

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

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The VGMS Society Case did a great job illustrating the range of interests and activities of our members.

VGMS made a strong showing at the Ventura County Fair again this year, earning an array of top awards across display cases and individual entries—first-place ribbons, special awards, and multiple Best of Show, Judge's Choice, and Staff Favorite honors. Pebble Pups and Junior members stood out with awards for cabbing, mineral collections, and gemstone carvings, while other members earned top recognition for mineral displays and hand-carved stone pieces. Just as impressive were the many volunteers who kept the event running smoothly as floor walkers, demonstrators, and support staff. Read inside for more!



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: \$30 new member/\$25 renewal

Subsequent adult member(s): \$15 each

Children ages 5-18: \$15 each, with adult member

Children ages 4 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. Summer Nights 3rd Wednesday through September.

Federation Affiliation

California Federation of Mineralogical Societies (CFMS)

Permission to Reprint

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Photo of the month credit

Photo of the month provided by Jim Brace-Thompson

Club Colors

Blue and gold

2026 Elected Officers

President	John Cook
1st VP, Programs	David Springer
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

2026 Committee Chairs

Ways & Means	Jenifer Russell
Museum	Troy Schmidt
Educational Outreach	Jim Brace-Thompson
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, David Springer, Ron Wise, and Robert Seaton

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**John Cook**

I would like to thank all the VGMS club members who helped set up the Gem and Mineral Building and participated in the 2026 Ventura County Fair. There was a lot to accomplish in a very short period

of time, and the building was set up and ready for entries, judging, and awards before the Fair opened.

There were many great exhibits, with some earning winning ribbons and plaques. Congratulations to everyone who entered an exhibit, and thank you for sharing your collections and talents with the public. With everyone's dedication and hard work, the Gem and Mineral Building was once again one of the best places to visit at the Fair.

I would also like to thank everyone who helped with clerking, organizing entries, demonstrating, and floor walking. Without all of your help, the Gem and Mineral Building would have been very difficult to prepare and maintain throughout the Fair. Your time and support are very much appreciated.

EDITOR'S NOTE**Monika Blackburn**

I encourage all members to share your adventures with the bulletin. Whether you've attended a show, joined a field trip, participated in an outreach event, led a youth activity, read a hobby-related book

or watched a film, contributed to an educational

The late-afternoon shop held on the second Wednesday of the month is going well and has been well used by our certified club members. Remember, the final second-Wednesday workshop for 2026 will be Wednesday, September 9, from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. The clubhouse will be open to certified club members only. If you are interested in attending, please sign up on Who's Coming at whoscoming.com/vgms.

There is still plenty of work to be done around the clubhouse, including repairs, organizing and sorting rocks, yard maintenance, and repairs to our exhibit cases. There is a list on the Members section of the VGMS website with some of the projects that need attention. If you can help with any of these projects, please let me or Robert Seaton know. We can always use an extra set of hands!

Our August Membership Meeting will be held live at the Poinsettia Pavilion on Wednesday, August 26, at 7:30 p.m. We will also have a great Silent Auction, so be sure to come and see what treasures will be available. It should be a fun evening, and I hope to see many of you there!

As always, I am available to answer questions, hear your ideas, and listen to your opinions. Please feel free to contact me anytime.

Rock on!

John Cook

President, Ventura Gem & Mineral Society

program, or completed a special project, your stories inspire and entertain your fellow rockhounds. Please send your article, trip report, photo, puzzle, riddle, joke—anything you'd like to share—to vgmseditor@gmail.com. The deadline for inclusion in each month's bulletin is the 10th.

PROGRAM REVIEW & UPDATE

David Springer, 1st VP - Programs



July Meeting - Craig Parrot

Our July meeting featured Mr. Craig Parrot, an 8th-grade science instructor at Vista Unified, a rockhound enthusiast, and Gem & Mineral dealer since 2019, as

well as a specialist in sunstones. His presentation took us through sunstones, what they are, their mineralogy, range of colors, where they occur, how to mine them, how they are valued, and more.

The presentation was information-rich with lots of great photos showing us the natural beauty of this gemstone. We learned that they were formed about 13-14 million years ago when the Yellowstone Hot Spot was positioned beneath Eastern Oregon, and are associated with the Steen's Basalt which was copper rich and not the much larger, copper poor Columbia Basalt.



