

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

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VGMS 80TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS CONTINUE!



Ventura County recognized the Ventura Gem & Mineral Society and the efforts of our young members with an official proclamation!

On January 14, 2025, the Board of Supervisors of Ventura County recognized VGMS with a "Proclamation Honoring Ventura Gem and Mineral Society Upon Their 80th Anniversary Celebrating a Legacy of Education, Community, and Excellence in Earth Sciences."

2025 DUES PAST DUE

It's approaching the final days to renew your VGMS membership! Please pay by February 28 to avoid penalties. Members who lapse their memberships will have to be re-voted in by the Board at the next board meeting and will not be able to use the clubhouse until they are members again. You can pay by Zeffy, PayPal (add \$2.00 service charge) cash or check at the February general meeting.



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

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Photo of the month credit

Photo of the month provided by Lisa Batchelder Hetrick

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 Museum

Jenifer Russell

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

I write this missive a day after a Super Bowl win by the Philadelphia Eagles – Fly Eagles Fly! Over the past few weeks, we have seen the LA fires finally put out, we got a bit of rain to restore some moisture in the environment, and the weather has given us several successive, beautiful days! Well, with January flying past us here we are with our show coming up the first of March this year. It is time to clean out your drawers, garage or rock pile(s), and bring some of those goodies in. We need your donations for the Silent auction, Raffle, Plant Sales, and of course the Country Store. You can contribute by bringing donation items to the membership meeting or better yet come to Camp Comfort and meet the crew out there and drop your goodies directly at the club house; you can also bring them directly to the fairground on days when we are setting up for the big show. Also, don't forget to sign up to exhibit your collections. Many who come to our show say the driving reason they come is to see all our members' great collections!



*Can you guess this view?**

A big thanks goes out to all who continue to help during these efforts – it keeps us on track to deliver an excellent show and we have fun in the process. If you have the time, please consider contributing, as we need your help to make this all work! Watch the newsletter and look for notices via e-mail for all the ways you can help with volunteering. Our member meeting at Poinsettia Pavilion will be focused on the show, so please attend if you can to get the straight dope on how we make this all happen.

We are including a third workshop day scheduled each month for certified members. It will be every second Wednesday from 2 PM to 5 PM, and will extend from February through April of this year. Thereafter we will move it to a later time slot for the spring and summer months when we have longer daylight. This month's extra workshop day occurs on February 12th, and for March it will be on March 12th, so mark your calendars. Also, don't forget that dues are now due! If you have not already done so, please pay our Membership Officer Erin the nominal annual fee for another great year, else you might miss out.

Let there be (more) Rocks!

David

*Guessed it yet? It is the "after" picture of our saw room's roof following a cleanup and oak tree trim by Robert and Lonnie. Unfortunately, we got to working so quickly we forgot to take a "before" shot! The club house grounds continue to improve thanks to the efforts of many. Thanks to Lonnie and Robert for this specific improvement.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Monika Blackburn

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

PROGRAM REVIEW & UPDATE

John Cook, 1st VP – Programs

For our February 2025 meeting we will have our annual pre-show meeting for club members to review the upcoming society's show in early March. Our show chairs will discuss the various activities regarding scheduling, staffing and logistics for a successful 2025 show. Also, we will be giving out our annual scholarship award to a deserving recipient.

The club meeting on January 22nd was our annual "Show and Tell". Club members who wanted to share their rock hounding experiences were asked to get up and tell us of their adventures in 2024. Many of the club members shared their experiences in the field collecting, going to Quartzsite or spending time doing lapidary arts. It sounded like many club members went to a lot of exotic places to rock hound in 2024! I would like to thank all others who also shared with us their rock hound adventures.



Our program for January was a member show-and-tell that included a pebble pup's rock collection.



For our January show-and-tell program, Ryan Canon showed samples of petrified whale bone he's found along our Ventura coast.

Future Programs

March Program

For March's club meeting program, we will have Mr. Lowell Foster talking about a subject to be determined.

April Program

For our April program, our speaker will be our very own Jenifer Russell, who will be giving a talk about diamonds titled Sparkle Secrets: Your Crash Course in Diamonds.

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.

Thank you,
John R. Cook

SHOWS

Diane Cook, 3rd VP – Show

Countdown to Showtime! How You Can Help

Loading Supplies: Wed., Feb. 26 (starting around 3 PM)

We need a crew at the clubhouse to load the truck with Show supplies. Arrive early so we can complete this task before sundown. Bring work gloves!

Set-up: Thur., Feb. 27 (9 AM – 6 PM) – San Miguel Building

We need help transferring supplies out of our truck, skirting tables and assembling display cases, arranging the various booths, setting up the Country Store and Plant Sale area, etc. There will be lunch fixings for everyone helping, and we welcome snack donations from members.

Move-in: Fri., Feb. 28 (all day & evening, until 8 PM) – San Miguel Building

We open doors to dealers, demonstrators, and exhibitors to begin set-up at noon. We need folks who can show up in the morning to help welcome/direct dealers and guest exhibitors to their booths and campsites. This is also the day for us to set up our own displays. Lunch fixings will be available in the afternoon. In addition, we ask club members to donate snack items to have available for volunteers throughout the day.

Show Time! Mar. 1–2 (10 AM – 5 PM Sat.; 10 AM – 4 PM Sun.)

There are still volunteer spots available <https://volunteersignup.org/LYWR4> Or pick an activity that interests you, then call the committee chair today to offer your help. We need help with:

- Hospitality. Welcome people to the show, give them Show Programs and tell them about our club, invite them to purchase raffle tickets, and tell them about our Country Store as well as other aspects of the show. We also have merchandise and our Teacher Station & Kids Scavenger Hunt in this booth. Contact Diane Cook about helping in the booth in general, Sheri Hultman regarding the Raffle, and Jim Brace-Thompson about the Teacher Station.
- Kids Booth. Help Renee Frisk-Jones organize and run activities for kids. We could use donations of small clean rock, mineral, fossil, and lapidary specimens as prizes, but more importantly, we need help in the booth managing the spinning wheel, grab bag sales, sand sifting, egg carton collections, and other activities. This booth can become hectic, so we need at least 4 to 6 people running it at all times. We welcome the helping hands of Pebble Pups and Junior Members!
- Silent Auction. Ron Wise, John Cook, David Springer, and their great team welcome help running our auctions. We'll need people to announce the auction each hour, hand out prizes, and set out new prizes. We also welcome donations of especially eye-catching material to put out on auction.
- Country Store. Help with our white elephant sale to raise funds for the club. This is a major source of revenue, so please offer your help to Shirley Layton, Susan Slyker, and their team.
- Plant Sale. Check with Terry Wilson to donate and sell plants—another great source of revenue!



