

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

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

IN THIS ISSUE

- President's Message
- Editor's Note
- Club News
- Program Review & Schedule
- Field Trips
- Workshop
- Federation News
- Meeting Minutes
- "Rockhound Ramblings"
(Editorials)
- Outreach
- Pebble Pups
- Crossword
- Club Business
- Calendar



Pups and their painted glowing rocks- some of the rocks had calcite in them so fluoresced by themselves! Pups earned their Fluorescent Minerals badges at this month's meeting.

This issue features a lot of what makes our club so great! We start with something pretty special—the estate sale of a former member that has turned into a lasting gift, funding a new scholarship in her honor. From there, we look back at some memorable experiences, including Dr. Jonathan Hoffman's visit from the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History and his presentation on the incredible whale fossil excavation out at Tajiguas Beach. You'll also see just how busy things have been on the outreach side, with members bringing earth science to the wider community. And, as always, there's plenty of enthusiasm from our younger crowd—our Pebble Pups got a hands-on look at fluorescent minerals and all their glowing surprises. And mark your calendars - our annual Rockhound Rendezvous is coming up, taking place on Sunday, June 28th. Hope to see you there!



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

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

Photo of the month credit

Photo of the month provided by Erin Valenzuela

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

Membership Secretary's note: As of the publication of this month's newsletter, everyone should have received their membership cards in the mail. Please contact me at venturagemmineral@gmail.com if you didn't or if there is a problem with yours. Sorry again for the delay and we should be good for a few more years!!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**John Cook**

Spring is in full swing, and with it comes a busy and exciting season for the Ventura Gem & Mineral Society. There are many opportunities in the coming months to enjoy our hobby, connect with fellow members, and support our club activities.

Our annual Picnic and Rendezvous will be held on Sunday, June 28, 2026, at the Clubhouse. While the workshop equipment will not be available for use that day, we are planning a fun event featuring a silent auction, and members are invited to participate in our favorite "tailgating" tradition in the parking lot—selling, trading, and sharing items with fellow rockhounds. We will also have some club equipment available for sale. We are pleased to invite members of the Oxnard and Conejo clubs to join us for this special gathering.

The Gold Coast Gem Show, coming up June 6 & 7, 2026, is another great opportunity for VGMS to promote our club and raise funds for future programs. Our club will have a booth featuring a smaller kids' activity area, along with sales of t-shirts, rocks, and slabs. Please consider volunteering to help at the show—your support makes a big difference. Be sure to sign up using the volunteer link included in this newsletter.

As summer approaches, so does the Ventura County Fair, one of our favorite annual traditions. This is a wonderful way to share our hobby with the public and showcase the talents of our members. Please consider volunteering before or during the fair. Entry submissions for the Gem & Mineral Building open June 1. You may enter individual items through Ventura County Fair, and for display case entries, please call the Fair office directly.

As many of you begin summer travel and vacations, remember to share your adventures with the club. I've never known a rockhound to take a trip without stopping somewhere to visit a mine, museum, roadside rock shop, or collecting site! If you have a fun story or photos to share, please send them to Monika for the bulletin at vgmseditor@gmail.com.

As always, I welcome your questions, ideas, and suggestions. Please feel free to contact me anytime at cookjohnr@sbcglobal.net or by cell at (805) 320-5611.

Rock on,
John Cook
President, Ventura Gem & Mineral Society

EDITOR'S NOTE**Monika Blackburn**

Is there something you would like to see in the bulletin? If you have any articles, photos, or comments about the bulletin, please email me at vgmseditor@gmail.com.

As always, thank you for reading!

CLUB NEWS

Honoring a Past Member's Passion *Inez Shakman's collection continues to inspire*

Jim Brace-Thompson

When Nancy and I first joined VGMS in 1998, one of the first members we met was Inez Shakman. Although her involvement with the club eventually waned, not so her interest in rocks, an interest she shared with partner, Bob Spjut. Collecting rocks, minerals, and fossils. Cutting and polishing rocks. Making fine jewelry with beads, cabs she crafted herself, or glass fusion pendants she baked in a kiln. She also often bragged with pride of her two most precious gems: a couple of smart boys named Andrew and Matthew.



It proved hard to squeeze around the slab tubs. Everyone, it seemed, had first dibs!

Inez has passed away, and those two boys now brag of their mother and the enthusiastic passion she brought to the hobby we love. Over the course of a lifetime, though, that enthusiasm filled a garage with lapidary equipment, a house with specimens and jewelry, and a backyard with—well, as rockhounds, we all know what with. They found the rock pile both amazing and amazingly overwhelming, so on the suggestion of a friend of Inez (former VGMS member Jay Baumler), Andrew tracked me down to see if VGMS might help consult.



Tyrone's delight at the rock pile proved so extreme, he nearly hugged the photographer.

After an initial meet-and-greet along with his father Robert Shakman, Andrew needed to return home to Oregon to consider various options we discussed and consult with relatives. Eventually, he returned to Ventura with a surprise: they would donate Inez's slab saw, trim saw, vibratory flat lap, tumbler, kiln and other equipment to VGMS. Nancy and I were joined by John and Diane Cook to fill the Cook's green trailer with this special gift. It all now resides at the VGMS clubhouse as we determine what best use to make of it. They also donated a couple display cabinets for use in the Gem & Mineral Building at the Ventura County Fair, where Inez always loved sharing her collection with our broader community—and always came home with a ribbon or two.

