

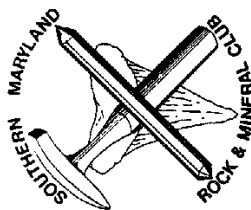
March 2011



SOUTHERN MARYLAND ROCK AND MINERAL CLUB



RockTalk



Message from the President

Our rock show on February 19th was a big success. I want to give a huge THANK YOU to our members and volunteers who helped put it all together.

We had a great attendee turnout (double from last year). The customers seemed happy and content to hang out a little longer this year and take it all in.

We had a wide variety of vendors who were pleased with the days events. The demonstrations and exhibits were appreciated and well attended.

We even had our "fifteen minutes of fame" television debut on the Top of the Morning Show from Baltimore. Bob posted the video clip

on our website for everyone to view.

Mother Nature even helped us out by bringing us a warm, albeit windy day to draw people out and about. All in all it was a good day, and we could have never pulled it off without our hard working and dedicated "show staff."

THANK YOU ALL AGAIN!

I'm looking forward to next year's show.

Pictures by Al Rauchenis and Dave Lines



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Meetings

..are held the 4th Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm.

Clearwater Nature Center 11000 Thrift Road Clinton, MD.

For more information, call Michael at (301) 297-4575.

EFMLS/AFMS News

Submitted by Jessica Dixon



Wildacres is quickly approaching. Register now if you are interested in attending this April or planning ahead for September classes.

There is a very interesting article worth reading about radioactive materials. Something to be aware of when you are out there hunting for other things.

For more information on any of these articles, visit www.amfed.org/efmls



The March AFMS newsletter contains an article about safety that describes a lab explosion with making jewelry and lists some recommendations for safety as a result of the investigation into the incident.

The President-Elect reminds us to register for the annual convention in Syracuse, NY. Be sure to check out the information on the website if you think you might want to attend!

For more information, visit www.amfed.org

Upcoming Shows and Events

Submitted by Ralph Gamba

March 19-20, 2011- Gem, Lapidary and Mineral Society of Montgomery County, MD. 47th Annual Gem-Mineral-Fossil Show. Montgomery County Fairgrounds. 16 Chestnut St, Gaithersburg, MD Saturday 10 AM – 6 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 5 PM. Adult \$6, Under 12 Free

March 26 & 27, 2011- Franklin County Rock and Mineral Club 33rd Annual Gem, Mineral and Jewelry Show. Shalom Christian Academy, 126 Social Island Road, Chambersburg, PA I-81 to exit 10, rt. 914 to Rt. 11. Turn right (north .p mile, turn left onto Social Island Road., school on left.) Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM Adults \$4, Children under 12 free with adult.

April 1- 3, 2011- 38th Annual Atlantic Micromounters' Conference MHA Conference Center in Elkridge, Maryland. 6820 Deerpath Rd; Elkridge, MD 21075-6200. Advanced Registration \$30, at the door \$35.

If you have any information to add to this section, contact Ralph Gamba.

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***If corrections or additions are needed, please contact Rocktalk Editor

February Minutes

By Cheryl Reese

DATE: February 22, 2011

Meeting was called to order at 7:05PM

Guests were welcomed and introduced: 2 guests found our club through the website and 1 guest found us through Rock and Gem magazine.

TREASURER: No report

MEMBERSHIP: 66 members paid to date with 5 new members

PROGRAMS: Linda passed around a sign up sheet for remaining programs and refreshments, she was very pleased to have an almost full roster for programs.

FIELD TRIPS: March 12, 2011 Dixie Iron Mine, Vesuvius, VA

March 26, 2011 Chestnut Ridge, Bath County, VA.

E-mails have been sent out on these 2 trips and Dave has stressed how difficult these trips are.

May 2011 Bob is planning a trip to Herkimer Diamond Mines most likely the week of the 9th

September 2011 Another trip to Utah is being planned, more info will be given at a later date

EDITOR: No report

WEBMASTER: Bob has been in-putting e-mails from the raffle box for next years' show for the coupons. He has also added a link for people to access to get on our e-mail list. No final numbers available for the attendance at the show but everyone agreed it seemed a huge success and thank you to all who helped. Vendors were pleased and some want more tables next year.