We need everyone to bring donations. In particular, we'll need your help with:

- Cookies and light snacks to provide near the coffee area throughout the Show.
- Raffle prizes: minerals, fossils, lapidary work, and other "showy" stuff you would see in a store window. Bring it to David Springer and Sheri Hultman in the Hospitality Booth during set-up on Friday.
- Silent auction: lapidary rough, large petrified wood, large mineral specimens, etc. The showier the material, the higher the bids will be. Bring them to the Silent Auction booth.
- Kids' prizes: Small pieces of jewelry, tumbled stones, polished slabs, clean fossils and mineral specimens, etc., are needed as prizes, along with plastic and paper grocery bags. Bring them to the Kids Booth.
- Country Store: garage sale items (but no clothes!), as well as magazines and books related to our hobby, and grocery bags and boxes for people to carry away their purchases.
- Plant sales: plants, cuttings, and related materials, as well as cardboard flats and plastic and paper grocery bags for people to pack away their purchases.

Dismantling: Sunday, Mar. 2, 4 PM until it's done!

It ain't over 'til it's over, so please don't pack up your goodies and run at Show's end. We'll need a lot of strong arms to reverse what we did on Thursday in order to pack everything into our rental truck for return to the clubhouse. As thanks, we'll have our annual pizza party once all is packed away.

Unloading Truck with Club Supplies: Monday, Mar. 3 (9:30 AM)

We can use all able-bodied members to help unload the truck at the clubhouse.

Receipts

If you've incurred show expenses, receipts are due to show treasurer Celia Churchill within 10 days of the Show so she can balance the Show books. Or give them to Show chair Diane Cook.

THANK YOU!!

Finally, a big thank-you to each and every Show committee member for work done to date, as well as to each club member, our dealers, demonstrators, and our guest exhibitors. It's shaping up to be a great show. We'll see you at the Fairgrounds!

Upcoming shows in April



VGMS's Big Moment in the Sun

Arthur J. Lopez

On Tuesday, January 14th 2025, a total of eight young VGMS Pups and Junior Rockhounds looked attentively to the five elected officials that represent the Ventura County Board of Supervisors as they moved briskly through the numbered items listed on their morning agenda. Seated in a packed boardroom where the proceedings were being televised live for all the public to see and hear, all eight honorees eagerly awaited their turn to be recognized. These young members were the top trophy winners at the "Super Bowl of Gem Shows," the 2024 AFMS and CFMS National Show and Convention. Soon all of their patience and hard work would be rewarded and recognized by these supervisors.

"Item number 33" was pronounced loudly by Supervisor Matt LaVere for the entire room to hear: "Proclamation Honoring Ventura Gem and Mineral Society Upon Their 80th Anniversary Celebrating a Legacy of Education, Community, and Excellence in Earth Sciences."

After inviting all of the VGMS honored guests to join him at the front of the dais, the young honorees faced the board members as Supervisor LaVere read what was inscribed in decorative font on the proclamation. "Whereas, the Ventura Gem and Mineral Society (VGMS) established in December 1944 by Mrs. P. M. Woodside and a group of junior high students led by Frances T. Hertel, celebrated its 80th anniversary in December 2024." He continued reading the formal list of milestones that VGMS accomplished throughout their eight decades of serving the community.

When the initial burst of applause subsided after the reading of the proclamation, VGMS President David Springer gave heartfelt thanks to the entire board for the honor and recognition bestowed on the club's legacy of 80 years. Pointing to the Pups and Junior Rockhounds present, he thanked the supervisors for giving VGMS "this moment in the sun" and reminded everyone that the same passion for Earth Sciences that moved those junior high students to create the club in the winter of 1944 was alive and thriving in the hearts and minds of this new generation standing before them.

Those young rockhounds honored for their excellent work were Valerie C., Skyla Lynn Z., Lucia H., Kaylee T., Henry and Beecher I., Beatrice B., and Colin P. Their names were noted in the proclamation and each received their own certificate of commendation from the Ventura County Board of Supervisors.

After the flurry of photos and handshakes were over, reactions to this once-in-a-lifetime event were effusive and positive. Junior Rockhound Lucia commented, "Such an incredible honor and 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."



David Springer, Erin Valenzuela, and the deserving young Rockhounds

Nine year old Skyla said "I was shocked to be there and meet a supervisor. A few weeks ago I received a certificate from the Mayor of Oxnard and now I met Vianey Lopez who is the supervisor from Oxnard. For a kid who has only been around for barely 9 years, this was super exciting to be happening now in real life."

Similarly, fellow Pup member, Valerie, summed up the whole affair concluding that "Everyone in Ventura who likes minerals and fossils should join the Ventura Gem and Mineral Society. It was really cool to get a certificate from the Board of Supervisors because we have the best rock club in the country!"

WORKSHOP HAPPENINGS

The New Year Ushers in Workshop Fun—and Work

Jim Brace-Thompson

2024 may be in the rearview mirror, but there's been no looking back up at the clubhouse workshop! On January 25, Stewards David Springer and Tyrone LaFay arrived early to greet the following members hitting saws, grinding wheels, and flat lap: Michael Rittenberg, Ryan Canon, Rich Pisor, Sheri Hultman, Bella Welch, Judie Weigand, Emily De La Torre, Lonnie Sutton, and me.



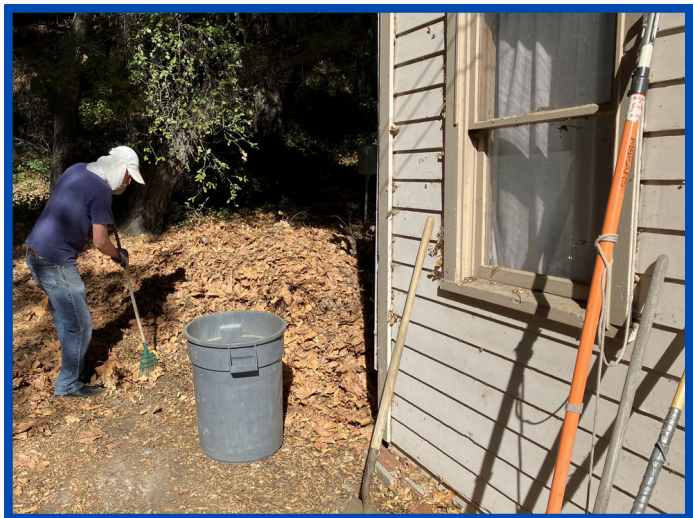
Robert and Lonnie say the view is fine from atop the saw room.