That second meeting brought another surprise. Andrew and Matt wished to honor their mother's passion by sharing the collections and rock pile she accumulated with like-minded rockhounds who would value them as much as she so clearly did. So they invited us to put out the word among the tri-clubs of Ventura County, and

once again, we all gathered together at Inez's house, setting up all day on Friday, May 1, and then holding a vibrant rock sale on Saturday and Sunday, a sale that excited all who participated in it, a sale that generated \$4,060.



Dan proved one happy customer with his first handful of slabs.

Those Shakman brothers continued to surprise. There was to be a split with VGMS getting 35% of the proceeds, but as the sale wound to a close, Andrew and Matt (and Matt's daughter Maisie) declared they'd be donating all the proceeds to VGMS. We countered their surprise with one of our own: to split off \$1,000 so that in 2027 we can award not just one but two college

scholarships, one being the Inez Shakman Scholarship Award, which our VGMS Board has subsequently approved. Their generous donation is especially timely as we continue our search for a new clubhouse facility, which will inevitably involve a fair measure of expense.

Watch for more slabs and other material to be sold at the Gold Coast Show and at our Rockhound Rendezvous and watch for another potential sale at the Shakman home in the coming month or so. The passion and enthusiasm palpably visible among club members picking through tubs of slabs that first weekend in May showed Andrew and Matt that their goal of honoring and sharing their mother's passion with like-minded souls was clearly achieved.



A big thank-you to hosts Andrew Shakman and family.

VGMS Clubhouse Search: The Search for a New Home Continues

Jim Brace-Thompson

Last month, I noted things were a bit stalled in the search for a new homebase to replace our current clubhouse facility. I'm happy to report our Facilities Search Committee has come upon a promising lead. Things are far too tentative to specify details at the moment, but everyone on the committee is feeling good for now. Then again, they say "be careful what you wish for." Should things turn out as wished, there will be considerable work to do on everyone's part.

I once read "a wish is just a beginning. That's the easy bit. Only you can make it true if day by day you reach for it." Here's to reaching together! This latest development is just one promising lead that may or may not pan out, so we still encourage all club members to help generate ideas, forge connections, or identify possible target locations. Also, wherever we end up, we'll likely need to pay more rent than we currently do, so we also welcome ideas on fund-raising and anyone with experience seeking grants.

PROGRAM REVIEW & UPDATE

David Springer, 1st VP - Programs

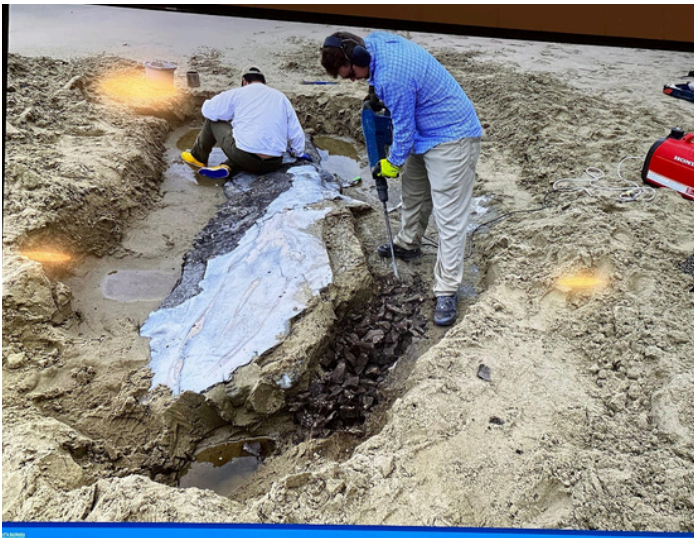


April Meeting - Dr. Jonathan Hoffman

Our April 2026 meeting featured Dr. Jonathan Hoffman, Dibblee Curator of Earth Science at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History (SBMNH). He spoke to us about the trials and

tribulations and ultimately the success regarding the ~15-million-year-old baleen whale skull, that was recently excavated and airlifted from the tidal zone at Tajiguas Beach in April 2025. It was a very detailed and informative presentation that covered permits, site access, tidal fluctuations, beach conditions, movement of the targeted fossil components themselves (both natural and human), and the act of extracting the huge fossil from the beach pediment, and its helicopter transport to a staging area. I had never thought so much work had gone into what we might think is a simple fossil extraction, the word perseverance comes to mind! It will be several years of work removing shale from the whale bones before it is ready for display, so stay tuned.

I think folks learned a lot from this presentation, and I learned about a new animal, the snot flower, a bone eating organism that is found near whale falls (how COOL!). There were some great follow up questions asked and his presentation generated a lot of interest. We are lucky to have Jonathan as a local resource, and hope he is available to continue coming to our club meetings for these types of presentations.



The excavation in progress.



Hauling out.



Dr. Jonathan Hoffman, Dibblee Curator of Earth Science at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History



We enjoyed a good crowd at our April meeting.

May Meeting - Austin Lippincott

For May's club meeting program, we will have Austin Lippincott. Austin is a Physics teacher at Oak Park High School, and President of the Conejo Gem and Mineral Club. He often uses rocks and minerals to showcase fascinating physics concepts in class (optics, nuclear, and quantum physics). His talk will be about the elusive Fairburn agates of the Black hills in South Dakota. We will explore the fascinating subculture that has spawned because of these colorful gems. People have dedicated their lives to collecting these; rightfully so considering the price tag they carry! Please join us in this special presentation.