Mr. Craig Parrot

We were walked through all the options associated with planning a trip to collect sunstones, including sites and vendors, seasons and conditions, routes to take, places to stay, and how to go collecting them. Collecting ranges from picking them off the parking lot surface for free, digging them out of the ground, paying a vendor to screen tailings containing the gemstones (i.e., screen mining), to having a laden conveyor belt roll past as you pick out the cream of the crop. All options come with different price points. There is also an option to purchase high-quality rough directly from the miners. We learned that when looking on the ground for sunstones, it is best done in the morning with the sun at your back so you can see its reflection off the stones.



Craig Parrot introduced us to Oregon sunstones at our July meeting.

During Craig's talk he called out questions to the audience and rewarded the respondent with a small container of sunstones. After his talk, members came forward to view his collection of sunstones he brought, including some beautiful, faceted gemstones, and everything was available for sale. I think folks really enjoyed this presentation.

August Meeting - Silent Auction

For the August meeting, we will have a silent auction for club members. Included in the available goodies for auction will be some choice jade from a prior estate donation, as well remaining items donated by the Inez Shakman estate, so bring your wallets and checkbooks!

FIELD TRIPS

Tyrone LaFay, 2nd VP - Field Trips



Upcoming Field Trips in the Works for 2026:

October 2026: Clear Creek Management Area (AWD; multi-day weekend; campground or hotel trip)

This is a recommended overnight trip. I will be camping from Friday night, October 9th until the morning of Sunday, October 11th, with our collecting day starting at 9am on Saturday, October 10th.

Overnight options include hotels in Coalinga or camping at the Jade Mill Campground.

You will need to secure BLM permits in advance (both to camp and to access the Management Area). All information needed is in the field trip description on whoscoming.com/vgms. Please RSVP if you would like to attend.

Future Programs

At the September meeting we will be hearing all about Iceland from Kari Dearborne.

October is currently open and I am trying to fill it with a jade or Poppy Jasper subject matter expert.

If you would like to do a program or know of an interesting and appropriate program suitable for our club meetings, please reach out to me and I will be happy to contact them for consideration of a future program.



We will be collecting plasma agate, serpentine, and other goodies that catch your eye. A 4-wheel drive vehicle is not mandatory, but a high clearance AWD vehicle is. Carpooling is encouraged. While we will be parking very close to the collection areas, please note that these sites can include steep terrain and creek collecting with wet uneven surfaces. Please be prepared with proper attire and sturdy shoes.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

*Note: all scheduled VGMS field trips are subject to change.

SHOW**Diane Cook, 3rd VP – Show**

A huge shoutout to everyone who helped make the Ventura County Fair – Gems, Minerals & Hobbies, Models & Collections Building such a success!

THANK YOU to every exhibitor who shared their amazing displays, every clerk and floor walker who helped keep things running, our wonderful demonstrators who shared their knowledge and enthusiasm, and, of course, my incredible staff and volunteers who worked so hard behind the scenes. Every display, every helping hand, and every hour volunteered made a difference. It truly takes a team to make our building shine—and you all helped make us SHINE!



I am incredibly grateful for everyone who gave their time, talent, and energy to make this year's Fair such a success.

Thank you for making the Gems, Minerals & Hobbies, Models & Collections Building one of the special places to visit at the Fair!

VGMS Shines Again at the Ventura County Fair**Jim Brace-Thompson**

Riddle me this: What took place July 29 through August 9? The Ventura County Fair! Despite the heat wave, I hope everyone attended and had fun.

Along with our annual gem show, this is the biggest public venue for VGMS to shine, and shine we did as exhibitors, demonstrators, registrars, judges and judging clerks, floorwalkers, set-up and take-down crews, and all-purpose helpers to show the general public what we're all about. VGMS members also played a major role in administration for the Gems & Minerals/Hobbies & Collections building with our own Diane Cook serving as Superintendent and Celia Churchill as her Deputy Head Honcho and further assistance by Erin Valenzuela and John Cook. Dick White oversaw



Many members worked behind the scenes to make the Ventura County Fair a success.

recruiting of demonstrators. In all, approximately 50 VGMS members participated in one way or another, including a sizeable number of Pebble Pups and Junior Members.



Here's hoping you were able to find your fun at this year's county fair!

VGMS members made quite the haul with first, second, and third place ribbons for their display cases and individual items, with an impressive number of Best of Show, Judge's Choice, Staff Choice, and other awards adorning their entries after judging. While it would take up too much space to list them all, I do want to single out the achievements of some of our Pebble Pups and Junior members and a couple others who made unusually rich hauls. Valerie's cabbing case earned a First Place ribbon, a Special Award ribbon, and Best Youth Division II plaque while Quinn's mineral collection earned a First Place ribbon, a Staff Favorite ribbon, and Best Novice Division plaque and Elyssa earned a First Place ribbon and Best Youth Division III plaque with her pretty-in-pink case of gemstone carvings. Trevor Ashton, with his hand-carved stone bowls, earned a First Place ribbon, Judge's Choice, Staff Favorite, and a plaque for Novelties & Carvings. Julie Cox's minerals case earned a First Place, Judge's Choice, Staff Favorite, and Best Mineral Case plaque.