At our First-Sunday-of-the-Month Workshop on February 2, Steward David Springer welcomed members Robert Seaton, Julie Cox, Belinda Poore, Michael Rittenberg, Emily De La Torres, Judy Weigand, Ryan Canon, and me as we settled in to work on varied lapidary projects. Richard Slyker continued work on show prep with our club supply of display cases while Lonnie Sutton and Rich Pisor worked on clearing leaf debris from around the clubhouse buildings—an especially important task in light of all the So-Cal fires that hit at year's beginning. David worked at cleaning up two small slab and trim saws recently acquired from a Rockhound estate, and Troy Schmidt worked away on the museum collection. In short, a lot of action on a lot of fronts with fruitful results all around.



The saw room hummed on January 25, while up above, footsteps clomped.

Robert Seaton led a team including Lonnie and David in scaling the roofs of the kiosk building and saw room to clear branches, leaves, and acorns. Richard Slyker helped with general maintenance while checking out supplies in anticipation of our upcoming show while Heather Seaton worked on reorganizing our club library books now that we've trimmed down the volumes held in the stacks.



Lonnie, Rich, and others continued work at tree debris removal on February 2.

With the New Year firmly established and advancing, don't get left behind! If not yet certified to use the club's machinery, sign up for a certification session. If already certified, take full advantage of our workshop studios and start having fun!



Pebble puppy Sadie worked on polishing bones at our January 25 workshop.



Richard inspected display cases for any needed repairs ahead of our annual show.

FEDERATION NEWS

Keeping Up-to-Date with CFMS

Jim Brace-Thompson, VGMS Federation Director

Here's some of the latest from our umbrella organization, the California Federation 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/>. I'll have copies on our take-one table at our February meeting. **The deadline is April 1.**
- The AFMS Show & Convention takes place March 27-30 in Hickory, North Carolina. Nancy and I are going, along with Diane Cook, and I hear others in our club are considering the cross-country trip. I hope to have a report in our April newsletter.
- I'm seeking applications from kids for the CFMS Junior Achievement Awards. (See accompanying article for details.) The application form is on the CFMS website (<https://cfmsinc.org/juniors-achievement-award/>), and I'll have them on our take-one table at our February club meeting. **The deadline is March 1.**



For Mother's Day, take Mom to Lancaster to participate in the CFMS Convention!

- Since last month, I've taken on the position of CFMS Public Relations Chair, meaning the Federation now needs to fill one last vacant committee post: Legal Advisor. This person should be a lawyer or paralegal who can be on-call to advise on questions of a legal nature by Federation officers or clubs (not to serve as a lawyer, per se, but to provide informed opinions). If interested, contact CFMS President Susan Chaisson-Walblom: slchaisson@yahoo.com.
- Finally, may we all send good thoughts and vibes south to any members of CFMS-affiliated clubs affected by the massive fires of January.

Encourage Kids to Go for the CFMS Junior Achievement Award

Jim Brace-Thompson, CFMS Junior Activities Chair

One last call! As noted previously, I'm accepting applications for the 2025 CFMS Junior Achievement Awards. These acknowledge outstanding achievement by kids in hobby-related areas and beyond. For the past couple months, I've had hardcopies of the application on our VGMS take-one table at our monthly meetings, and I'll have them at our February meeting. It's also posted to the CFMS website (<https://cfmsinc.org/juniors-achievement-award/>).



Our own Valerie C. won the CFMS Junior Achievement Award in 2021!

This award requires a formal application from the junior member that will be scored against other applications. At the CFMS Convention Awards Banquet, winners receive a Certificate-of-Achievement and \$100. Applicants fall within two age groups: under 12 and 12-18. Applications should be accompanied by a cover letter written by the child or dictated to a parent highlighting accomplishments to which s/he wishes to draw special attention; basically, "in your own words, tell us where you really shine." Kids then mail or email applications to the CFMS Junior Activities Chair, i.e., me! **The deadline is March 1.** Several VGMS pebble pups and juniors have won or been runner-ups since I began this program five years ago. Do you have outstanding kids in your household? Encourage them to go for it!

One Last Call to Support the American Federation

Jim Brace-Thompson, CFMS Chair for AFMS Endowment Fund

Last chance! The AFMS Endowment Fund supports programs like the free AFMS/FRA badges that our VGMS kids earn. One way AFMS raises money for this fund is via an annual raffle. You can help! How so?

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

Make a specimen donation! We invite hobby-related items: gem, mineral or fossil specimens, jewelry, stone carvings, bead projects, etc. I thank Kelly Plumb (Antioch Lapidary Club) for donating a wire-wrapped charoite pendant and several VGMS members who have donated: Diane Cook with a lapis pendant, David Springer with a sagenitic onyx sphere; and me with two handcrafted pendants—a silver sand dollar and a silver ammonite. Two Ocean Jasper pendants have also been donated by Richard and Linda Jaeger of the Tulsa Rock & Mineral Society.



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

I'm in charge of selling tickets and gathering items within the CFMS, and I welcome additional donations. Items should have a minimum value of \$75 and a maximum weight of not more than five pounds. 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 CFMS/VGMS members.

How to make arrangements to purchase tickets and/or to donate items? Just call (805-659-3577) or email (jbraceth@roadrunner.com), and I'm happy to assist!

MEETING MINUTES

VGMS General Meeting, January 22, 2024, at the Poinsettia Pavilion

Called to order at 7:30 PM PST, David Springer, Presiding

Attendees: There were 27 members and 7 guests.

Announcements

- Membership due now. After February 28 any member not paid will lose access to all benefits.
- Clubhouse open, Saturday 1/25 (9-12). The clubhouse will be open the 2nd Wednesday, starting in February (2/12) from 2-5 pm.
- 4/27-97th annual St. Francis Dam Disaster Lecture and Bus Tour Fair, a fundraiser put on by the Santa Clarita Historical Society.
- Purchase your equipment usage card from Nancy or Celia.
- Thank you to Jim and Celia for all their work on the All-American Book. Thank you to club members who answered the questionnaire that was sent out. The end of March we will know if we have won.
- Ventura County issued a proclamation to honor our club for 80 years. Thank you to Art for making this happen. The Pebble Pups were so excited.

Old Business

- Tree work at the clubhouse was completed Jan. 7.
- Ventura County is working on another 2-year lease for the clubhouse.
- We will have a display at the EP Foster Library to highlight the March show. Please bring any item you wish to put in the case to the library Sat. Feb. 1, 10 am. Let Jim know ahead of time so he can make labels.

