at approximately 3pm, we pulled up to the home of a prominent local rockhound, Jeremy Berg. Jeremy and his family graciously opened up their home rock yard for us to explore and drool over the many piles, crates and tubs of high-quality material he has collected over the years. After receiving a warm welcome and quick tour of the yard, we set off in search of more treasures as multiple lapidary slab saws hummed in the background.

Pictured right, from left to right: Sheri Hultman, Julie Cox, Lauren Wideman & Tyrone LaFay sifting through decades worth of collecting material at Jeremy Berg's rock yard in Apple Valley, CA.



Obligatory stop and pose photo (Lauren Wideman & Tyrone LaFay).



In one area of Jeremy's rock yard was a pile of diverse material that he had salvaged from a home that had burnt down. These pieces were lodged and set into concrete in many of the homes walls and floors. Some of the material even showed signs of being burnt. Just goes to show the various forms in which collections from one rockhound can be transferred to another, and then find their way into yet another collection to be enjoyed.

After a couple of hours oohing and aahing over Jeremy's vast collection, we settled up with our various finds and thanked our generous host before hitting the road back to Ventura.

This is the dreamiest and least physically taxing field trip for a rockhound....all of the hard work has been done for you, and all you have to do is sift through rock piles to find that one (or thirty in my case) that speak to you. Silver Picking is the perfect term for this type of collecting: easily being able to pick out the shiniest, most beautiful rock that catches your eye from a collection laid out before you. Sounds fun, right? Well, we hope to make this an annual trip, so stay tuned for a possible Rock Yard Rendezvous in 2026.



View of part of the salvaged collection Jeremy salvaged from the fire.

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

- July 20, 2025: Ralph Bishop's Museum & Avila Beach
 - Ralph Bishop: tour of an extensive museum collection and possible rock sales in Santa Maria.
 - Avila Beach: collecting DeeDeeite at low tide.

WORKSHOP HAPPENINGS

Spring Rains Grow Projects at the Club Workshop

Jim Brace-Thompson

Damp weather in March didn't dampen spirits at the club workshop studios. We saw two nearly back-to-back workshops on March 12th and 15th. Attendance on March 12 wasn't bad, considering it was a Wednesday afternoon. We saw Stewards David Springer and Ron Wise and members Robert Seaton, Robin Tan, Emily De La Torre, Judy Weigand, Rich Pisor, Julie Cox, Lonnie Sutton, and me.



Welcome to the saw room!

Those showing up on the 15th included Stewards David Springer, Ron Wise, and John Cook overseeing Robert & Heather Seaton, Shirley Layton, Emily De La Torre, Rich Pisor, Erin Valenzuela, and me. Robert and Heather arrived ready to work: Robert tackled the task of filling in woodpecker holes peppering the wood slats on the clubhouse and other buildings while Heather worked on organizing our library books. Erin arrived to set up for a Pebble Pup lesson on Stone Age Tools that started as soon as the workshop concluded at noon.

Attendance just kept increasing with our April workshops. In fact, for folks who value elbow room, April 6 was not your day! Shop Stewards Ron Wise, John Cook, and David Springer oversaw a small army of members that included Julie Cox, Emily De La Torre, Shirley Layton, Rich Pisor, Michael Rittenberg, Robert Seaton, Lonnie Sutton, Robin Tan, Judy Weigand, Bella Welch, Troy Schmidt, Dylan Schroeder, and me. In addition to all the members, we enjoyed a visit to our museum rooms by Ken Sparkes, his wife, and their 6-year-old grandson, and Troy Schmidt and I gave them a little tour of our modest holdings. While most attendees went about sawing, grinding, and flat-lapping, Troy tended to some museum and library work and I fiddled about in our club archives to add newly acquired materials before being called away early by a phone call from Nancy informing me she was stranded on the side of the road with a dead rental SUV filled with our grandkids visiting from Scotland. (All made it home safely—plus, we got a discount on the rental!)

A sunny April 9 ushered in a brief hot spell in Ojai, and things continued hot up at the club studios. Shop Stewards Ron Wise and David Springer oversaw members Julie Cox, Val Darts, Kristin Kennedy, Shirley Layton, Rich Pisor, Michael Rittenberg, Robert Seaton, Lonnie Sutton, and me. Not a bad showing for a Wednesday afternoon! Every slot at the Genies was quickly filled, so some changed plans to work at sawing until a slot opened up, and everyone went home pleased.