Many others, like David Springer with his gorgeous Morgan Hill Poppy Jasper sphere, earned plaques for Best Single Item in many of the divisions. Congratulations to each of these members and to all club members who entered! Our society case earned a First Place ribbon and Best Society Case plaque thanks to items loaned by 13 members and the creative hand of Celia to put it all together while our VGMS Pebble Pups Case (assembled by Erin with the help of 11 Pebble Pups) also earned a First Place ribbon.



Great exhibits like Julie Cox's minerals garnered many a prize at the fair.

I want to give a shout-out to all who devoted time demonstrating varied aspects of our hobby. Dick White and Rylee demoed soft stone carving, Phyllis White demoed gem tree making, Emily de la Torre and Renee Frisk-Jones demoed wire wrap while Elyssa demoed how to make Kandi Creations Bead bracelets, David Mautz showed off fossil cleaning and prep, I did silver work with precious metal clay, Erin did a special Minecraft cube-making exercise for Kids Day, and John Cook, Ron Wise and Pebble Pup Valerie showed how to grind and polish cabochons. Demonstrations like these draw eyes, stimulate conversations, and excite folks as they see things they, too, can craft—if only they join VGMS!



Demonstrators draw public attention and spark interest in our avocation. We aren't just rock collectors. We do neat things with those rocks!



Don't be left behind! Here's to lines of people enjoying YOUR display next year!

Finally, if you volunteered at the Fair, pencil this into your calendar. A Volunteer Thank-You Reception takes place 10:00 AM, Saturday, October 10 at Santa Rosa Hall on the Fairgrounds. I would say, "See you there!" but Nancy and I will be in Scotland seeing grandkids instead and visiting gravesites of old dead ancestors. Maybe I'll chip a bit of marble from a headstone to enter into next year's Fair?

September 26 Grab Bag Stuffing Party for Kids' Booth

Jim Brace-Thompson, Kids' Booth Elf

You're invited! Nancy and I are hosting a grab bag stuffing party at 11:00 AM on Saturday, September 26 at our place. If you can come, please RSVP via email (jbraceth@roadrunner.com) for the address. We'll also host a potluck lunch, so bring something yummy to share. (Dogs welcomed—so long as they can refrain themselves around the potluck table.) Our supply of grab bags to sell at our annual show and the Gold Coast shows is growing low, so we need to fill as many bags as we can.

I have empty grab bags and all the filler we need, although I'll happily accept donations of more small stones, tumbled stones, and fossils. Also, as I noted last month, we need to start assembling still more materials for other aspects of our Show Kids Booth, so I encourage you to bring some stuff to donate to the cause. What do we seek? Crystal specimens, general mineral specimens, agates, petrified wood, geodes, fossils, and carvings/lapidary/jewelry work. Also, agates, petrified wood limbs, and the like that have had one corner or a face polished on a Genie. It's best

if we can assemble most of what we need via member donations rather than spending money at Quartzsite and elsewhere, which undercuts our income. I know lots of members who can be assumed to have lots of nice stuff in home rock piles. Let's share the wealth. See you on the 26th!



Here's your chance to add "Grab Bag Stuffer" to your resume!



Materials for our Kids Booth don't appear by magic. Please help us re-stock.

FEDERATION NEWS

Keeping Up-to-Date with CFMS & AFMS

Jim Brace-Thompson, VGMS Federation Director

If you didn't sign up for it, you're too late! As you read this, the Camp Paradise residential lapidary and jewelry workshops are underway. We have some fellow club members participating (including yours truly), so watch for a recap and a photo or two next month.

Details about the 2026 CFMS Show & Convention in Reno are posted to the CFMS website. Go to www.cfmsinc.org to access the show schedule, registration form, and exhibitor application forms. I encourage everyone who can attend to enter an

exhibit. The deadline for entry applications has been extended to August 30, so there's still time, but hurry! The show itself takes place September 18-20.

Four entries were submitted for this year's CFMS Junior Achievement Awards, including one from a VGMS Pebble Pup. Judging is now close to being wrapped up, and results will be announced during the Awards Banquet at the CFMS Show & Convention.