OLD BUSINESS: No old business

NEW BUSINESS: Paul thought we should form a committee for next years' show. Harry has said he will chair this committee. Thank you Harry. Discussion followed about the possibility of a 2-day show and opening at 9:00 when the gun show starts.

ADJOURNED: Meeting was adjourned at 7:30 for refreshments provided by Harry, followed by a wonderful program on fossils of the Chesapeake Bay region given by Joe Davis.

Dixie and the Worm Tracks

By Dave Lines



The wild trout were clearly visible in the deep pool of the stream --- after all, the water was crystal clear. And this was just two days after a big rain. No sediment. This mountain stream was not large --- only 10 to 15 feet across --- but it was gorgeous. The water tumbling over boulders and fallen logs made pleasant splashing sounds. Mountain laurel and blueberry bushes growing under an open canopy of white pine, tulip poplar and oak trees --- and if you looked very closely --- small red teaberries. A perfect early morning setting as we hiked alongside up toward the Dixie Iron Mine.

Four intrepid rock hounds(* Dave L., Steve L., David K. and his daughter Samantha) from the Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club joined another four (* Dean, Scott G., Bob F. and Eleanor) from the Shenandoah Valley Gem and Mineral Society for this adventure near Vesuvius, Virginia. We had rendezvoused earlier at the Burger King beside White's Truck Stop, then caravanned to an old field on private property where we parked with permission near the trail head. Then we hiked up the mountain for over a mile and reached the first workings of the long abandoned iron mine around 11 a.m..

Once at the mine, Dean gave a great impromptu tour for the group and explained how the miners had followed the vein of iron ore both on the surface and down into the mountain using only hand drills and sledgehammers and black powder. This mountain top mine was long --- crossing two hollows and going into three ridges --- and deep --- the visible shafts went down 180 feet according to Dean. During the safety brief, he cautioned that if we fell in, we would be dead before anyone could reach us. A dangerous --- stay-well-away-from --- kind of place. That is why no kids were allowed on this trip.

The mine area we chose to explore contained the dumps on the east end --- a steep hollow with lots of surface rock and a mine opening that was slowly caving in. We remained well outside of the danger areas and concentrated our efforts looking for lapidary material. The prize was "rockbridgeite" --- an iron phosphate ore that --- according to Dean --- made the smelted iron too brittle, so the miners discarded it. Good for us though because it takes a high polish --- a rich deep luster like black jade.

Another (and more plentiful) material found there was jasper. It came mostly in variations of a deep mustard yellow color. Also, there was a brecciated type where it appeared as though a light tan colored rock had cracked into smaller angular pieces and was surrounded by the yellow jasper. This type sometimes had veins and lines of a black material --- perhaps an iron ore. Additionally, some of the jasper contained small white jasper spots. The more solid pieces of this jasper will all polish nicely.



It took awhile for most of us to get our eyes calibrated to find what we were looking for --- especially since there was a great deal of rock everywhere. From the outside, rock-bridgeite looks much like the rest of the rock there --- dark brown or black --- but with a key difference --- it shows a "pea green" streak if scratched with a

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Dixie and the Worm Tracks

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knife. Slowly, we all began to concentrate our efforts around one particular rock dump area where we found several pieces of rockbridgeite on the surface. We soon found that we could scratch through this dump material and --- with persistence --- find rockbridgeite in chunks up to 2-½ inches thick, although the typical size was one to two inches. Brecciated jasper, with its many variations, was also found in this same dump. By 2 p.m., we had enough specimen material and we decided to head back down the mountain toward our vehicles.

The hike back took almost 1-½ hours --- iron ore is heavy! Along the way, we kept noticing rocks of a handsome fine grained quartzite with bold, black stripes running through it. The quartzite came in several colors --- pink, maroon, tan and ivory. The black stripes were fossil skolithos “tube worm” burrows --- dating from ancient Cambrian (500 million years ago) tidal flats, according to several sources I looked up on the internet. At any rate, this material will polish, too. It should make fine bookends or spheres. Trouble is, it is heavy. So we passed on picking any up. About a half mile from my van, I gave in --- and put one ten pound chunk in my backpack. It is a pinkish-maroon piece with strong black stripes. I like it.