Emily moves to the final wheel in preparation for a fine polish.



Don't look down! Robert thwarts woodpeckers by reinforcing our siding.



Michael takes his usual nook at the Genies.



Troy Schmidt checks out materials in our club archives.

FEDERATION NEWS

Keeping Up-to-Date with CFMS

Jim Brace-Thompson, VGMS Federation Director

Here's the latest from our umbrella organization, the California Federation of Mineralogical Societies. For anyone who hasn't read the last several newsletters, the 2025 CFMS Convention, sponsored by the Antelope Valley Gem & Mineral Club, takes place May 10-11 with set-up on May 9 at Antelope Valley Fairgrounds, Lancaster. That's Mother's Day weekend, so take Mom to the show and let her pick the gem of her choice! The deadline is now closed for entering competitive displays into the convention; we have something like two dozen entries from 17 exhibitors. You can still enter a noncompetitive exhibit, though, until the May 1 deadline. Get your exhibitor application form on the CFMS website at <https://cfmsinc.org/2020-cfms-show-forms/>. 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 in the various competitions!

CFMS is now accepting applications to attend the Camp Paradise Earth Science Studies program, which includes two one-week sessions of classes and workshop in all manner of lapidary and jewelry arts and metal work.

The fee for each weekly session is \$550, which includes room and board in a rustic camp setting. You can sign up for just one week or go for both. I'll have the forms on the take-one table at our monthly meetings, and you can also get them (and full info about Camp Paradise) on the CFMS website at <https://cfmsinc.org/camp-paradise/>.



Interested in going to Camp Paradise for workshop sessions? Check the CFMS website! (Photo courtesy of CFMS.)

A Recap of the 2025 AFMS Show & Convention And a peek into the mineral treasures of North Carolina!

Jim Brace-Thompson, AFMS Public Relations Chair

The American Federation of Mineralogical Societies is the national umbrella organization made up of seven regional federations, including our own California Federation. In all, it has some 600 affiliated societies at local levels, including VGMS. AFMS held its Annual Show & Convention March 27-30 in Hickory, North Carolina. Nancy and I went along with Diane Cook and CFMS President Susan Chaisson-Walblom. Here are a few things of note. Our own Robert Seaton won a beautiful Ocean Jasper cabochon pendant set in sterling silver from the AFMS Endowment Fund Raffle. VGMS did great in competitions for All American Club-of-the-Year and the national Bulletin Contest. Because those awards won't be "officially" announced until the CFMS Convention in May, I've been told to keep it hush-hush until then.



Don't tell her yet, but it seems Celia Churchill may have won a trophy in the Bulletin Contest at the AFMS Show & Convention!

During the AFMS business meeting, I somehow got enlisted to help current AFMS President J.C. Moore devise ways to improve the training of judges for competitive exhibits at federation shows. At present, to get trained as a judge you need to attend a 4-day session in some far-away location that requires travel and hotel expense and that take places somewhat randomly and sporadically.



Susan Chaisson-Walblom and Diane Cook did a fine job representing the California Federation at the annual meeting of the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies.

The result? We have very few "officially" trained and registered judges. We'll be looking at ways to use online distance learning techniques to increase the pool. Interesting side note: exhibits don't seem to be a big thing in the Eastern Federation. They had only about 15 displays, just one of which was entered into competition. Are East Coast folks just more reserved when it comes to strutting your stuff?

One fun event during the convention was a 2-hour "cracker barrel" session to educate folks about the AFMS Youth Programs, including the AFMS Future Rockhounds of America Badge Program that our own VGMS Pebble Pups and Junior Members enjoy. Of special note, there are now 21 badges to be earned! A new "Sand & Sediment" badge looks like a lot of fun and was officially unveiled during this session. In addition to using it with our own club kids, I think this would make for a great booth at science nights for our local school districts. I plan to check it out in detail and to steal activities from it.



There's a new badge in town for VGMS kids to earn:
Sand & Sediment.

Beyond the meetings and traditional convention events, we all enjoyed the Dealer Hall. We saw a distinct difference in what's being sold at West Coast shows versus East Coast. For instance, there was very little emphasis on lapidary and jewelry arts—only one dealer was selling slabs, very few were selling lapidary rough, and few offered lapidary tools or findings. On the other hand, there was a big emphasis on specimen collecting, and nearly every-other dealer seemed to offer a wide variety of micro-mount, thumbnail, and cabinet minerals. So, apparently, you go to the East Coast to build a mineral and rock collection, but if you want to make something from those rocks, head West! On both coasts, though, you'll find plenty of dealers offering fine finished jewelry (at very fine prices).