Sharon Rogow chairs the CFMS Endowment Fund Committee and is seeking donations of nice rocks, minerals, fossils, slabs, and jewelry or lapidary items (or books about all of the above) to sell at an Endowment Fund booth during the CFMS convention. If you can make a donation, please pass it along to me before September 15, and I'll take it to Reno. We're seeking similar donations for a silent auction to be held at the Friday night Cracker Barrel during the convention.

A field trip open to members of all CFMS-affiliated clubs is being sponsored by the Roseville Rock Rollers to Hawthorne, Nevada, September 26-27. They'll be collecting varied minerals in the old mining region of Mina, including microcline feldspar, copper minerals, smoky quartz crystals, epidote, and grossular garnet. They're also hoping to hit a fossil and/or petrified wood site depending on road conditions. The trip requires sturdy high clearance vehicles given the remote location with poorly maintained desert access roads. In the words of the field trip leaders, "This is NOT a dude ranch; this is not a casual day-in-the-park trip." To sign up and get more details, contact James Hutching (530-367-5108; jhutchings22@hotmail.com) or Gene Doyle (408-605-9457; eugene.doyle@sbcglobal.net). More details are also contained in the August CFMS Newsletter, which is available on the CFMS website, www.cfmsinc.org.

Our own Terry Wilson is CFMS Webmaster, and she has announced entries are being accepted for the annual CFMS Website Contest open to all CFMS-affiliated societies. The deadline for entries is September 30, and winning entries will be forwarded for judging in the national AFMS Website Contest.

Bob Papac chairs the CFMS Scholarship Program and is seeking honorees. It's actually a two-tiered system. A local club nominates an individual or

couple within their ranks who have made remarkable contributions to their club and/or CFMS. Nominations are sent to Bob's committee, which selects the winner/s. The winner then selects a college geology student to honor with a \$2,000 scholarship. I've won this award in the past, and I went to the geology department at UCSB and worked with their Chair to pick a student to receive the scholarship while I received a plaque from CFMS.

Finally, to keep up-to-date with CFMS, including listings of local shows, check out the website and head to the Newsletter page: <https://cfmsinc.org/newsletters-2026/>



Upcoming CFMS Convention

Erin Valenzuela

Many of you may not know that I serve as the Social Media Chair for CFMS. VGMS already has a strong online presence, but the state and several clubs are working to build theirs up. I'm helping spread the word about the Reno show in September and the CFMS convention that accompanies it. By the time you read this, the CFMS social media pages will have rolled out promotions for both events. We'd appreciate if everyone could share, like, and comment to help the CFMS/Reno show get more reach on our social media platforms. Feel free to share from our pages! Follow us on Facebook- California Federation Of Mineralogical Societies and on Instagram at cfmsinc.

It is also not too late to enter a case for the Reno show, attend the Banquet, or just visit and hang out with us... a lot of our favorite vendors will be there too!



MEETING MINUTES

VGMS General Meeting, July 22, 2026, at Poinsettia Pavilion

Called to order at 7:30 PM PST, John Cook presiding.

7:00 PM – 7:30 PM was social time.

Welcome and Flag Salute

Tonight's meeting was attended by 33 members and 5 guests.

Robert Seaton motioned to approve the June 24, 2026, meeting minutes as they are printed in the bulletin. Bill Halloway seconded. Motion passed.

Announcements:

- Rockhound Rendezvous had a great turnout, food, and tailgating.
- Thank you to the people who are exhibiting and setting up cases at the Fair.
- Clubhouse open, Sunday 8/2 (12-3), Wednesday 8/12 (3-6pm) and Saturday 8/15 (9-12).

Old Business

- We still need floor walkers at the Fair. Duties include cleaning cases and keeping an eye on everything. See the back table to sign-up.
- Camp Paradise is still taking applications, deadline August 1.
- The CFMS Show will be in Reno at the end of September. The deadline for entries is August 31; hard copies on back table.

New Business

- Nothing to report.

Officer Reports

- 1st VP - Programs - David Springer
 - The July meeting was Craig Parrott teaching us all about sunstones and where to mine them in Oregon.
 - August meeting will be a silent auction.
 - September meeting will feature Carrie Dearborn talking about Iceland.
 - October meeting does not have a speaker yet; hoping for a jade or a Poppy Jasper expert. Please let David know if you know anyone.
- 2nd VP - Field Trips - Tyrone LaFay
 - Looking into a possible trip to Rose Garden Mine in the Greenhorn Mts. for Rose quartz. Possibly end of August, let Tyrone know. The more people interested the more likely the trip.
 - October 10 and 11 is the field trip for camping at Clear Creek Management Area and finding Plasma Agates, among many other things.
- 3rd VP, Show Chair - Diane Cook
 - Show cards are out for Gold Coast's November show and our March show.
 - Jim is looking for material for the kids' booth. This fall there will be a bag stuffing party; date TBA.
- Membership Secretary - Erin Valenzuela
 - 200 Adult members, 37 Pebble Pups and 9 Juniors for a total of 246 members.