FIELD TRIPS

Tyrone LaFay, 2nd VP - Field Trips



Upcoming Field Trips in the Works for 2026:

Confirmed - May 9, 2026: Ralph Bishop's Museum (Santa Maria) & Prefumo Canyon (SLO)

Future Programs

For the June Meeting, we will have Bill Dinklage, Geology Professor at Santa Barbara City College, talk to us about his recent trip to Nepal covering macro geologic features and including some specimens he collected along the way.

For the July meeting, we will have Craig Parrot, who will provide us a comprehensive overview of the sunstone, what it is, where it occurs, and how to collect it.

The August meeting slot is currently open, and I am seeking a jade expert to fill it.

If you would like to do a program or have seen 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.

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

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

WORKSHOP HAPPENINGS

David Springer

On Sunday, May 3, our first Sunday, the clubhouse was busy with activity. Starting before noon, we did a tailgate amongst members, we got the back vegetation cleared via weed-whacking (thanks AGAIN, David Springer), did lots of cutting on our club saws for members bringing goodies in for cutting, and we hosted several members mostly busy with trim saw and Genie work.

Members in attendance included: David Springer (Steward), Shirley Layton, Ron Wise (Steward), Kathryn Kennedy, Val Dart, Emily De La Torre, Michael Rittenberg, Holly Green, Lone Sutton, Robert Seaton (Steward), Julie Cox, Dan Kitay and Robin Tan.

Unfortunately, we got so busy, we forgot to take pictures!

On 13 May, our second Wednesday, we had a total of 10 members visiting, including David Springer (steward), Robert Seaton (steward), Holly Green, Michael Rittenberg, Emily De La Torre, Julie Cox, Richard Pisor, Shirley Layton, Dan Kitay, and John Cook. From the login sheet, it was clear we had the Blue Room visiting Camp Comfort earlier in the day. Robert and David worked to clean up some of the rock yard, the rest of the folks were using the trim saws or were on the Genies, except Richard who was dedicated to the flat lap. David kept steady progress on the slab saws, while overseeing cleanup of all the trim saws with replacement oil, and appreciated the efforts from Holly, Julie, and Dan in cleaning up after themselves and learning to clean up the trim saws. We learned in real time that it only takes about 30 minutes of trim sawing to really mess up the trim saw oil; forcing one trim saw to have its oil changed twice!





FEDERATION NEWS

Keeping Up-to-Date with CFMS & AFMS

Jim Brace-Thompson, VGMS Federation Director

A new issue of the CFMS Newsletter has not yet been released, so I have nothing new to report from the Federation that wasn't reported last month. Just as a reminder, dates have been set for the CFMS Show & Convention taking part alongside the annual show of the Reno Gem & Mineral Society. Those dates are September 18-20 in Reno, Nevada. Hours were recently posted, and those hours are long, enabling you to shop-till-you-drop among the dealers: 10AM-7PM Friday and Saturday; 10AM-5PM Sunday. Check in now and then on their show webpage:

<https://renogemandmineralsociety.org/events/jackpot-of-gems/>. I, for one, hope to enter a competitive display this year, especially since I couldn't do so the past three years while I was on the CFMS Rules Committee overseeing competitive exhibits.



Another reminder: Camp Paradise flyers and application forms will continue to be on our take-one table at monthly meetings. This residential workshop retreat is run by the CFMS Earth Science Studies Committee. You can sign up for 1- or 2-week sessions in the scenic forests of northern California. This year's dates are August 16-22 and August 23-28. Classes include silversmithing, intarsia, cabbing, hard- and soft-stone carving, wire wrap, wax casting, enameling, beading, chain maille, cold connections, and gem trees. Basic tuition (which also covers room and board) is \$600 per week, with some classes requiring a modest materials fee. They started accepting applications March 15, and I understand slots are filling fast. Keep tabs of latest developments on the CFMS website: <https://cfmsinc.org/camp-paradise/>. You can also email Jill Atkins (atkinsdesign@gmail.com), Gary Atkins (garysgems@gmail.com), or the camp registrar, Ann Marie McCann (registerforcampparadise@gmail.com). Nancy and I have already registered for the second week. See you there?

MEETING MINUTES

VGMS General Meeting, April 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 39 members and 1 guest.

Announcements:

- Clubhouse open, Saturday 4/25 (9-12 pm) and Sunday 5/3 (12-3 pm).

Old Business

- Nothing to report.

New Business

- Rockhound Rendezvous will take place Sunday, June 28 - watch for sign-ups.
- Possible rock sale May 2 & 3 in Ventura. The estate of Inez Shackman. An email blast will be sent out.