I especially enjoyed all the “native” materials on offer—stuff like fossil shark teeth and emeralds that came from North Carolina itself. North Carolina has varied geomorphic provinces and a rich history in the annals of American geology.



Their state geological survey, founded 1823, predated that of the US Geological Survey by some 46 years, and before California became the “Golden State,” North Carolina had had its own gold rush and was the center of U.S. gold mining activity, complete with its own mint. Up until the 49er gold rush, the bulk of gold minted in the U.S. came from North Carolina, making it the Golden State back in the day. Their rush began with a 17-pound rock found in 1799 by a little boy and used as a door stop. A local jeweler identified it as gold in 1803, and the rush was on. North Carolina later went on to have an emerald, ruby and sapphire rush, and you can still mine for those precious gemstones. In fact, specimens were peppered all over the Dealer Hall. The state was also extensively mined whenever a war called for essential metals, like iron and lead—think Civil War and WWII, in particular. For more on the state's geological riches, check out Shields Flynn's book, *Unearthing North Carolina's Mineral Treasures from Gold to Lithium* (2025), and then let's plan a field trip adventure!



Native emeralds from North Carolina can be big and beautiful. Let's go find one!

Pictured left: East Coast Meg (right) meets West Coast Meg (left): two giant fossil shark teeth from Miocene deposits of California and North Carolina.

MEETING MINUTES

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

Called to order at 7:30 PM PST, David Springer, Presiding
7:00 PM – 7:30 PM was social time.

Welcome and Flag Salute

Attendees: Tonight's meeting was attended by 58 members and 7/8 guests.

Robert Seaton motioned to accept the minutes as printed in the bulletin. Celia Churchill second. Motion passed.

Announcements

- Clubhouse open, the first Sunday 4/6 (12-3 pm), the 2nd Wednesday 4/9 (2-5 pm) and third Saturday 4/19 (9-2 pm).
- Purchase your equipment usage card from Celia.
- When you are at the clubhouse please sign in the book and if you use the Genies please sign in on that sheet, as well.
- David took an informal poll if anyone would be interested in a baseball type hat with VGMS on it. About 15 people raised hands. Jen asked for more stickers.

Old Business

- The club is selling off excess grit for \$3 a pound. We have 100, 220 and 600 grit. See Shop Steward to purchase.

New Business

- Lortone 6" trim saw for sale. Possibly a 10" Box saw for sale in the future.
- Crack the News is looking for rock related content for its newsletter. The stories can be reprints of your past work or new articles. It is an AFMS Junior Newsletter.

Officer Reports

- 1st VP – Programs – John Cook
 - Tonight's meeting was a presentation from Lowell Foster about agates and memories from his last 20 years of collecting.
 - April meeting will be a presentation from Jen Russell on diamonds.
- 2nd VP – Field Trips – Tyrone LaFay
 - March 22, field trip to Diamond Pacific, Two Sisters and Jeremy Bergrs rock yards. We met up with two other clubs (Victor Valley & Southern Nevada Gem and Mineral Clubs). There was lots of great material to purchase.
 - April 12, field trip to the Borax visitor center and to Aerial Acres to collect banded travertine. Sign-ups on whoscoming.com/vgms.
- 3rd VP – Show – Diane Cook (absent – David Springer reporting)
 - Thank you to everyone! Well done.
 - This month's newsletter has a lot about the show.
- Membership Secretary – Erin Valenzuela
 - 170 Adult members, 35 Pebble Pup and 12 Juniors for a total of 217.
 - We are changing the website password on 4/1. It will be emailed out to all paid members.
- Treasurer – Celia Churchill
 - Buy your usage cards.
 - Turn in your show receipts.

Officer Reports (cont.)

- Secretary.- Sheri Hultman
 - Nothing to report
- Bulletin Editor - Monika Blackburn (absent) - Celia Churchill reported
 - Deadline for April newsletter is April 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, applications on the back table. Non-competitive has until May 1.
 - Jim & Nancy at the AFMS show (with Diane) in North Carolina. They will give a full report when they return.
- Web Director - Troy Schmidt
 - Will add newsletter
 - He will look for Lowell's informative agate indexes to add to our website.
 - Will update David's phone number on front cover of the member directory.
- Parliamentarian/Scholarship - Nancy Brace-Thompson (absent)
 - Since we just awarded our scholarships, nothing to report.