Officer Reports (cont.'d)

- Treasurer - Celia Churchill
 - Erin has saw cards.
- Secretary - Sheri Hultman
 - Nothing to report.
- Bulletin editor - Monika Blackburn (absent)
 - Due date for next bulletin is August 10, send submissions to vgmseditor@gmail.com
- Federation Director - Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Nothing to report.
- Webmaster - Troy Schmidt (absent):
 - Nothing to report.
- Parliamentarian/Scholarship - Nancy Brace-Thompson
 - Nothing to report.

Committee Reports

- Pebble Pups - Erin Valenzuela
 - The July meeting was on Zoom this month. Next month's meeting will be in person.
- Juniors - Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick (absent) and Erin Valenzuela
 - Nothing was reported.
- Ways and Means- Jenifer Russell
 - Thank you, David, Dan, Debbie and Ron, for the donation.
 - Always accepting donations!
- Museum - Troy Schmidt (absent):
 - Nothing to report.
- Clubhouse Search - David Springer, Art Lopez and Jim Brace-Thompson:
 - Nothing to report.
- Educational Outreach - Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Jim did a fossil activity at the Oxnard Library for the summer reading program on 7/11 and donated 2 books in the club's name.
 - Thank you to Monika, her daughter, Michael, and Lisa for helping on 7/16 at Camarillo Heritage Days.
 - 7/29-8/9 Ventura County Fair; we need floor walkers.
 - 8/1 Jim will be giving a talk at the Oxnard Library to adults about rockhounding in Ventura.
- Hostess - Susan Slyker
 - Thank you to everyone who brought a snack to share.
 - August will be a potluck.
- Librarian - Heather (absent) & Robert Seaton:
 - Nothing to report.
- Facility Maintenance - Robert Seaton
 - Thank you everyone who helped with the last clean-up day. The next one will be on a weekend in October.

Committee Reports (cont.'d)

- Archivist/Historian: Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Nothing to report.
- Stewards - Ron Wise, John Cook, Robert Seaton, and David Springer:
 - David picked up some refurbished wheels and they worked great. He will be getting more.

David Springer motioned to adjourn meeting at 9:06. Robert Seaton seconded. Motion passed.

Next members meeting is Wednesday, August 26, at 7:30 pm at Poinsettia Pavilion.

Respectfully submitted on July 25, 2026, by Sheri Hultman, Recording Secretary.

VGMS Board Meeting, August 6, 2026, via Zoom

Called to order at 7:30 PM PST, John Cook presiding

Attendees: David Springer, Troy Schmidt, John & Diane Cook, Sheri Hultman, Terry Wilson, Robert Seaton, Tyrone LaFay, Lisa Batchelder, Erin Valenzuela, Jim & Nance Brace-Thompson and Dick & Phyllis White.

David Springer motioned to approve the July 9, 2026, board meeting minutes as they are printed in the bulletin. Troy Schmidt seconded. Motion passed.

Old Business

- David Springer motioned to allocate up to \$500 to purchase 2000 adult flyers. Nancy Brace-Thompson seconded. Motion passed.
- Shay Andrade asked the club to donate a few slabs for her to take to Camp Paradise. Nancy Brace-Thompson motioned to donate slabs to Camp Paradise. David Springer seconded. Motion passed.

New Business

- Nothing to report.

Officer Reports

- 1st VP - Programs - David Springer
 - August meeting will be a silent auction.
 - September meeting will be Carrie Dearborn talking about Iceland.
 - October meeting - hoping to get a jade expert or someone to talk about Morgan Hill Poppy Jasper.
- 2nd VP - Field Trips - Tyrone LaFay
 - October 10-11 fieldtrip will be to Clear Creek and it is a camping trip. We will be looking for Plasma Agate.

