

Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club



Rock Talk



October, 2014



Message from the President

Rich Simcsak

Our club has a few months before our 25th Show to be held on 14 Feb 2015. A short time to accomplish a lot. Any and all help is truly appreciated. We have some busy months ahead of all of us. The Show discussions, Elections, the Annual Holiday Party, James Madison University trip - all leading up to the show. Full membership participation is truly encouraged!!

Had a chance to visit the Rock and Mineral Club of Lower Bucks County, PA last month and like our club, they have avid membership enjoying the fluorescence of minerals! One member returned from a week in Sweden and found many beautiful minerals in many of their abandon mines not normally found at Stirling Hill. Recommend when anyone has a chance to - visit other clubs, do so and share experiences and samples that one may have. These new friendships will only benefit the entire hobby.

Attendance at the November Meeting is HIGHLY encouraged for the elections for the club that will determine how the club will move forward. Please be there as we remold our leadership.

In this issue:

September Minutes	2
Upcoming Shows and Events	3
Upcoming Field Trips	3
Field Trip Report: Rainbow Rocks from Willis Mountain, VA	3
EFMLS/AFMS News	6
Safety in the Field: Venomous Snakes	7
Member Finds	9

Next Meeting:

October 28, 2014@7:00 PM
Program

Rhodochrosite Red Treasure of the Rockies." (Part 2)

Refreshments

Polly Zimmerman, Carole and Al Raucheisen.

Clearwater Nature Center, 11000 Thrift Road, Clinton, MD.

SEPTEMBER MINUTES

DATE: July 23, 2014; Meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by president Richard Simsack.

VISITORS/NEW MEMBERS: ---
Visitor: Benjamin Foard, son of the club's editor;
new members Melissa Neil and Rosie Rexach

AUGUST MINUTES: None taken.
Summary notes approved as written.

MEMBERSHIP: No Report.

NEWSLETTER: Out on time! Request made for members to send photos of recent finds or purchases.

FIELD TRIPS: (Jim White) --- Recent trip to Vulcan Manassas, VA successful; Trip to Willis Mt. Saturday (September 27th).

PROGRAMS: Sept and Oct --- 2 part (40 minutes each) film about famous rhodochrosite specimen mining at Sweet Home silver mine in Alma, Colorado by Brian Lees of Collectors Edge. They recovered world class xls including the "Alma King" – a brick sized rhombohedral crystal valued at \$1 million and later purchased and donated to Denver Museum of Natural History by Coors. November --- presentation by Ed Masouka. The December meeting will be on Thursday December 11, at 6:00 pm for a potluck and gift exchange.

ELECTION: September - October for nominations.

WEBMASTER: no report

OLD BUSINESS: Discussed profits from last month's auction, Discussion of improving advertisement of Valentines Rock Show. Question as to whether venue war free or do we need an audit covering the past 5 years of shows. David offered to forward info to Rock and Gem, newspapers, etc. Also to create a flyer for the February show. Jim will organize a team for planning and logistics of the show. Discussion of previous years show and how well everything went, Demonstrations were discussed: panning for gold, fossils, arrowhead making.

NEW BUSINESS: need committee for elections. Polly, Ralph, and Carol designated for committee. Elections need to be completed by November meeting.

ADJOURNED: Meeting adjourned at 7:38pm.

Upcoming Shows and Events

November 1-2: 45th Annual Gemarama 2014, sponsored by the Tuscarora Lapidary Society. School at Church Farm, 1001 Lincoln Highway, Exton, PA 19341.

November 8: 23rd Annual Richmond Gem and Mineral Society Rock Sale and Swap. Ridge Baptist Church Meeting Hall, 1515 East Ridge Road, Richmond, VA 23229.

November 22-23: 23rd Annual Gem, Mineral, and Fossil Show sponsored by the Northern Virginia Mineral Club. George Mason University Student Union II Building, Braddock Road and Rte. 123, Fairfax, VA.