Committee Reports

- Pebble Pups - Erin Valenzuela
 - March 13, 11 Pups worked on their badge "Stone Age Tools & Art"
 - Next meeting will be April 12 at 11 am, they will be working on their case for CFMS.
- Juniors - Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick (absent)
 - Nothing to report.
- Ways and Means- Jenifer Russell
 - Thank you, Lowell, Steve and Richard for the donations! Always accepting donations.
 - The raffle made \$151.
- Museum - Troy Schmidt
 - Nothing to report.
- Clubhouse Search - Diane Cook (absent)
 - Nothing to report.
- Educational Outreach - Jim Brace-Thompson
 - 3/27, Ocean View School Science Night in Oxnard, 5:00-7:00. Erin will coordinate and
 - Monika and Beatrice Blackburn will help her.
 - 4/24 Blue Room preschool will be bring 16 children to visit the clubhouse.
 - 4/24 Mountain View Vista Elementary School Open House. Volunteers needed.
 - 4/25 Dos Caminos Elementary School Science night, 6-7:30 pm. Volunteers needed.
 - 4/27, The Annual Ventura Eco fest sponsored by Ventura Charter School is an all-day event.
 - We will have a California Dinosaur booth. Volunteers needed.
 - 5/3, Wheeler Gorge Visitor Center, open house day. Details TBD.
 - In June, rescheduling Jim's talk about "Enhanced and Synthetic Gem Stones" to the Conejo Gem & Mineral Club.
- Historian/Archivist - Jim Brace-Thompson (absent)
 - Nothing to report
- Hostess - Susan Slyker (absent)
 - Thank you to Julie & Leslie Cox and Robin Tan for snacks this month.
 - Troy and Amy next month.
 - Possibly open months in the summer, will need volunteers.
- Librarian - Heather & Robert Seaton
 - Nothing to report
- Facility Maintenance - Robert Seaton
 - Almost done with the woodpecker holes.
 - A swiffer was purchased to be used by the Genies to keep the floor dry, please use.
- Stewards - Ron Wise (absent), John Cook, Tyrone LaFay and David Springer:
 - Working on fix up some equipment to sell.

Erin read a thank you card from Tony and Sandy Fender.

Next members meeting is Wednesday, April 23 at 7:30 at the Poinsettia Pavilion. Robert Seaton motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 pm. Kevin seconded. Respectfully submitted on April 1, 2025 by Sheri Hultman, Recording Secretary.

VGMS Board Meeting, April 3, 2025, via Zoom

Called to order at 7:01pm PST, David Springer presiding

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

Nancy Brace-Thompson motioned to approve the February 6 Board Meeting minutes as they are printed in the bulletin. Erin Valenzuela seconded. Motion passed.

Old Business

- The 6" saw mentioned at the members meeting was sold for \$200.
- David put the Highland Park equipment on Craigslist and sold it for \$225.
- They are checking out the 10" saw this weekend and then it will be sold.
- The grit is selling, but we still have some 100, 220 and 600. It is selling for \$3 lb.
- When the club has excess oil for saws, they will be willing to sell at cost to members (1gal/\$12).
- Rock yard picnic table was moved to the front area. We are still looking for another table.
- 4/26 at 10 am, Jim and Robert will be at the library to remove the club's display. Please come pick up your items. Jim will have Bret contact Robert about possible coming 4/5 to pick up his items to put in a case for an upcoming show.

New Business

- Art Lopez suggested we present a thank you plaque to the Ventura Board of Supervisors. He will cover the cost. The club will provide 5 Ventura beach jasper polished slabs and possibly 5 80th anniversary pins. We would present at the next supervisors meeting.
- David suggested the club get new hats to sell, there is interest and Jen needs more stickers. Diane is working on a design and Erin will look into getting them made. Probably through Lemon Tree Embroidery.
- Lowell Foster donated roughly 30 rocks. He would like them given out. No money to be made. Erin will do a name tag raffle at our next meeting and hand them out.
- Eileen Negus, who is selling her home, notified Ron and David for a donation pickup. All told, we received 210 pounds of high quality jade. We would like to have someone appraise it, maybe Jeff Miller, or other?
- Rockhound Rendezvous will be June 14. June 11th clubhouse day will also be a cleaning day.
- Jim announced a new sand badge for the Pebble Pups. The lady who put this badge together is part of an International Sand Collectors association. This group is looking at California to host a show, maybe we could be a liaison. Jim will keep us posted.