Officer Reports (cont.'d)

- 3rd VP - Show- Diane Cook
 - We have the show card made for our March show.
 - September 9, at 7:30, will be the show meeting.
 - Diane Cook motioned to have Michael Rittenberg take the mugs the club has to the CFMS show to sell. CFMS will pay the cost for any mugs sold. David Springer seconded. Motion passed.
 - We need to make more kids' grab bags. It will be either 9/12 or 9/26. More info. to come.
- Treasurer -Celia Churchill
 - The report will be emailed out to the board.
- Secretary - Sheri Hultman
 - Nothing to report.
- Web Director - Troy Schmidt
 - Website is up to date.
- Membership Secretary - Erin Valenzuela
 - Erin Valenzuela motioned to accept new members Jeffrey Kudiac and Jason Greene. Diane Cook seconded. Motion passed.
 - After the above were voted in, we have 203 Adult members, 37 Pebble Pups and 9 Junior members. Total 249 members.
 - Erin is working on updating the directory.
- Federation Director: Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Nothing to report.
- Bulletin Editor: Monika Blackburn (absent)
 - Deadline for newsletter is the 10th of the month. vgmseditor@gmail.com.
- Parliamentarian/Scholarship: Nancy Brace-Thompson
 - There will be information in the September bulletin about the upcoming 2 scholarships.

Committee Reports

- Pebble Pups - Erin Valenzuela
 - There was no July meeting, but the Pups were invited to help with the fair and there was a scavenger hunt for them.
 - August or September meeting Erin is trying to go to Tony Demaria.
 - August 30 is Dino Fest.
- Juniors - Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick and Erin Valenzuela
 - Lisa is looking into getting Villanova High Schoolers to volunteer. She is going to find out if we could get other high schoolers as well.
 - Sept./Oct.-trying to do a jewelry class.
- Museum - Troy Schmidt
 - Nothing to report.
- Clubhouse Search - David Springer, Art Lopez, and Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Nothing to report.

Committee Reports (cont.'d)

- Ways and Means - Jenifer Russell (absent)
 - Nothing to report.
- Educational Outreach - Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Jim had two talks at the Oxnard Library this summer.
 - Thank you to Monika & Beatrice Blackburn and Michael & Lisa Rittenberg for helping at Camarillo Heritage Days.
 - Jim estimates about 50 of our club members have helped with the Ventura County Fair.
- Historian/Archivist - Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Nothing to report
- Hostess: Susan Slyker (absent)
 - Nothing to report.
- Librarians - Heather (absent) & Robert Seaton
 - Nothing to report.
- Facility Maintenance: Robert Seaton
 - Backyard clean-up and Tuff shed clean-out still need to be done.
- Stewards - John Cook, Ron Wise (absent), Robert Seaton & David Springer
 - Clubhouse days are September 6, 9 and 19.
 - 4 saw blades and a second set of wheels were bought.
 - David is going to come up with a policy regarding having club members help change saw oil.

David Springer motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 pm. Troy Schmidt seconded. Motion passed.

Next Board Meeting: September 3, 2026, at 7 pm

Next Membership Meeting: August 26, 2026, at 7:30 pm

Respectfully submitted on August 14, 2026, by Sheri Hultman, Recording Secretary

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

One Month, Two Library Presentations

Jim Brace-Thompson, Educational Outreach Chair

The Oxnard Public Library's Children's Librarian Patty Rose invited me to give a fossil talk for kids from pre-school through grades 4/5 on July 11. Given the theme of "Plant a Seed, Read" for their Summer Reading Program, I brought my personal collection of fossils seeds and cones from ancient plants of different sorts, from cones of towering Carboniferous plants to Jurassic pine cones from Patagonia, fossil figs that dinos may have snacked on from Glendive, Montana, seeds and seed pods of the Eocene Green River formation, and more. I also brought along a couple kids' books on fossil plants to donate to the library. About a dozen kids attended, alongside parents, and while they didn't go home with fossil seeds, they did get to pick free fossil shark teeth from a basket.

I was also invited by Joanne Center, the library's Senior Librarian, to give a talk to adults on local rockhounding. Choosing specimens from my personal collection, I brought along fossils and rock specimens from here in Ventura County and lapidary and jewelry projects crafted from local material, like our brecciated beach jasper. The talk took place the morning of August 1 when I delivered the bad news to an audience of half a dozen attendees: if you're hoping to find precious gems in Ventura, you're out of luck, unless you can be satisfied with microscopic gems from local black sands. Most gemstones hail from igneous or metamorphic rocks while coastal Ventura County is blanketed by sedimentary rocks (give or take the Conejo volcanics), so while gemstones may be few and far between, you can find a bounty of fossils.



Kids learned about fossil plants and seeds as part of the summer reading program at Oxnard Public Library.