Officer Reports

- 1st VP - Programs - David Springer
 - The April meeting was Jonathan Hoffman of the SBNHM talking about the whale excavation at TajiguasBeach. It was quite an adventure!
 - May meeting will be Austin Lippincott, Conejo Club President, talking about Fairburn agates.
 - June meeting will be Bill Dinklage discussing his trip to and the geology of Nepal.
 - July meeting will be Greg Parrot, topic to be announced.
- 2nd VP - Field Trips - Tyrone LaFay
 - May 9 there is a field trip to Ralph Bishop's house and to Prefumo Canyon. Sign up on Whoscoming.
- 3rd VP, Show Chair - Diane Cook
 - The show went well - highest year yet.
 - Gold Coast show will be June 6 & 7. VGMS will have a table. There will be sign-ups.
 - Ventura County Fair sign-ups for entry will be opening up soon. Everyone please enter something!
 - Leslie thanked everyone for helping out at the Conejo Club show.
- Membership Secretary - Erin Valenzuela
 - 177 Adult members, 31 Pebble Pups and 8 Juniors for a total of 216 members.
- Treasurer - Celia Churchill
 - Turn in receipts.
 - If anyone needs the "swingers" added to their pins, bring them and Celia will attach them.
 - Buy your usage cards.
- Secretary - Sheri Hultman
 - Nothing to report.
- Bulletin editor - Monika Blackburn (absent)
 - Due date for next bulletin is May 10, send submissions to vgmseditor@gmail.com

Officer Reports (cont.'d)

- Federation Director - Jim Brace-Thompson
 - See newsletter for more information.
 - Jim is selling raffle tickets that supports badge program among other things.
 - AFMS show will be in Chicago on May 5/22-5/24. Jim, Nancy and Diane will be there.
- Webmaster, Troy Schmidt:
 - Troy will put up sign-ups for the Gold Coast show and Rockhound Rendezvous.
- Parliamentarian/Scholarship - Nancy Brace-Thompson
 - Nothing to report.

Committee Reports

- Pebble Pups - Erin Valenzuela
 - The April meeting was about fluorescent minerals. John and Robert cut geodes for the kids. They also painted rocks and used a blacklight. There were 11 pups.
 - 10 Pups have earned their Rockstar badge.
 - May meeting to be announced.
- Juniors - Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick and Erin Valenzuela
 - Three Juniors went to the LANHM to see "Unearthed: Raw Beauty" on April 12. They also visited Gnatalie while they were there.
- Ways and Means- Jenifer Russell
 - Thank you David for your donation.
 - Always accepting donations!
- Museum - Troy Schmidt:
 - Nothing to report.
- Clubhouse Search - David Springer, Art Lopez and Jim Brace-Thompson:
 - The committee met with Gerry Cooper last Thursday. They have a few possible leads from that meeting to follow-up on.
- Educational Outreach - Jim Brace-Thompson
 - 7 have been done and 8 to go.
 - Thank you Volunteers!
 - April 24, Dos Caminos Elementary School, we will be doing our "Magic Magnetic Minerals." John, Michael, and Robert offered to help.
 - April 26, Ventura Charter School will hold their "Eco Fest." We will do CA Dinosaurs. (Jared and David will help.)
 - The Blue Room Preschool will come to visit our museum and learn about dinosaurs on May 13. There will be about 20 families.
 - In October we will be a part of Earth Science week at SBNHM.
- Hostess - Susan Slyker
 - Thank you to Jim & Nancy Brace-Thompson and Julie Cox for the snacks.
 - May will be a potluck.
- Librarian - Heather (absent) & Robert Seaton:
 - Nothing to report.

Committee Reports (cont.'d)

- Facility Maintenance - Robert Seaton
 - In the library the clips that were holding in glass have been replaced.
- Archivist/Historian: Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Nothing to report.
- Stewards - Ron Wise, John Cook, Robert Seaton, and David Springer:
 - The arbor has been fixed by Richard, Ron, and Lonnie. They need to hook up water.

David Springer motioned to adjourn meeting at 9:16. Robert Seaton seconded. Motion passed.

Next members meeting is Wednesday, May 27, at 7:30 pm at Poinsettia Pavilion.

Respectfully submitted on April 26, 2026, by Sheri Hultman, Recording Secretary.

VGMS Board Meeting, May 7, 2026, via Zoom

Called to order at 8:30 PM PST, John Cook presiding

Attendees: David Springer, Monika Blackburn, Troy Schmidt, John & Diane Cook, Sheri Hultman, Robert Seaton, Tyrone LaFay, Lisa Batchelder, Erin Valenzuela, Jim & Nance Brace-Thompson, Celia Churchill, Shirley Layton and Art & Susan Lopez.

David Springer motioned to approve the April 2, 2026 Board Meeting minutes as they are printed in the bulletin. Troy Schmidt seconded. Motion passed.

Old Business

- The Inez Shakman rock sale went very well. We were given material for upcoming Rockhound Rendezvous silent auction. Possibly having another sale, still lots of material.
- Ventura County Fair is coming up. We will do a club case this year- Celia will take the lead.
- Lisa suggested a possible fundraiser that the Reno club does. They hold a silent auction on-line with 32 auctions with local pick up only.

New Business

- June 25 at 9:30 there will be a clean out of the Tuff shed and parking lot to get ready for the Rendezvous. It will be put up on whoscoming.

Officer Reports

- 1st VP - Programs - David Springer
 - April meeting was Jonathan Hoffman of the SBNHM talking about the whale excavation at Tajiguas Beach.
 - May meeting will be Austin Lippincott, Conejo Club president. He will talk about Fairburn Agates.
 - June meeting will be Bill Dinklage from SBCC talking about his trip and the geology of Nepal.
 - July meeting will be Craig Parrot talking about sunstones.
 - August meeting will be a silent auction.
 - There has been a request to find someone who will do a talk about jade. Diane working on.