Officer Reports

- 1st VP - Programs - John Cook
 - April meeting will be Jen Russell talking about diamonds.
 - John is working on few other speakers.
 - May will be a silent auction.

Officer Reports, cont'd.

- 2nd VP – Field Trips – Tyrone LaFay
 - April 12 field trip will be to Borax Visitor Center and Aerial Acres for banded travertine.
 - The July 20 field trip will be to Avila Beach to find Deedeeite and a stop at Ralph Bishop's house in Santa Maria.
 - He has not had any luck with the Conejo club leading trips.
 - Tyrone has offered to lead a camping field trip to Clear Creek in October.
 - Jim will check his calendar to set a date for Pine Mountain fossil hunting trip.
 - Tyrone is willing to help other members if they want to lead a trip.
- Treasurer –Celia Churchill
 - Celia emailed a report and the budget to the board.
 - Our filing status is now in process and they have cashed our check.
 - Chris Churchill has agreed to a quarterly audit and will submit to David.
 - Our triangles and bars have arrived. They will be handed out at the next meeting.
 - The show books have been closed. The club made a nice profit.
 - Celia has filed our 990n with the IRS.
 - She will do the 2024 state registration form due by 5/15.

Nancy Brace-Thompson motions to approve \$270 for the Pebble Pup fliers and \$198 for the polished stones to be put under misc. expenses. Monika Blackburn seconded. Motion passed.

- Secretary.- Sheri Hultman
 - Nothing to report.
- Web Director – Troy Schmidt
 - April 1st Troy has change the password.
 - Erin sent in an updated membership directory.
 - Lowell Foster's agate guide has a link on our website.
 - Troy took the club express link off, it was a broken link.
 - Troy cleaned up the Rockhound Rambler archives. He would like to digitize some old newsletters and add them.
 - Jen sent in a description for her talk on diamonds for this month.
 - Jim sent Troy some information about recent club activities.
 - Troy will put up a whoscoming for May.
 - Troy will have Terry set up whosbringingwhat for the Rockhound Rendvous.
- Membership Secretary – Erin Valenzuela
 - Erin Valenzuela motioned to accept new members Floyd Graham, Steven Dulla, David Blackburn, Stephen Skala, David Hartman, Jeremy Cole and Clavin (PP) Nancy Brace-Thompson seconded. The motion passed.
 - After the above were voted in, we have 181 Adult members, 37 Pebble Pups and 13 Junior members. Total 231 members.
- Federation Director – Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Possibly look for new venue if we do another AFMS show. The show in NC went well.
 - Jim is on another committee to improve judge training. It is currently hard to train new judges, maybe a distance/on-line learning program?
 - The 2025 CFMS convention will be May 10 & 11, at the Antelope Valley Fairgrounds. Deadline for non-competitive exhibits is May 1.
- Bulletin Editor – Monika Blackburn
 - Deadline for newsletter is the 10th of the month, vgmseditor@gmail.com.
- Parliamentarian/Scholarship – Nancy Brace-Thompson
 - Nancy has send out an email to the committee about meeting to update our Operating Regulations and our By-Laws.