The first part of my talk focused on that, with hands-on specimens of local finds like fossil whale bone, turritella snails and crabs from Simi Valley, fossil sand dollars from all around the county, etc. For those into gemstones, I then noted all is not lost. Our beaches do boast lapidary stones like translucent white travertine and red and yellow brecciated jasper that can be crafted into spheres, carvings, and cabochons for jewelry. You can pick up sand dollars, scallop and clam shells, and other flotsam and jetsam to make molds to craft into silver pendants with precious metal clay. Or drill holes into sea glass to craft bracelets and pendants. Where to learn how to craft such wonders? Join the Ventura Gem & Mineral Society! We'll see how many follow through...

Oh! And everyone in attendance on August 1 walked away with a gift or two of Ventura beach wishing stones. Don't know what a wishing stone is? Call me! You don't know what you're missing.

Right: Local rockhounding was what it was all about at Oxnard Public Library on August 1.



Dinosaurs Invade Camarillo!

Jim Brace-Thompson, Educational Outreach Chair

Shannon Klemann and her sister Kelly invited VGMS to have a free booth during Camarillo Heritage Days Fiesta Community Connections Night on July 16. Heritage Days Fiesta was a week-long event featuring carnival rides, food carts, live music, a souped-up car show, arts and crafts vendors, Mariachi and country line dancing, and even a cornhole tournament. This was the first time they've included a Community Connections Night of one evening set aside on a big open field to highlight local nonprofits dedicated to the community. In all, 27 groups showed up—organizations like CARL, Scouts, Special Olympics of SoCal, Kiwanis, Friends of California Condors, and, of course, VGMS! They're hoping to make this a regular feature of Heritage Days.

I hauled in a couple fold-out tables, a pop-up canopy, chairs, and supplies for a booth centered around California dinosaurs. They requested a "brief, family-friendly activity" from all groups attending, so we offered make-a-dino-footprint in clay along with coloring pages featuring California dinos, like our State Dino, Auggie. I don't know what attendance was, overall, but about 50 kids made dino footprints while also receiving a free



As the sun set, our team spread the word about California dinos at Camarillo Heritage Days.

fossil shark tooth from Morocco. We stamped "passports" that could help kids and their families win prizes like a boat ride to the Channel Islands. (I wish I'd had one of those passports!)

My thanks to Monika and Beatrice Blackburn and Michael and Lisa Rittenberg who volunteered to join me in the booth. While I blasted our hadrosaur horn now and then, Beatrice helped many a kid make dino footprints and Michael stamped passport after passport after passport.

PEBBLE PUPS

Erin Valenzuela, Pebble Pups

The busy summer was not good for Pup classes this year, but I wanted to thank the Pups and Juniors who were at the Fair. We had a few who were floor walkers/volunteers interacting with the public, we had some Juniors who demonstrated their skills in bead work, carving and cabbing, and thanks to those who entered cases and single items! Shout out to Quinn who entered his first case this year and won a plaque and a few big ribbons!! And our Minecraft case got 1st place, the judges loved it! You all Rock (pun intended!)



Minerals and Minecraft for Youth Day at the Fair

Three pups did our scavenger hunt in the building and received Pebble Pup bucks and rocks! We had such a great time and look forward to even more Pups entering next year! While at the fair we were able to lock down the date for our August meeting/fieldtrip. On Saturday morning, August 29th, we will be meeting at the Demaria home in Upper Ojai. More info will be on the Band app!



Quinn's case

The Monthly Challenge: A Blue Dot Special!

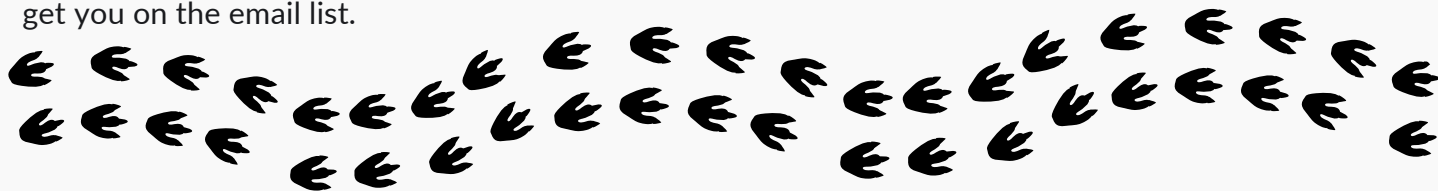
Jim Brace-Thompson

Last month's Challenge for Pebble Pups and Junior Members asked everyone to identify a rock that looks for all the world like a fake. In fact, that's what some professional geologists called it when it first appeared on the market. But K2 Granite proves to be very real: a speckled white granite from the Himalayas with dramatic blue spheres of azurite. Look closely, and you may see some little green specks of malachite, too. Our Pebble Pups and Junior Members who came through with the right answer include Landon, Lexi, Connor, Ian, Oliver, Shea, Cliff, and Quinn. Congratulations, one and all! Our next Challenge is now well underway.