New Business

- David picked some material at Quartzsite for the silent auction.
- David is looking for 3 gentlemen to help pick up some donated equipment in Sylmar.
- In the Jan./Feb. Rock and Gem Magazine, Jim wrote an article about how to start a rock collection. 3 of our Pebble Pups are quoted in the article.
- Country Store is looking for donated items for their booth for the show.

Officer Reports

- 1st VP – Programs – John Cook
 - Tonight's meeting was a show and tell from our members. Over ten members shared everything from fossils, purchased items, stories and self-collected items.
 - February meeting will be all about the March show.
 - March meeting will be Lowell Foster and some new material he has.
 - April meeting will be a presentation from Jen Russell.
- 2nd VP – Field Trips – Tyrone LaFay(absent) David reported:
 - February 23 Tyrone will lead a field trip to Tajiguas Beach. We will be collecting whale bone, Shells and beach rocks. Sign-ups on whoscoming.com/vgms.
- 3rd VP – Show – Diane Cook(absent) John reported:
 - Diane is working with the fairgrounds.
 - If fires are burning during our show, we may have to postpone due to fire personnel using the space.
 - Exhibitor forms and show cards on the back table.
- Treasurer – Celia Churchill and Nancy Brace-Thompson
 - Buy your usage cards.
- Membership Secretary – Erin Valenzuela
 - 72 Adult members, 15 Pebble Pup and 4 Juniors for a total of 91.
 - Membership will likely go up next year.
 - Badge prices have gone from \$15 to \$18.
- Secretary – Sheri Hultman
 - Nothing to report.
- Bulletin Editor – Monika Blackburn (absent) – David reported
 - Deadline for February newsletter is Feb 10, 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 under 12 and 12–18-year-olds. They are on the back table.
 - CFMS newsletter went out.
 - CFMS is still looking for a legal advisor and public relations person.
 - Jim is doing the raffle for AFMS show in March in Hickory, North Carolina.
 - Prayers to Los Angeles clubs.
- Web Director – Troy Schmidt:
 - Please let Troy know if you are having any trouble logging in. Some people reported problems.
- Parliamentarian/Scholarship – Nancy Brace-Thompson
 - We have 6 applicants. We announce the winner at the next meeting.

Committee Reports

- Pebble Pups – Erin Valenzuela
 - 1st meeting was Jan. 18, we had 13 Pups and the topic was "Rocks & Minerals".
 - Next meeting will be Feb. 16 on "Gemstones: Lore & Legends".

Committee Reports, cont'd.

- Juniors – Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick
 - Lisa is developing a program that offers more to the teenagers. She will a deeper dive into topics the Jrs. are interested in, overnight camping trip over the summer, visiting local colleges or maybe some internships. Also, still mentoring the Pups and still get the badges.
 - Early Feb. They are taking a field trip to Tajiguas Beach.
- Ways and Means
 - Thank you, Jim for the donations! Always accepting donations.
 - The raffle made \$77.
- Museum – Troy Schmidt
 - Nothing to report.
- Educational Outreach – Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Wed. 1/29, Cornerstone Christian School, 3 grade, 9:50-11:30 am
 - Sat. 2/1, E.P. Foster library install at 10 am.
 - Thurs. 2/6, Science night at Flory Elementary School
 - Wed. 2/19, 12-1:30 a lunch time Rotary Club has invited Jim to talk about our history and what we do.
 - Mon. 3/10 or 3/17, Homeschool group coming to clubhouse.
 - Sat. 5/3, Los Padres National Forest is having an open house at Wheeler Gorge. More information to come.
 - Check out Skylar's display at the Camarillo Library and will be involved next summer with the Oxnard Library STEM program. She will put up her Mary Anning case and present.
- Historian/Archivist – Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Jim is planning on finishing digitizing all the old slides, as far back as 1940.
 - Jim will be putting in some copies of some old articles into the bulletin from "Gems and Minerals" which is no longer in print, in our newsletter.
- Hostess – Susan Slyker
 - Thank you to Susan for snacks this month
 - She sent around the sign up for the year, still some meetings need to be signed up for.
- Librarian – Heather & Robert Seaton
 - Magazines still need to be gone through.
 - Robert brought several books for people to check out. The length of check out is one month.
- Facility Maintenance – Robert Seaton
 - Will be going to the board to get a budget to fix the wood pecker holes.
 - We need to replace some wood trim in the saw room.
 - Will clean leaves off saw room roof on Saturday. David offered help.
- Stewards – Ron Wise (absent), John Cook, Tyrone LaFay and David Springer:
 - Nothing to report.

Next members meeting is Wednesday, February 26 at 7:30 at the Poinsettia Pavilion. Troy motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:10 pm. Celia seconded. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted on January 28, 2025 by Sheri Hultman, Recording Secretary.

VGMS Board Meeting, February 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, Monika Blackburn, Celia Churchill, Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick, Shirly Layton, Dick and Phyllis White and Troy Schmidt.

Meeting Minutes

- Erin Valenzuela motioned to approve the January Member meeting minutes. Diane Cook seconded. Motion passed.

Old Business

- The County sent over a new 2-year lease (3 year per dates); David will sign. They really want to know how many volunteer hours the club members put into the club. The hours are due 1/28 of the upcoming year. This year Diane figured it out. Celia will look into possible apps that do that. Every board member please start tracking.
- Diane clarified Robert's responsibility to pick up supplies and plan workdays.
- Celia has gotten the club a 7-month CD. She will be looking into other CD's once the rates improve.
- 2/1 David, Tyrone and John went to Sylmar and picked up a 10" and 20" saw. As well as quite a bit of grit and polish. We will sell some at the silent auction at the show.
- Clubhouse open, Wednesday 2/12, 2-5 pm. We will continue through May and then switch the hours to the evening.

New Business

- See Scholarship Committee report.
- Richard Pisor brought up the idea that we should sell ads in our newsletter. We send out our newsletter to 20ish other clubs. Monika will reach out to San Diego club since they do that.