Committee Reports

- Pebble Pups – Erin Valenzuela
 - March 16 “Stone Age Tools and Crafts”. We had 11 pups.
 - April 12 Finish “Stone Age Tools and Crafts”. We will work on case for the show and do some prep work for our May field trip.
 - Jim brought up maybe creating a new Sand Theme for science night, Erin is excited.
- Juniors – Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick
 - Possible upcoming speakers: Allison Costa she is a college admissions consultant. She will talk about college admissions around the geologic fields, possibly last week of April. Tory Cassidy a PhD candidate at USC, she works at L.A. Natural History Museum and will do a talk and tour. Her focus is in the geologic timeline, possible in May. Micheal Santos of StarStruck Meteoritics and he will do a talk sometime around Diane’s May show.
 - Lisa is trying to put together some fieldtrips and possible an overnight camping trip in June or July.
 - Richard said he would do a jewelry class sometime this summer.
 - We have a badge called “Reach Across the Ages”, she has the idea to create a map where each state is made out of a rock that represents that state. We could use this map as a display to put up at our shows. This would be a several year project and need everyone’s help.
- Museum – Troy Schmidt
 - Nothing to report.
- Educational Outreach – Jim Brace-Thompson
 - 4/24, Blue Room preschool will be bringing 16 children to visit the clubhouse.
 - 4/24, Mountain View Vista Elementary School Open House. Volunteers needed.
 - 4/25, Dos Caminos Elementary School Science night, 6–7:30 pm. Volunteers needed.
 - 4/27, The Annual Ventura Eco fest sponsored by Ventura Charter School is an all-day event. We will have a California Dinosaur booth. Volunteers needed.
 - 5/3, Wheeler Gorge Visitor Center, open house day. Details TBD.
 - In June, rescheduling Jim’s talk about “Enhanced and Synthetic Gem Stones” to the Conejo Gem & Mineral Club.
- Historian/Archivist – Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Nothing to report.
- Librarian – Heather(absent) – Robert Seaton
 - Heather is planning to come 4/19 and work in the library.
- Clubhouse Maintenance: Robert Seaton
 - Woodpecker holes are almost done.
 - Will replace header board above saw room door & bring in some new lights.
 - Clean up June 11 for Rockhound Rendezvous.
- Stewards – John, Ron, Tyrone, and David
 - They are going to arrive early to do some saw clean up.
 - David may have a buyer for the big rock tumbler.

Nancy Brace-Thompson motioned to adjourn the meeting. Troy Schmidt seconded. Motion passed.

Next Board Meeting: May 1, 2025 at 7 pm

Next Membership Meeting: April 23, 2025

Respectfully submitted on April 10. By Sheri Hultman, Recording Secretary

ROCKHOUND RAMBLINGS

Book review by Erin Valenzuela

Geopedia by Marcia Bjornerud

I have really enjoyed the last few book reports that I've done so I figured I'd continue. For Christmas I received the book *Geopedia; a Brief Compendium of Geological Curiosities*, written by Marcia Bjornerud. It's a fun little pocket read, alphabetically sectioned with entries from Acasta Gneiss to Zircon. Each letter (except I, Q & W) has at least one entry; "A" has the most with 6. Each entry is a description or definition of a rock, mineral, fossil, geologic process, event and more. Fun and funny words like haboob, slickensides, twist hackle and yazoo are explained in a humorous and educational way.

Geosciences can have confusing and hard-to-understand words and concepts but with this book's explanations, history, root language discussions- and even some of today's political climate- the science is a bit easier to understand. My favorite entries were about diamonds life in Kimberlite, the Tully Monster fossil, Panthalassa- the all ocean opposite to the supercontinent Pangaea, and the zircon crystals on the moon that came from Earth billions of years ago.

I really recommend *Geopedia* as an enjoyable, entertaining encyclopedia of our Earth! Stay tuned for my review of its sister book, *Dinopedia*. (Hint, my review might not be as glowing!)



EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

OVSD's family STREAM night at Ocean View Jr High School

Erin Valenzuela

On March 27th, Jared McGowen, Art Lopez, Pebble Pup Skyla Z. and I attended the OVSD's family STREAM night at Ocean View Jr High School. We set up our California Dinosaurs outreach booth and it was a huge success! We had dinosaur coloring pages, a fun Dino puppet craft, dinosaur books for kids to read, dinosaur casts that kids and adults could view and touch up close.

Pictured right: Erin Valenzuela and Skyla Z. at OVUSD



We fielded lots of questions about Dinosaurs and I finally got the pronunciation down for *Augustynolophus*, our State Dinosaur- I always call him Auggie! I think Jared was tired of me asking him to say it! I asked my favorite question at this outreach the kids and parents- What's your favorite Dinosaur? T-Rex was the majority winner that night! Sometimes the parents have more fun than the kids (we discovered a really talented artist dad) but I think our booth was enjoyed by all who stopped by- we even got a new member family that joined after the event! Thank you to OVSD and Susan Lopez for inviting our club to participate and for the members who helped me run the booth- it was a dino-tastic time!