Officer Reports (cont.'d)

- 2nd VP - Field Trips - Tyrone LaFay
 - May 9 We will go to Ralph Bishop's place and to Prefumo Canyon. He has 12 RSVP.
 - There is a request from several Pebble Pup families for a trip to Jade Cove/Willow Creek. Maybe next year or switch out Clear Creek camping trip for it.
- 3rd VP - Show- Diane Cook
 - Nancy Brace-Thompson motioned that VGMS purchase a 3rd table for \$50 to sell slabs from the Shakman donation. Celia Churchill seconded. Motion passed.
- Treasurer -Celia Churchill
 - We reviewed the emailed treasurer's report that Celia sent the board.
 - The Shakman family gave the gross proceeds from the sale to the club.
 - David Springer motions to increase the utilities budget to \$500 for the year. Nancy Brace-Thompson seconded. Motion passed.
- Secretary - Sheri Hultman
 - Nothing to report.
- Web Director - Troy Schmidt
 - Whoscoming for May workshops are up. Troy will put up the June workshops, the 7th and the 10th.
 - Website needs new credit card to pay for upcoming year.
 - Gold Coast Show sign-ups are live.
 - Some members reported that the website has been a little glitchy lately. Troy noticed as well and will look into it. Also, it won't let you sign up the day before the workshop.
 - Troy has been working on getting some history up on our site.
- Membership Secretary - Erin Valenzuela
 - Erin Valenzuela motioned to accept new members; Matthew Bashill & Zachary (Jr.), Kristen Fragosa & Tatiana (PP), Emily Carter, Russell Mills, Heidi McElvaney & June (PP), Kathleen Delfino, Kathy & Kyle Gavin and J (PP). David Springer seconded. Motion passed.
 - After the above were voted in, we have 185 Adult members, 34 Pebble Pups and 9 Junior members. Total 228 members.
- Federation Director: Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Nothing to Report.
- Bulletin Editor: Monika Blackburn
 - Deadline for newsletter is the 10th of the month. vgmseditor@gmail.com.
- Parliamentarian/Scholarship: Nancy Brace-Thompson
 - Diane Cook motioned to use \$1,000 of the Shakman donation to provide a second scholarship next year. Jim Brace-Thompson seconded. Motion passed.

Committee Reports

- Pebble Pups - Erin Valenzuela
 - The May meeting will be May 31 topic to be determined. Possible guest speaker.
 - June trying to get a field trip to the Raymond Alf Museum.
- Juniors - Lisa Batchelder-Hetrick and Erin Valenzuela
 - The La Brea Tar Pits will be closing July 7 for two years. Lisa trying to get a field trip before it closes.
 - We need more Pup/Jr. brochures.
 - Lisa is working with Villanova to get the students to get community service hours helping us out. She will keep us posted.
- Museum - Troy Schmidt
 - Jim has some thumbnail specimens from Inez Shakman that he would like Troy to look at.

Committee Reports (cont.'d)

- Clubhouse Search - David Springer, Art Lopez, and Jim Brace-Thompson
 - They are meeting with Geri Cooper with Ventura Parks and Recreation again on May 11 at the Casitas Community Center. It looks hopeful. Jim sent her some photos of the clubhouse. She is putting together a presentation for her bosses to help find us a place.
- Ways and Means - Jenifer Russell (absent)
 - Nothing to report.
- Educational Outreach - Jim Brace-Thompson
 - End of April was very busy! This year there have been 11 outreach events and we have 5 to go!
 - Next week we have the Blue Room Preschool and another homeschool group visiting the museum.
 - At the end of May Jim and Erin are hosting a table at the Moxi Museum in SB, "The Minerals of Minecraft."
 - Jim has two talks at the Oxnard Library this summer.
- Historian/Archivist - Jim Brace-Thompson
 - Nothing to report.
- Hostess: Susan Slyker (absent)
 - May will be a potluck.
- Librarians - Heather (absent) & Robert Seaton
 - Nothing to report.
- Facility Maintenance: Robert Seaton
 - There will be a clean up on 6/25. We need to get ready for the Rockhound Rendezvous.
 - A concern was brought up about the hazard of the rocks behind the clubhouse and in buckets & crates that need to be organized. Robert and Diane are going to reach out to Slate Concrete to see if they will take some of the cobble and other material.
- Stewards - John Cook, Ron Wise (absent), Robert Seaton & David Springer
 - Clubhouse days this month are 5/13 and 5/16.

John Cook adjourned the meeting at 9:48 pm.

Next Board Meeting: June 4, 2026, at 7 pm

Next Membership Meeting: May 27, 2026, at 7:30 pm

Respectfully submitted on May 11, 2026, by Sheri Hultman, Recording Secretary.

ROCKHOUND RAMBLINGS**Trip Report: Oregon: From the Mountains to the Sea****Jim Brace-Thompson**

With our newest granddaughter Ellie Rose up in Clackamas, Oregon, Nancy and I have been taking Pacific Coast flights this year. On our most recent visit, the only gem we saw was Ellie Rose herself. Still, while being homebodies for the five-day visit, it was impossible not to get a view or two of the resident stratovolcano. Mt. Hood was ever-present on the horizon, at least whenever the sun was shining, which is not a given in the Pacific Northwest.