Officer Reports

- 1st VP – Programs – John Cook
 - February meeting will be all about our March show and to meet our scholarship winners.
 - March meeting will be a presentation by Lowell Foster, topic to TBA.
 - April meeting will be Jen Russell talking about diamonds.
- 2nd VP – Field Trips – Tyrone LaFay (absent) David reported
 - Tyrone is meeting with the Conejo club field trip leader, Juan De Valle, at the Tajiguas Beach field trip to discuss possible upcoming trips.
 - Field trip to Tajiguas Beach Sun. Feb. 23, 12-3.
 - March field trip will be to Avila Beach to find Deedeeite and a stop at Ralph Bishop's House in Santa Maria.
- 3rd VP – Show – Diane Cook
 - We got the big building and food will be in the McBride building.
 - Next meeting scheduled for 2/11 at 7 pm.
- Treasurer – Celia Churchill
 - Turn in original receipts, but can send picture if you need to.
 - Diane Cook motioned we appoint Chris Churchill to audit our finances. Sheri Hultman seconded. Motion passed.
 - All forms have been filed.
 - We only need to approve expenditures if they go over the budgeted amount.
 - We should consider having anyone on our bank account background checked. Add to By-Laws?
 - Celia shared the budget for this year. Diane Cook motioned to approve the 2025 budget. Erin Valenzuela seconded. Motion passed.

Officer Reports, cont'd.

- Secretary – Sheri Hultman
 - Nothing to report.
- Web Director – Troy Schmidt
 - Troy will add Feb. 12th and March 9th (note 2nd Sunday) for clubhouse use to whoscoming.com/vgms.
 - Since the genies are filling up, Troy will add a waitlist for when more than 6 people sign up to use them.
 - Troy will get Lisa access to whoscoming.com/vgms so she can add her Junior events.
- Membership Secretary – Erin Valenzuela
 - Erin Valenzuela motioned to accept new members Tim and Justin Spears, Dylan Schroeder, Michelle Gilles, Kirk Flittie, Brian Farrer, Michelle Pinnegar, Layne Campbell and Pebble Pup Micah. John Cook seconded. The motion passed. They have been vetted through Megan's Law.
 - Celia Churchill motioned to accept returning members (who had lapsed memberships) Bella & Andrea Welch. Erin Valenzuela seconded. Motion passed.
 - 126 Adult members, 27 Pebble Pups and 7 Junior members. Total 160 members.
- Federation Director – Jim Brace-Thompson (reported through email)
 - Jim is seeking kids under 11 & 12-18 age groups to apply for the CFMS Junior Achievements Awards. Applications are on the CFMS website and are due March 1.
 - CFMS is still looking for a legal advisor. Public relations position as been filled by no other than our own 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. Hoping to get some VGMS kids to put in cases.
 - The AFMS Show & Convention takes place 3/27-30 in Hickory, NC. Nancy, Jim, Diane and Susan Chaisson-Walblom (CFMS President) will be attending.
- Bulletin Editor – Monika Blackburn
 - Deadline for February newsletter is Feb 10, vgmseditor@gmail.com.
- Parliamentarian/Scholarship – Nancy Brace-Thompson (reported through email)
 - The scholarship committee awarded two scholarships this year since we had six applicants and it was hard to decide the top one. The extra scholarship money is coming out of the profit we made at the CFMS/AFMS show last May.
 - Our Awardees are Maria Tharpe from UCLA and Emily Felder from UCSB. They will both be at our February membership meeting to accept their awards and tell us about their research.
 - After our show is over, Nancy will start working with the Operating Regulation committee on updating our Operating Regulations and our By-Laws.

Committee Reports

- Pebble Pups – Erin Valenzuela
 - 13 Pups came to the January meeting. We mostly finished our Rocks and Minerals Badge.
 - Next meeting Feb. 16, "Gemstones Lore and Legends". 8 Pups signed up.
 - The Pups are doing a birthstone case for the show.
 - Diane, Nancy, Celia, Erin and Lucia got together went through all the Pebble Pup information, last weekend.
- Junior Rockhounds – Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick
 - Fieldtrip to collect whale bone at Tajiguas Beach, Sat. 8 10am – 3pm.
 - Lisa still has some supplies at her house she needs to sort and organize.
 - Questions were brought up about budget. Lisa has a suggested donation amount for each class and since she started that, she has used that money. However, she will now be keeping track of donations and receipts and turn into Celia.
 - Lisa has plans for guest speaker.
 - Lisa is looking for contacts at local colleges. She would like to have the Juniors take some tours of campuses.

Committee Reports, cont'd.

- Ways and Means – Jenifer Russell (absent)
 - Nothing to report.
- Museum – Troy Schmidt
 - Troy recently spent some time clean and organizing cases in the museum.
- Educational Outreach – Jim Brace-Thompson (reported through email)
 - 1/29, Nancy & Jim gave a presentation on fossils & on uses of minerals to 3rd & 4th grade students at Cornerstone Christian School.
 - 2/1, 10 am at E.P. Foster Library. Robert, Art, Bret, Brett, Nancy and Jim put in a display promoting our club and upcoming show.
 - Tonight, Nancy and Jim are putting on a “Magic Magnetic Minerals” show for Flory Elementary School’s Science Night.
 - 2/13, Jim will be giving his talk “Fakes & Phonies” to the Conejo Gem & Mineral Club.
 - 2/19, 12-2:00 Jim will be giving a PowerPoint history of VGMS and our community engagement efforts to the Rotary Club of Ventura. If you want to attend, see Jim.
 - 3/5, Walnut Canyon Elementary School Science Night, 4:30 set up time. Families will be there from 5:30 to 7. Monika & Beatrice Blackburn, Nancy and Jim will run the event. Other volunteers welcome.
 - 3/27, Ocean View School District Night in Oxnard, 5:00–7:00. We need a coordinator and volunteers to step forward if we are to have a booth. Nancy and Jim will be at the AFMS Show & Convention. Erin stepped up to do California Dinos. Monika and Beatrice Blackburn also stepped up to help.
 - 4/27, The Annual Ventura Ecofest 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.
- Archivist/Historian – Jim Brace-Thompson (reported through email)
 - Jim has been working on compiling a list of all past Rockhounds for Year awardees.
- Clubhouse Search – Diane Cook
 - We are still looking. Art has a possible lead.
- Librarian – Heather Seaton (absent) Robert reported
 - Heather has started to alphabetize book by subject and author.
 - Also, Robert brought up putting plastic covers on nicer books to protect them, everyone agreed.
- Facilities Maintenance – Robert Seaton
 - Project 1, Robert priced the material for the woodpecker hole repair. It will be less than \$100, he will pick up.
 - Project 2, the header board above the doors to the saw room needs to be replaced.
 - Project 3, continuing to clean up leaves behind saw room.
- Stewards – John, Ron, Tyrone, and David
 - One of the genies has a broken belt. David will talk to Ron about fixing it.

Diane Cook motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 pm. Erin Valenzuela seconded. Motion passed.

Next Board Meeting: March 6, 2025 at 7 pm, via Zoom.