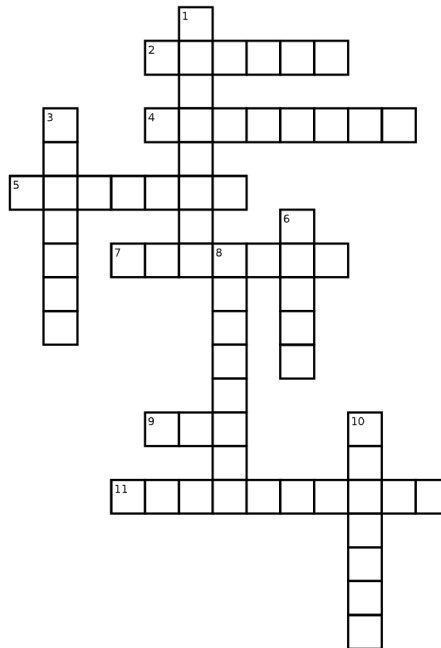
This month, participating kids received K2 Granite from the world's second-highest mountain.

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.



Join the "Happy Rocks" movement, spreading joy one rock at a time!

VGMS Crossword #8



Down:

1. A typically blue mineral often mottled with white calcite and sometimes fluorescent under ultraviolet light.
3. To smooth or polish a metal surface by rubbing or compression rather than removing significant material.
6. A coating or cluster of tiny sparkling crystals that forms on the surface or inside a cavity of a rock.
8. A large group of rock-forming minerals that includes moonstone, labradorite, and sunstone.
10. The rarer of the two minerals commonly called jade; the other is nephrite.

Across:

2. The final lapidary process used to produce a smooth, glossy surface on a stone.
4. A mineral property describing resistance to scratching, commonly compared using the Mohs scale.
5. A rock composed of broken, angular fragments that have been naturally cemented together.
7. A rough stone that has been trimmed and shaped into the basic outline of a cabochon before finer grinding and polishing.
9. A flat rotating disk or wheel charged with abrasive or polishing compound and used to grind or polish stones.
11. A mineral growth habit consisting of rounded, grape-like clusters or bumps.

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 Monika and Beatrice Blackburn and Michael and Lisa Rittenberg for volunteering their help in our VGMS booth at Camarillo Heritage Days Community Connections Night.

A big thanks to the small army of VGMS members taking part and helping in the Gem & Mineral Building during the Ventura County Fair!

from Erin Valenzuela

Thank you to Diane Cook for her amazing job as the Superintendent of the Gem and Minerals Building at the Ventura County Fair. As Jim B-T is fond of saying, the fair is one of our biggest educational outreach events for the year. And it is because of Diane! Since my days at the Oil Museum, Diane has invited me to do fun activities for youth day in the building. This year was a Minecraft theme to go along with the Pup case. Thanks Diane for helping us showcase our hobbies and our club!

Thanks to Dick White for assisting with the tear down of my fair case! Those stubborn vinyl ammonites were going to be the death of me!

VGMS Crossword #8



CLUB CALENDARS

2026 AUGUST

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
					1 	2  Member Workshop, 12 p.m.-3p.m.
3 	4 	5 	6  Board Meeting, 7 p.m.	7 	8 	9 
10	11	12 Member Workshop, 3p.m.-6p.m.	13	14 Happy Birthday, Sheri Hultman!	15 Open Workshop, 9a.m.-12 p.m.	16
17 Happy Birthday, Diane Grizard!	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25 Happy Birthday, Lisa Rittenberg!	26 Happy Birthday, Rylee J.! Member Meeting, 7:30 p.m.	27	28 Happy Birthday, Art Lopez!	29 Happy Birthday, Justin Waller!	30
31						

2026 SEPTEMBER

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1	2	3 Board Meeting, 7 p.m.	4	5	6 Member Workshop, 12 p.m.-3p.m.
7	8	9 Happy Birthday, Tyrone LaFay! Member Workshop, 3p.m.-6p.m.	10 Happy Birthday, Muriel Christianson!	11	12	13 Happy Birthday, Teagan Groh!
14	15	16	17	18	19 Open Workshop, 9a.m.-12 p.m.	20
21	22	23 Member Meeting, 7:30 p.m.	24	25	26 Happy Birthday, Otto O.!	27
28 Happy Birthday, Stuart Bloom!	29	30				