We've already planned our next visit for a considerably longer stay this summer. For that visit, we'll be driving rather than flying. While we'll take an inland route through California, as soon as we hit the border, we'll turn west to hug the coast all the way to Portland. We're researching and mapping out Oregon beaches featured in gem collecting guidebooks and have earmarked a few that feature agates, jasper, and fossils. The only problem? We'll be hitting beaches during the height of the tourist season, when many more beachcombers will be scouring the sands and long past the winter season when most treasures are tossed up by the waves. Will we find anything? Stay tuned. Meanwhile, enjoy this view of Mt. Hood!



Around nearly every bend in Portland, Oregon, Mt. Hood towers on the horizon.

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

Educational Outreach Fun Continues Throughout the Spring! Can you help?

Jim Brace-Thompson, Educational Outreach Chair

I'm suddenly afraid to turn around, because every time I do, we get another request for educational outreach! We've completed eleven events so far this year, and we have another five to go between now and the start of the Ventura County Fair.

- **Wednesday, May 13, 9:00 AM**, the Blue Room Preschool will visit the club museum to cap their "Dino Unit." We'll learn about California dinosaurs, shoot off a volcano, and make fossil dinosaur footprints, then distribute goodie bags to one and all.
- **Thursday, May 14, 1:00 – 3:00 PM**, at Juanamaria Park, Ventura; I'll set out "The Amazing Mineral Magic Show" for Bonnie of the Ventura homeschooling group ACHEV.
- **Saturday, May 30, 5:00 – 8:00 PM**, with set-up starting 4:00; Erin Valenzuela and I have been invited to participate in a "Game On" family event at MOXI (AKA The Wolf Museum of Exploration + Innovation) in Santa Barbara. Because it will focus on games like Pokemon, Super Mario, and Minecraft, we'll have a table with a display and hands-on activities using the minerals of Minecraft, building from the Pebble Pup exhibit Erin had at our March gem show.
- **Saturday, July 11, 2:00 PM**: I've been invited to give a fossil talk by the Oxnard Public Library's Children's Librarian for kids from pre-school through grades 4/5. Given the theme of "Plant a Seed, Read" for their summer program, I'll bring in my collection of fossils seeds along with several kids' books on fossil plants to donate to the library.
- **Saturday, August 1, 11:00 AM**: I've been invited by the Senior Librarian at the Oxnard Public Library to give a PowerPoint talk to adults on local rockhounding, along with fossils and rock specimens from here in Ventura County and some basic lapidary arts using Ventura jasper.

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



The Blue Room Preschool returns to our club museum this month.

Home Schoolers, Science Nights, Ecofest and More!

Jim Brace-Thompson, Educational Outreach Chair

The last week of April saw a true whirlwind of educational outreach activities of all sorts involving varied topics in varied settings.

Michelle Varju of the Thousand Oaks chapter of the Blue Ridge Academy homeschool group invited us to participate in a Park Day on April 23 at Thousand Oaks Community Park with a table set up for students to explore and ask questions. With Earth Day happening that week, they had a theme of "Our Planet Rocks," and in their advertising for their event, they spotlighted VGMS as their featured Guest Visitor. Nancy and I set out our hands-on Amazing Mineral Magic Show, which enthralled kids and parents alike. We were set up under the shade of a picnic structure, and other tables around us included a rock painting station, a make-a-rock station, a mineral identification activity, and more. At our station, kids also walked away with a tumble-polished stone and literature about minerals with special effects.



Blue Ridge Academy welcomed us at T.O. Community Park for "Our Planet Rocks."

The very next day, on April 24, Katie Hall and principal Robert Wagner welcomed us to Dos Caminos Elementary School Science Night. There, I joined John Cook and Michael Rittenberg to set up our Magnetism & Magnetic Minerals display and activities. We've been invited to participate in this event for several years now,



Nancy helped one Blue Ridge student find Fuzzy in a jar of magnetic sand.

and I gave them a menu of other activities to choose from, but they said our magnetism activities have proven so popular with kids that they wanted a repeat, so repeat we did, offering kids and parents flyers on magnetism and a magnetite specimen of their own as they completed their activities.



We featured Magnetic Minerals with hands-on activities at Dos Caminos Science Night.



While John demos levitation, Michael helps a student pick her own magnetite specimen.

After resting a couple days, I was hauling a pop-up canopy, two tables, chairs, and everything needed to run our “California Dinosaurs” booth for Ventura Charter School’s annual day-long EcoFest, where they estimated attendance at about 2,500. Jared McGowan also brought a table and display materials, including actual dinosaur and marine reptile fossils. David Springer and Monika and Beatrice Blackburn rounded out our team in braving fierce ocean winds behind the school while showing off materials about California dinosaurs, setting out a sand box for kids to dig-a-dino, and helping kids make their own fossil dino footprints. They also got free tumble-polished stones and fossil shark teeth along with coloring pages and a leaflet on



Beatrice helped students craft their own fossil dino footprints.