Next Membership Meeting: February 26, 2025, at 7:30 pm, at the Poinsettia Pavilion.

Respectfully submitted on Feb. 9. By Sheri Hultman, Recording Secretary

ROCKHOUND RAMBLINGS

Touching a Gap of 1.2 Billion Years at “The Great Unconformity”

Jim Brace-Thompson

In January, Nancy and I took an extended weekend break to meet up with old college friends who flew into Las Vegas to get out of the extreme cold of New England. The entire four days, I looked out from our hotel window at Frenchman Mountain dominating the skyline to the north. As we dropped our friends at the airport and began our homeward journey, I insisted on a brief detour to touch that mountain. “Why?” asked Nancy. Because of The Great Unconformity, of course!

Frenchman Mountain—and the Grand Canyon—offers a clear view of a unique geological wonder. At both places, you can clearly see The Great Unconformity. An unconformity is a break in time in an otherwise continuous rock record. It reveals a gap in that record corresponding to a period or periods of non-deposition or to weathering and erosion that erased pages from the history book of Earth. You see many spots in and around Ventura where slanted or folded sediment has been sheared off and is capped by horizontal sediments. In our region, these often represent a gap of hundreds of thousands of years or perhaps a few million at most. That’s nothing!



Frenchman Mountain stands out clearly on the horizon to the north of Las Vegas.



Nancy touches the gap where 1.2 billion years of Earth history are missing.

Earth is believed to be 4.543 billion years old. At The Great Unconformity, 1.2 billion years is missing. That’s some 26% of Earth history! The lifespan of the average U.S. citizen is now 77 years old. Imagine if 20 of those years, or most of your latter middle ages, suddenly vanished from your memory. That’s how much time of Earth’s history is missing from the rock record at this spot in North Las Vegas. That’s one bad hangover! You can reach out and literally touch a gap where 520 million year old sandstone kisses a folded and sheared sequence of 1.7 billion year old granite, gneiss, and schist.

If you, too, ever find yourself in Las Vegas, this is an easy field trip that takes no more than an hour or so. And while in town, drop by their nice little Las Vegas Natural History Museum. You won't see splashy high-end specimens like those in the Los Angeles gem collection, but you'll get a good geological and paleontological education. The museum seems geared to kids and classroom visits, and its exhibits are nicely done for that purpose. One room holds displays and small-screen video presentations on volcanoes, uses of minerals, Nevada minerals, fluorescent minerals, and more. An Ice Age Mammals gallery includes a *Smilodon* skeleton in attack mode, and a darkened Prehistoric Life Gallery holds animatronic dinosaurs and an exhibit on the Nevada state fossil: the giant marine ichthyosaur *Shonisaurus*. The museum also boasts "the best *Rhynchotherium* specimen in the world." And who doesn't love a good *Rhynchotherium*? Next time in Vegas, check it out!



The Cambrian Tapeats Sandstone is a mere 520 million years old, while the Precambrian granite and schist immediately beneath it ring in at 1.7 billion!



If ever in town, check out the Las Vegas Natural History Museum.

A BLAST FROM THE PAST

Words Whispered from the Past

Jim Brace-Thompson, Historian/Archivist

The defunct magazine *Gems & Minerals* served as the official magazine of the California Federation of Mineralogical Societies, Texas Federation of Mineralogical Societies (now the South-Central Federation), and American Federation of Mineralogical Societies. As such, it included features pertaining to clubs and federations: notice of shows and fieldtrip localities, full articles and program listings for Federation conventions, and "Digested Chips" sent in from local clubs. I recently acquired several *Gems & Minerals* issues dating between 1960 and 1964 and found fun glimpses into our own club and federation some six decades ago.

April 1961. Gems, minerals and lapidary are proclaimed "America's No. 2 Hobby!" and it was reported that "fossilized sharks teeth, ray teeth, bones, and tusks were there for collectors from the Ventura Gem & Mineral Society who hunted Sharks Tooth Hill."

January 1962. Per a report of the Fall CFMS Directors Meeting, total membership included 188 clubs. Today, that number hovers around 90. At that meeting, a report was read from the 1961 CFMS Show & Convention in Pomona noting show attendance at 25,000 with 1,000 attendees camped in trailers around the fairgrounds and 292 displays entered into competition. For anyone frustrated by the AFMS Uniform Rules for competitive exhibiting, it was at this convention that folks began talking about adopting them to replace the 4-page "California Rules." Meanwhile, closer to home, "Don Didier discussed fossil ridges from the Coalinga area to the Los Angeles County line for the Ventura Gem & Mineral Society, and good rainbow jasper attracted field trippers to Rainbow Ridge."

April 1962. "The Great Mojave Desert has had considerable rain this year. This is indeed, a boon to the rock collector. Many sandy roads, impassable to stock cars during dry season, are now well packed and negotiable for careful drivers. New collectors and out-of-state visitors should be sure to have a sturdy shovel along on back country treks. Heavy downpours and runoff leave deep washes cut across many of the roads. A few minutes of shovel work will enable you to continue your trip...Should have some fine wild flower displays this year." "Sand dollars, gastropods, and clams may be found along Highway 399, 22 miles north of Ojai" and "A. L. Gentile, Hughes Research Laboratories, gave a program with slides and samples of crystal growth, at a meeting of the Ventura Gem & Mineral Society."

June 1964. In Federation news, nominations for CFMS officers included two candidates for Vice-President Minerals. One was a legendary VGMS member: "Bruno Benson has been on the Federation's Field Trip Committee for a number of years and was chairman in 1963. He served two terms as president of the Ventura Gem & Mineral Society, was Federation director for five years, also was show chairman." An interesting observation: for nearly all CFMS officer positions, there were at least two candidates in the running. They actually had races and real elections for CFMS positions!

September 1964. An article entitled "The Best of the Best" reported a 2-month joint exhibition between CFMS and the L.A. County Museum to showcase "beautiful mineral specimens, exotic gems, fossils, jewelry, and the lapidary work of members of the California Federation." Among those invited to participate? "Bruno Benson will have among his varied fossils some microfossils. These will have enlarged pictures taken through a microscope." It was further reported Bruno won that election for CFMS Vice-President Minerals in "the largest and longest meeting in recent memory, convened Friday evening and lasting well into late afternoon on Saturday, July 18." By the way, dues for club members for CFMS back then? 50 cents, or a 10 cent increase, "with 5 cents going to the American Federation."