When we reached the parking area, Steve met us with a big smile. He had returned a bit earlier than the rest of us and had been picking up “worm tracks” as he called the skolithos. Steve had several great chunks of it. So several of us spent some time picking up a few more worm tracks from the stream and the surrounding area. It is abundant.

Another Shenandoah Valley Club member, Mary L. D. , of Charlottesville, had arrived at the parking area while we were at the Dixie and she had been searching the dumps of another mine --- the Fauver. It had been a manganese mine and, despite being fully reclaimed, many signs of the old mine were visible --- large, terraced dumps of clay --- all tree covered, but still recognizable as man made piles. In addition to the Fauver , there was another manganese mine there --- the Kelley Bank Mine --- although the exact location of each mine is somewhat undetermined. Five of us then decided to cross the stream and search one of the large dump piles for manganese ore nodules --- cryptomelane and, perhaps, psilomelane. We were interested in collecting the botryoidally shaped nodules of these minerals. Around the lower edges of the dump piles, we scratched through the fallen leaves and found several decent specimens, although many pieces that we found were too large to take home. (This material also responds well to polishing as I lightly buffed a piece the next day at home and its surface became a shiny metallic black.)

All in all, our day in the mountains near Vesuvius was both pleasant and productive. We found rockbrigeite, brecciated jasper, cryptomelane, and “worm tracks” while enjoying the company of the members of another club in a beautiful natural setting along with near perfect early Spring weather --- a combination that is hard to beat. This is why rock hounding is so much fun. Hope you will join us next time.



Meet the Member

Submitted by Carole Raucheisen



Name: Monty Reese

Area live in: Chesapeake Beach

Place of birth: Minnesota, but lived in Seattle most of his life.

Marital status/spouse's name: Cheryl

Occupation: Retired econometrician for a regulatory agency

Number and ages of children: 3, all in their 40's. Seven grandchildren, ages 16-23 or 24. All live on the west coast: Oregon, Washington, and Idaho.

How became interested in rocks/minerals/fossils: Began collecting shark's teeth with Cheryl. Now, Monty likes to get out and hike, and find things.

How long a collector: Shark's teeth for the past 15 to 16 years; rocks and minerals for the past couple of years.

What you like to collect: Gold.

Favorite find and how found: Gold at Contrary Creek in Virginia.

Favorite Rock Club experience: Hiking in Utah and New Mexico.

Most memorable field trip: Finding star garnet at Emerald Creek in Idaho.

What you have gained from the Rock Club: "A yard full of rocks."

What you would still like to find/collect: Just likes to get out.

Other interests: Salmon fishing every year in Westport, Washington. He takes a charter boat, has the salmon cleaned, frozen, and shipped home.

Monty volunteers a lot: Meals on Wheels, and he prepares taxes for seniors. That's what he was doing when he saw the Rock Show flyer at a Lusby Senior Center a couple of years ago.

Message from the Editor

By Jessica Dixon

Greetings to all. We are so close to Spring, one can smell it! Oh, wait-that would be the tree pollen already! I hope all with allergies are ready for the season. I know we are all ready for the rock hunting to get into full-swing. It looks as though it has already begun and the articles are coming in. Remember when you go on a trip, we need an article for the RockTalk.

The show last month seemed to be a huge hit. Bob did a wonderful job collecting data from the door prize slips. Some of the information is included on this page. Check it out and start thinking of ideas to help our numbers grow even more next year!

Also, start thinking about an article you might like to write for the RockTalk. We need some fresh ideas. Would you like to start a Kid's Corner? How about a monthly piece on something everyone needs to know about rockhounding? Everyone has some great ideas. You can make those ideas come to life. Let me know of any ideas you have and I can help you get started!

Also, make sure you've paid your dues. They are past due and if you want to go on field trips, you have to have your dues up-to-date. You can make your payments at the meeting Tuesday, March 22.