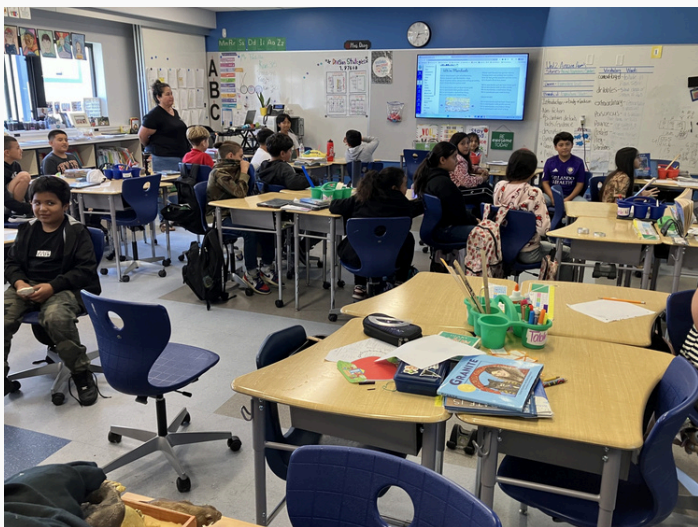


Our crew for “California Dinos” at Ecofest included Jim, David, Beatrice, Monika, and Jared.



Budding paleontologists quickly uncovered dino bones in the VGMS sand box.

On May Day, I found myself driving to Christa McAuliffe Elementary School in Oxnard at the invitation of fourth grade teachers Taylor Lumas & Nancy Diaz for their 50 students. They were in the midst of their California History unit, so I had volunteered to give a little California Gold Rush PowerPoint presentation augmented with actual Gold Rush era mining artifacts. I'm not sure how I look to a fourth grader, but apparently I look old enough to be one of those artifacts. "Were you in the Gold Rush?" asked one student. (No, but my grandfather's grandfather was in a gold rush to Colorado, from whence he returned home to his Illinois farm with a souvenir ink well and the clothes on his back. That's why I don't have a mansion tucked into the foothills of Santa Barbara.)



Ms. Diaz and her fourth graders welcomed Jim at Christa McAuliffe Elementary School to get a hands-on introduction to gold panning for their California history unit.

While talking about the California state mineral of gold, I also showed them specimens of their state gemstone, rock, and fossil before capping it all off a demonstration that proved surprisingly popular: panning for actual gold using the little packets the Valley Prospectors sell at our annual gem show. When "color" suddenly popped at the bottom of the gold pan, every student circled around me was asking for a nugget, hands extended. To show them it pays to be a teacher, those nuggets instead went to Ms. Lumas and Ms. Diaz, along with authentic hand-made clay assay cups found in the dump of an old mining camp and some books and flyers on California gold they can consult for next year's classes. Instead of gold, students got my leaflet on the California state rock symbols and a flyer on California gold. (In other words, I gave out homework.)

If you, too, would like to spread gold within our local educational community, join our next round of educational outreach. It's fun!



Kids especially perked up when it came time to separate gold from sand!

PEBBLE PUPS

Erin Valenzuela, Pebble Pups

April's Pebble Pup meeting was held on April 19th at the clubhouse. We had 11 pups and their adults join us. Thanks to VGMS President John Cook and Robert Seaton for starting off the meeting with a small lapidary safety talk before heading into the saw room to cut some agates (kindly donated by Luis De Los Santos and John Cook.) I forgot how loud the saw room is and the pups definitely learned about ear protection!



Pups waiting and watching John. Ear protection was offered after the photos!



Then we learned about fluorescent minerals! The pups and parents got to see the fluorescent mineral display in the museum and Robert Seaton showed the pups some of his collection and discussed the different UV wavelengths. Then we had some fun with fluorescence- the pups painted rocks with black light paint and watched them glow in the very dark clubhouse. We also added tonic water to water beads (sometimes called Orbeez) and again went into the dark room to see if they glowed in the dark. Spoiler alert... they do! Quinine in the tonic water fluoresces a bright blue. The kids also had fun seeing their clothes, fingernails, and other items glow. It was a great day for earning their Fluorescent Minerals badge. And I am proud to say that 3 more pups earned their Rockhound Patch this month- I only have about 6 regularly attend pups left to earn it! That is our goal for this year!



Poppy P. brought me her cut geode to see if the crystals fluoresced. Later we found out her dress did- the yellow turned pink and bright peach!



The glowing water beads.



Even some of AFMS Badges glowed in the black light!

The Monthly Challenge: Big Sur Nephrite Jade, a California Classic

Jim Brace-Thompson

Last month's Challenge for Pebble Pups and Junior Members proved especially popular. Connor, Ellis, Gwyn, Otto, Bowie, Quinn, Ian, Skyla, Scarlett, Gabby, Izzy, Landon, Lexi, Oliver, Shea, and Cliff all took it on. Each successfully identified our featured gemstone as jade. Several earned extra pebble pup bucks by going a step further to identify the specific variety, nephrite jade, and/or by providing other local names, such as Monterey Jade and Big Sur Jade. Congratulations to one and all who now have a true California classic in their collections. I also heard from several parents who are asking if the club might consider a field trip to Jade Cove and/or nearby Willow Creek. My vote would be a definite yes, especially since Willow Creek is also a gold-bearing stream, has ample parking right by the beach, and features a public restroom! What's not to like?