Finally, according to a Gems & Minerals ad, if you wanted to buy your own Highland Park Model "U" 24-inch slab saw in 1960, it would set you back \$395. Oh. Did you say you wanted a blade with that? You'll need to throw in another \$478.80. What's that? You insist on having a motor to run the blasted thing? Well now, you are picky, aren't you? Very well, then. Give me another \$130.75! Alternatively, you could turn to Vreco (Vreeland Manufacturing Company of Portland) to "build your own 12-inch sawing machine at only \$27.50 for the sawing carriage and \$10 for the saw arbor." Blade and motor still not included?? "Write for literature."

Right: Get your own Highland Park slab saw for only \$395! (Motor and blade not included.)

BIG RUGGED

MODEL "U"
24" SLAB SAW
WITH
POWER FEED

This giant saw model has a large plastic window in hood and vapor-proof light for easy vision. Machine is mounted on rubber casters.

Rugged, all-metal construction assures the user of many years of dependable service.

Features AND Specifications

SAW BOX — 3 1/4" welded steel. Size 15" deep, 30" wide, 34" long.
AUTOMATIC CUT-OFF SWITCH — Adjusts for full or partial cuts.
BEARINGS — 1 1/2" sealed ball bearings.
ARBOR SHAFT — 1 1/2" shaft turned down to 1" at end for blade.
CARRIAGE — Cast of close grained grey iron. Spindle has 1 1/2" tapered cold chisel and weighs 150 lbs. Spindle is positioned on four carriage rails on V-shaped edge (center to center) of metal carriage, operated by the flow of a hand-cranked roller has 7" lateral movement with a graduated dial for multiple cuts within .001 of an inch.
VISE — Made of close grained cast iron with hardened steel jaws. Opens up to 18".
POWER FEED — Three speeds of travel for uniformity in rock thickness.
POWER REQUIREMENT — 1 H.P. motor.
APPROXIMATE SHIPPING WEIGHT — 475 lbs. boxed.

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Metal hood — Standard model less blade & motor, includes automatic cut-off switch.	\$395.00
WITH 24" x 584 blade.	470.70
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WRITE FOR FREE LITERATURE

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

Strutting Our Stuff at E.P. Foster

Jim Brace-Thompson, Educational Outreach Chair

At the beginning of each year, VGMS installs an exhibit in the glass display case gracing the main reading room of downtown Ventura's E. P. Foster Library. This year was no different. On the morning of February 1, several of us gathered: Robert Seaton, Brett Johnson, Brett Bednorz, Art Lopez, and Nancy and me. David Springer also took part from afar, having passed along a sphere for display at our last club meeting.

The exhibit both promotes our March show and educates the community about our society and the many facets of our hobby. Thus, we showed off a wide range of specimens: fossils, rocks and minerals, lapidary and jewelry work, and beading. We augmented the specimens with photos showing activities within the club and within the community at large. Also, because this is in a library, we included a small array of books about minerals, fossils, and lapidary arts, and Robert arranged for a selection of books from the library itself to be on display in a bookshelf alongside our exhibit.



Head to E.P. Foster Library and check out our club display!

We invite everyone to check it out and to consider joining us for next year's display. It's great fun serving the library with a nice display to educate our community about the many things we do.



Jim, Art, Brett, Robert, and Nancy, gathered at E.P. Foster Library to assemble a display promoting our club and upcoming show.

Off & Running with Educational Outreach, 2025!

Jim Brace-Thompson, Educational Outreach Chair

Our first effort at educational outreach for the new year got smoke-delayed when the January 22 Walnut Canyon Science Night was postponed due to poor air quality caused by the Hughes Fire and the blanket of ash it sent over Ventura County. But we quickly received another request for our services from teacher Rebecca Redderson, who was in the midst of an earth science unit but was feeling a bit unsure of her knowledge. I guess her kids were finding her lectures a bit dry because she asked if we might “share enthusiasm.”

Thus, the morning of January 29 found Nancy and me lugging boxfuls of big touchable specimens into Ms. Red’s third-grade classroom, where we found her students accompanied by a fourth grade class invited to sit in at Cornerstone Christian School in Camarillo. We talked about fossils (What is a fossil? How do they form? What is your California state fossil and state dinosaur?), and we talked about uses of minerals with a collection of common economic minerals and samples of everyday items produced from them. (Forget the bauxite and the aluminum can; kids were far more intrigued by the faceted gemstones.) At the end, we gave every student a bulging Goodie Bag and left Ms. Red with big teaching specimens of rocks and minerals along with activities she could do later with her students.

Right: Nancy compared a rough pink tourmaline to one she self-collected at the Oceanview Mine and then had faceted.



“Forget the aluminum Coke can,” Ms. Red’s kids told Jim. “Show us the gemstones!”



Nancy attracted kids with her magnetism at the Flory’s rainy STEM Night.

We then got a shot at another Science Night—this one at Flory Elementary School in Moorpark on February 6. Building on the success of last year’s “Magic Magnetic Minerals” booth, we went with that once again, with a few tweaks and a new hands-on activity. Despite a steady rain, the event was well attended with a steady stream of students, parents, and siblings. Here’s inviting you to join us in our next outreach effort!

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

Jim Brace-Thompson, Educational Outreach Chair

After a relatively slow start, a slew of educational outreach requests are jostling for space on the calendar. To wit:

- February 13: I've been asked to give my talk on "Enhanced & Synthetic Gemstones: Fakes & Phonies or Real Deal?" to the Conejo Gem & Mineral Club at their monthly meeting, where I'll also encourage folks to attend and exhibit at our Ventura club show.
- February 19: I've been invited to give a presentation on the history of VGMS with emphasis on our outreach efforts and events benefiting the community at a luncheon meeting of the Rotary Club of Ventura. Several fellow members will be accompanying me.
- March 5: Walnut Canyon Elementary School in Moorpark will hold their smoke-delayed Science Night, where we'll set up our hands-on Magic Magnet Minerals booth. Monica and Beatrice Blackburn have already volunteered to accompany Nancy and me, and we welcome others.
- March 10: Ventura Charter Homeschool will make a fieldtrip visit to our clubhouse museum rooms starting 11:30 AM with 10-15 students and 2 teachers. Volunteers to help show them around are welcomed!
- 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 will be looking for volunteers!
- 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!
- 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: We've just received a query from a second grade teacher in Fillmore. I'm seeking details.

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



Join us in trumpeting earth sciences at our educational outreach opportunities!

JUST FOR FUN

February's Rockhound Holiday Rings True!

Jim Brace-Thompson

As my final installment on little-known Rockhound Holidays, I see we have but one day to celebrate in February if you set aside National Periodic Table Day (February 7) and Pluto Day (February 18). Because those are a bit of a stretch, I'll just go with another stretch: National Wedding Ring Day.