Rock Show Stats

By Bob Davidson

- Last year when the Show was moved from the Nature Center to the Show Place Arena the number of attendees (who filled out a door prize ticket) almost doubled from 131 to 247. This year that number doubled again to 546.
- The largest number (40%), came from Prince Georges County. This was an increase of 9% over last year. Anne Arundel was second with 17% followed by Calvert County with 12%. There was a slight drop in attendance from Charles County (5%), St. Mary's County (5%), and Montgomery County (5%). Baltimore County remained the same at 3% as did Washington D.C. with 1%.
- The number of people from Virginia dropped slightly from 9% to 7% and from other States attendance remained about the same at 4%.
- The largest number of people (19%) learned about the Show from the emails sent in December and February. This percentage doubled from last year. The second method, according to responses was 'Flyer Posted' (15%), about half of what it was last year.
- It appears that many people bring others to the Show. 14% of attendees indicated that they heard about the Show from a friend or family member.
- Newspaper advertising came in next at 13%.
- The Show Place Arena sign seems to be attracting more visitors. About 10% of the people learned of the Show from the "Sign on the Highway". This is nearly double what it was last year.

Contact Bob Davidson for more information

Big Things Come in Small Packages: Part 1 - Microlite

By Ralph Gamba

When you think of the Morefield Mine in Amelia County, Virginia, you think of amazonite. But Morefield has over 60 different recognized minerals. This is the story of one of those other minerals.

When my friend Mary asked me what I wanted to do for my birthday, the answer was easy. I want to go to Morefield. So early morning on November 3, 2007, Mary met me at my home and off to Morefield we went.

It was not too crowded that day, so on the last dump of the day I was able to grab a large rock. It had nice piece of amazonite on one end but also some of the lesser known minerals. At worst, it would make a nice garden rock. The rock weighed 38 pounds.

The rock sat around before I gave it a close examination. As the May 31 2008 trip to Morefield neared, I gave the rock a close examination, thinking there might be something I can't identify, but Sam Dunaway, the mine owner, could.

At the very tip of the rock I saw an octahedral crystal. It was small, about 1/8 inch wide. I carefully extracted the crystal and surrounding matrix from the host rock and using dental tools, removed a small portion of the matrix, making the crystal visible.

My first thought that the crystal was zircon, another mineral found at Morefield. I carefully wrapped the specimen and took it to Morefield.

Late in the afternoon, I showed it to Sam. He identified the mineral as microlite.



Microlite

Collected 11-3-07

Big Things Come in Small Packages

CONTINUED

This story of microlite does not end there. While collecting at Morefield, I tend to gather a number of samples to examine at the sluice or when I get home. Most of these end up in the "leaverite" pile at the sluice, but a few make it home. The ones that make it home get stored for later examination. When time allows, I'll examine the rocks, breaking them apart carefully with small chisels and dental picks to see if any interesting minerals lurk within. When I find something, place it aside for Sam to identify.

While preparing for our November 21, 2009 trip to Morefield, I looked over a number of specimens, collected in 2008, which needed identifying. Sam identified one of them as microlite. On the same specimen Sam noticed an area that looked like phenakite (Be_2SiO_4). Sam took a photograph of the microlite. Upon arriving home, I placed the microlite phenakite specimen in a box, made a label and added it to my collection. Below are two photographs of the microlite, with the second one photographed through the lens of a stereomicroscope.



Microlite (2008)



Microlite (2008) close-up
Ruler tic marks are 1 mm

Microlite is named from Greek, *mikros* for "small" and *lithos* for "stone", alluding to the small size. It is a pale-yellow, reddish-brown, or black isometric mineral composed of sodium calcium tantalum oxide with a small amount of fluorine $(\text{Na,Ca})_2\text{Ta}_2\text{O}_6(\text{O,OH,F})$. Rare earth elements may also occur in Microlite, often making it slightly radioactive. Microlite was first described in 1835 for an occurrence on the Island of Uto, State of Stockholm, Sweden. The type locality is the Clark Ledges pegmatite, Chesterfield, Hampshire County, Massachusetts.

So when you are collecting at Morefield, and any other locality for that matter, keep a lookout for the more unusual minerals. An interesting mineral may even come in a small package.



ROCKTALK

Clearwater Nature Center
Maryland-National Capital Park &
Planning Commission
11000 Thrift Road

Next Meeting
March 22, 2010
7:00 PM

We're on the web:

SMRMC.org

March's
Refreshments/
Programs

Refreshments:

Phyllis Chappelleau

Program:

"Quartzsite 2011 and a Visit to the Planet Mine" --- Dave Lines will share his experiences and pictures of his recent visit to Quartzsite, Arizona where he rendezvoused with his California rockhound buddies as well as his son for 4 days packed with rock and mineral shopping, story telling and rockhounding.