Jared McGowen talks dinos

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

Jim Brace-Thompson, Educational Outreach Chair

As noted in March, the end of this month will see a burst of activity in quick succession, and for several of these, we could use some help. Here's the line-up:

- April 24, 9AM: The Blue Room Preschool in Ojai will bring 16 little ones for a tour of our clubhouse museum rooms, especially our dinosaur displays, as a capstone to a unit they've been enjoying about dinos. No volunteers needed; I've got this one handled.
- April 24, 6–7PM: Second grade teacher Kelly Myer of Mountain Vista Elementary School in Fillmore has invited us to set up a VGMS booth at a school open house night. She & I are still discussing details, but we'll likely do either Magic Magnetic Minerals or California state symbols (state rock, mineral, gemstone, fossil, and dinosaur). Volunteers welcomed!
- April 25, 6–7:30PM: We've been invited to participate in Dos Caminos Elementary School's Family Science Night in Camarillo with our Magic Magnetic Minerals activities. We definitely need volunteers to help! Science nights are always especially hectic.
- April 27, 11AM–4:30PM: Ventura Charter School is once again sponsoring the Annual Ventura Ecofest. We'll do a repeat of last year's California Dinosaurs Booth. Volunteers needed.
- May 3, 10AM–2PM: We've been invited to the annual Open House of the Wheeler Visitor Center for Los Padres National Forest. Topic & exact sort of event (whether hands-on activities or more of a booth display) TBD.
- June 12: I'll give my talk on "Enhanced & Synthetic Gemstones" to the Conejo Gem & Mineral Club at their monthly membership meeting that evening.

If you can lend a hand volunteering at our educational outreach events, I welcome hearing from you. Email me at jbraceth@roadrunner.com. For each event, I'll likely be arriving at least an hour beforehand for set-up.



Last year's VGMS team was well received at the Ventura Charter School's annual Ecofest. Will you join this year's team?



Help wow kids with magic magnetic minerals during Dos Caminos Family Science Night!

PEBBLE PUPS

Erin Valenzuela, Pebble Pups

Our March Pebble Pup meeting was held on March 15th at the Clubhouse. I started out the meeting handing out badges to pups, new members got the future rock hounding patch, and most got the badges from Jan & Feb classes. Then we started on our new badge, Stone Age Tools and Art. The pups made a list of rocks, minerals and other organic materials that would/could have been made by Prehistoric, Stone Age and early indigenous people to use as tools, food equipment, trading items and art. The pups were able to see samples of those rocks, shells, oil and see how they could be used. Everyone got a chance at grinding rice in a molcajete (a traditional Mexican mortar and pestle tool) and we discussed different types of stone age art. I shared some pictographs and cave paintings from local areas. We made clay bowls- it was great to see the different ways each pup decided to make theirs, and decorated sand art pictures. We will finish this badge with our May meeting- a trip to the Vasquez Rocks Interpretive center in Acton (and a huge portion of the fieldtrip badge as well!) April's meeting is a mash up of a planning badges and working on our case for the CFMS show- with a few spring activities thrown in.





The Monthly Challenge: This Month's Challenge Stinks: Coprolite!

Jim Brace-Thompson

Our March Monthly Challenge for Pebble Pups and Junior Members was tackled by Skyla, Bowie, Wren, Dashel, Izzy, Gabby, Graham, Otto, Colin, and Grayson. Each successfully identified our featured fossil: coprolite, AKA petrified poo. Two pebble pups respectfully declined to receive a specimen, so if you didn't take part in the March Challenge and still want one, watch for those pieces at the Kids' Silent Auction during our Rockhound Rendezvous picnic on June 14. (Speaking of which, I hope you've been saving up your Pebble Pup Bucks. You can cash them in at the Rendezvous!)



We challenged kids with coprolite fossils from Miocene deposits of Washington.

CHALLENGE

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. (Not all the prizes are as crappy as this month's.) 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 Erin Valenzuela and her fine volunteers for jumping in to oversee a VGMS booth on California Dinos for the Ocean View School District STEAM Night.
- Thank you to Robert Seaton for his efforts at clubhouse maintenance, especially repairing the areas of siding damaged over the years by very persistent woodpeckers. (Where are they going to stuff their acorns now??)

CLUB CALENDARS

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			

05 MAY 2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick Board meeting, 7p	2	3
4 Member Workshop 12-3p	5 Valerie Churchill Dan Kitay	6	7	8	9	10 Bulletin Articles due
11 Emily De La Torre	12	13	14 Member Workshop 2-6p	15	16	17 Open Workshop 9a-12p
18	19	20 Kristin Kennedy David Mautz	21 Candice Alexander Overton	22	23 Shae Andrae	24
25	26	27	28 Member meeting, 7:30p	29	30	31