First observed in 2012, National Wedding Ring Day is observed each year on the third day of February. Why February 3? Who knows?! It's suggested married couples admire their existing rings and the commitment they signify: the circular shape, with no beginning or end, symbolizes eternity. Perhaps have those rings engraved with a special message, or design whole new rings and renew vows. Or even have a ring design tattooed permanently around your finger!

Wedding and engagement rings date back 5,000 years to the ancient Egyptians but were greatly popularized within the past 100 years courtesy of the De Beers diamond company (no surprise there). Interesting statistic: in the U.S. alone, 17 tons of gold gets crafted into wedding rings EACH YEAR! Why gold? It's considered the purest of metals. For those ancient Egyptians, it was enough to use rings crafted from leather or braided hemp. Proves kinder to the budget of a fledgling family. Placing the ring on the fourth finger of the left hand dates to ancient Romans, who believed a vein ran directly from there to the heart. So if you, too, wear a wedding ring, give it a little twirl each February 3rd and get back in touch with the person who makes your heart skip.



Wedding rings go back—way, way back some 5,000 years!

PEBBLE PUPS

Erin Valenzuela, Pebble Pups

January was our first Pebble Pup meeting of the new year and our new program. We started working on their Gem and Minerals badge. Skyla, Leonard, Bowie, Shea and a few other pups shared their mineral collection. We learned about the rock cycle and made some edible crystal structures! Our next meeting is February 16th and we will be working on our Show case (and working on our Gemstone Lore and Legends badge while we're at it.) Thanks to the VGMS members who helped me get situated for my first solo meeting- I appreciate your help!



Erin's January program for Pebble Pups was all about minerals.



Yum!

Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick, Junior Members

This field trip's success hinges on a good storm and Mother Nature didn't disappoint. Last week we had the first measurable rainfall of the season. Slow and steady, the rain came and went in a matter of a few days. The clouds parted, and skies cleared, just in time for the most glorious sunshine filled day of possibilities to search for fossilized whale bone, beach agate and more.



A mermaid's purse



Enjoying a field trip to Tajiguas Beach

Located approximately 55 miles north of Ventura, Tajiguas is past Refugio State Beach. When you first arrive you may not know the beautiful beach beyond the railroad tracks and down the cliff is a wide swath of pristine shoreline where a creek runs into the ocean. During the winter months storms churn up the cobbles and expose fossils waiting to be discovered. This location is usually not populated by many visitors due to the obscure entry to the beach. But that also comes with no bathrooms and no lifeguard so you need to be aware of your surroundings and the tide.

On February 8, 26 rockhounds from VGMS and OGMS gathered to be on the hunt. The tide was set to be fully out in the early afternoon. We had a 5 hours planned to search the beach. Our Juniors and Pups were excited with the possibility of finding something special. They were quick to find mermaid purses (shark egg casings), a deceased Humpback whale, vertebrae and rib bones to investigate, and later be witness to a baby leopard shark before it was returned to the ocean. It was a full marine-filled discovery day.



Leopard Shark

Everyone scoured the shores up and down the beach. The best part was watching everyone share with each other what they found. The Pups and Juniors enjoyed learning from each other. These types of learning opportunities are so important to the future of our club and hobby. It will inspire the next generation to pursue hobbies, schooling, or jobs in the field of earth science, geology or paleontology. All this, from a day at the beach and a conversation with each other, to be excited about what discoveries the day has to offer.



Julia and Ian looking at a whale bone



Whale bone



Bowie and Lucia

The Monthly Challenge

Jim Brace-Thompson

Our first Challenge of 2025 for Pebble Pups and Junior Members was tackled by Otto, Wren, Dashel, Benji, Graham, Otto, Skyla, Noah, Oliver, Shea, Connor, and Ellis. Each successfully identified our featured stone as lapis lazuli, a gemstone enjoyed by royalty dating back to the ancient Egyptians. Said Skyla: "The answer is Lapis Lazuli. My Poppa has a piece of it in my front room and it looks like a bunch of slices of cake stacked up in a tower. When I was researching this rock, I came across articles and websites on Lapis Lazuli, and people in Egypt used it for jewelry, eye shadow, and makeup. They even put it in the stripes of the King's statues and crowns."



We challenged kids this month with lapis lazuli.

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 Nancy Brace-Thompson and the members of her Scholarship Committee—David Springer, Troy Schmidt, and Sheri Hultman—for their work wading through applicants and selecting two fine students for this year’s VGMS Scholarship awards.
- Thank you to all who have been volunteering their time to help with educational outreach events as the New Year began!
- Thank you to Robert, Lonnie, Rich, David and everyone else who has been helping with leaf and debris removal on the clubhouse grounds.

from David Springer

- Thanks go out to Lonnie Sutton and Robert Seaton for completing the roof clearing and some extra branch removal as well as leaf pile removal, which hasn’t been done in a loooooong time.
- Thanks also to Richard Pisor for rewiring our newly acquired 10” trim saw, it now runs and purrs like a kitten. Future thanks for him agreeing to take on a second rewiring chore for our newly acquired 10” box saw.
- Thanks to Tyrone and John for accompanying me in the pick up and transport of two large and heavy donation items in Sylmar.

CLUB CALENDARS

FEBRUARY							2025
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
26	27	28	29	30	31	1	
2 Member Workshop 12-3p Janet Allaway	3 Karen King-Cantway	4	5	6 Board meeting, 7:30p Mark Paul, Michael Kovacs	7	8	
9	10 Bulletin Articles Due	11	12	13	14	15 Open Workshop 9a-12p	
16 Pebble Pups 10a Susan Cowlishaw	17	18	19	20	21	22	
23	24 Bill Allaway	25	26 Member meeting, 7p Corey Accardo	27	28 Show Prep Membership Renewals Final Due Date	1 February 28th Nemo Buchmiller, Andrew Isaac	

MARCH							2025
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	
23	24	25	26	27	28	1 VGMS SHOW	
2 VGMS SHOW	3	4 David Springer	5	6 Board meeting, 7 p.m.	7	8	
9 Member workshop, noon - 3 p.m.	10 Bulletin articles due	11	12 Member workshop, 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.	13	14	15 Open Workshop, 9 a.m. - noon	
16	17 Andrew Overton	18	19	20	21	22	
23	24 Richard Petropulos	25	26 Member meeting, 7:30 p.m.	27 Cyndy Treutelaar	28	29	
30	31	1	2	3	4	5	