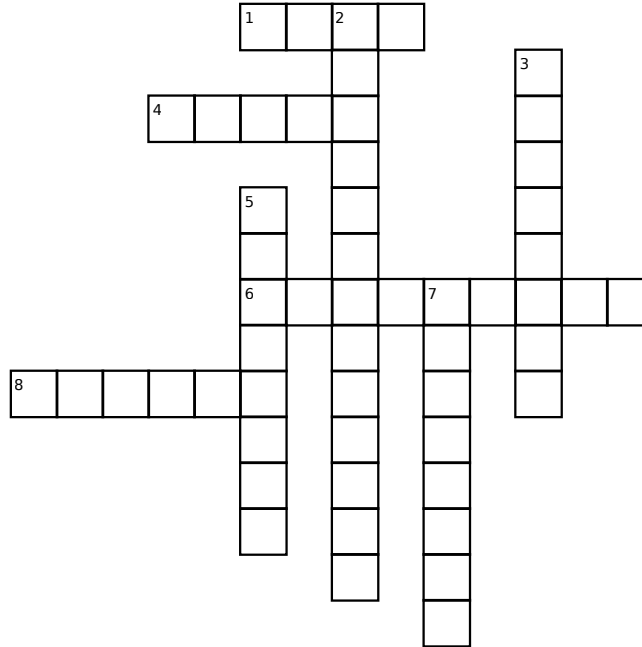
To all VGMS Pebble Pups and Junior Members: take The Monthly Challenge to test your knowledge while adding free mineral and fossil specimens to your collection.



This month, participating kids received a California classic for their collections.

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. And if you are on that list but haven't yet paid dues for 2026, contact Erin today so you can remain Challenged!

VGMS Crossword #4



Down:

- 2. One of the oldest fossil types (up to 2 billion years old), consisting of algae layers that create intricate patterns in polished slabs
- 3. A process of cutting and polishing small, flat surfaces onto a gemstone to enhance its brilliance and light reflection
- 5. One of two types of Jade that is a silicate of calcium and magnesium where Jadeite is the rarer type with a silicate of sodium and aluminum
- 7. An intricate art form where small, precisely cut stones are fitted together and polished to form a single seamless picture or pattern.

Across:

- 1. A type of dendritic inclusion found in agates, and other stones that resembles forests, ferns, and foliage that is often green but can also appear black, red, and brown
- 4. Fossilized tree resin (sap) that hardened and polymerized over millions of years, often preserving tiny organisms inside
- 6. Organic material, like wood, that has been fossilized where original organic material was replaced by silica (quartz)
- 8. An opaque, dense variety of microcrystalline quartz that comes in many colors, commonly red, yellow, or brown

CLUB BUSINESS

THANK YOU'S

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 everyone who helped me with educational outreach in April, including Nancy B-T, John Cook, Michael Rittenberg, Jared McGowan, David Springer, and Monika and Beatrice Blackburn. And thank you to all who have already volunteered help for upcoming educational outreach events!

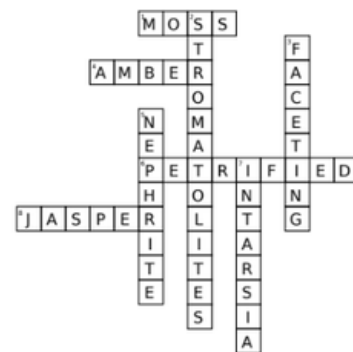
Huge thanks to the Shakman family for sharing their mother's passion with like-minded rockhounds, giving treasures she collected new homes where they'll remain valued. And thank you to the team that assembled at the Inez Shakman home to sort material and help run the sale. Finally, thanks to all who made purchases that will benefit both the club and one lucky college scholarship winner.

Thank you to our Facilities Search Committee (David Springer, Diane Cook, Art Lopez, Erin Valenzuela, and Jim B-T) for the work they've been doing to find a new homebase for VGMS.

Thanks, Tyrone, for a great May field trip to Ralph Bishop's private museum and to Prefumo Canyon for some dang-nice brecciated jasper!



VGMS Crossword #4



CLUB CALENDARS

2026 MAY

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
				1 Happy Birthday, Lisa Batchelder Hetrick!	2	3 Member Workshop,12 p.m.-3p.m.
4	5 Happy Birthday, Valerie C., Piper Presley, and Dan Kitay!	6	7 Board Meeting, 7 p.m	8	9	10
11 Happy Birthday, Emily De La Torre	12	13 Member Workshop, 3p.m.-6p.m.	14	15	16 Open Workshop, 9a.m.-12 p.m.	17
18	19	20 Happy Birthday, David Mautz! Summer Nights Workshop, 3p.m.-6p.m.	21 Happy Birthday, Candace Alexander!	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

2026 JUNE

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
1	2	3	4 Board Meeting, 7 p.m	5	6 THE Gold Coast GEM SHOW Happy Birthday, Phyllis White!	7 THE Gold Coast GEM SHOW Member Workshop,12 p.m.-3p.m.
8	9	10 Member Workshop, 3p.m.-6p.m.	11	12	13	14
15	16	Happy Birthday, Jeff Miller and Amy Liest!	Happy Birthday, Kenneth Boyd!	19	20	21
Happy Birthday, John Cook!	Happy Birthday, Shirley Layton and Pamela Petropulos!	24 Member Meeting, 7:30 p.m.	25 Clean-up Day 9:30a.m.-1p.m.	26	27 Happy Birthday, Kathryn Davis!	28 PARTY! Rockhound Rendezvous, 11a.m.-2p.m.
29	30					