Upcoming Field Trips

“Saturday, Jan 31st is our annual trip to James Madison University to visit Dr. Lance Kearns. For those new members or anyone who has never been, Dr. Kearns has one of the most complete Geology labs around, including x-ray diffraction equipment for definitive mineral ID. We take our specimens to him and he uses his knowledge and equipment to ID them. He also has surplus specimens for sale at very reasonable prices, a great opportunity to add to your collections. If that's not enough the school has a GREAT mineral museum, worth the trip all by itself. One of the few places in the WORLD where you can see Turquoise CRYSTALS!!!

We will be doing something a little different this year, a combined trip with the Montgomery County club, suggested by Jonathan Harris, their trip chair, and whole-heartedly endorsed by Dr. Kearns (it's probably one more Saturday that he will have free). Hopefully this won't make for too big a group and everyone will get a chance to get their specimens identified.”

Interested? Contact Jim at whitejs1@verizon.net

Field Trip Report:

Rainbow Rocks from Willis Mountain, Virginia

By Dave Lines



Immediately upon splitting open the large black boulder, you could see several pockets of kyanite crystals completely covered with a coating of very brightly colored iridescent hematite. They absolutely glistened in the bright sunshine with a shiny metallic luster. At last, we had finally found some Willis Mountain specimens of iridescent hematite that clearly rivaled the beauty of those found at Graves Mountain, Georgia. Unfortunately, it was time to leave ---it was 12:45 p.m. and the field trip was over in 15 minutes. Acting quickly, I continued to break apart the rather soft rock with a large (20 pound) sledge hammer and a long pointed steel chisel. Within a few minutes, I broke the 300 pound hunk in half and reduced one part into manageable chunks which were then expertly packed by Rich Simcsak into heavy duty cardboard boxes and flats in single layers. Together, we carried our finds about 30 yards to the van for the trip home. We had to leave the other half of that rock there. It broke my heart. I gave a nice hand sized specimen of the material to Mike Morris (Willis Mountain rep) in appreciation --he was ecstatic and said it would go into their display case.

The annual field trip to the Willis Mountain kyanite mine had again been superbly put together by Dave Callahan of the Lynchburg Club and hosted by the owner (Mr. Dixon) who was represented by Mike Morris. Participants were limited to 100 members of local rock and mineral clubs. Safety was paramount as all attendees were required to wear steel toed shoes, safety glasses, up to date hardhats, gloves and long pants. Additionally, all vehicles that entered the mine had to apply the parking brakes and chock their wheels when parked.



When we entered the mine in a long convoy of vehicles at 9:20 a.m., it was obvious that a great deal of mining had occurred in the past year. The usual area where we had parked on the mountain in past years was all red dirt with very few rocks. After a cursory inspection of the area, we walked to the top where many folks had already driven. The trees on top of the mountain were gone and much of the top had been removed. There was lots of fresh rock everywhere up there. Near the top the road divided and Rich went left and I went right and uphill. I saw John Haskins and his wife Nona of Lynchburg hammering with a small hammer on a good sized rock, so I asked if I could help. The upshot of this was that John drove me back down to my van which I drove back to the top so I could use my BIG sledge hammer (the 20 pounder) to break open some very hard boulders showing promising looking blue-green crystals. After about 30 minutes of work, we had some nice gemmy crystals (in matrix) of what we think is either apatite or the rare green mineral found there called "trolleite".

Then I said farewell to the now small crowd of specimen admirers that had gathered and walked further along the road toward the top. I had in mind finding some iridescent hematite because back in the summer of 1996, my son Jeff and I had stopped at Willis Mountain during a weekday and were given permission to collect that day (big difference from nowadays). I remember Jeff had walked up an old firebreak (or trail) that went almost straight to the top of the mountain and he found a good deal of iridescent hematite coating on matrix. We were both inexperienced novices at that time, but we could see that the specimens were interesting, but of little value because the iridescence was faded and the matrix was crumbly. Since that firebreak had been exactly on the opposite side of the area where I now was, I reasoned that the recent shots on the mountain top might have uncovered some better specimens. As it turned out, I was right.



At the end of the road, I walked into a small clearing at the base of a recent shot. A very friendly family ---Wayne Lee and his young son Addison and Wayne's sister Karen all of the Shenandoah Valley Club ---had already discovered some of the iridescent hematite in some small rocks which were very soft and almost crumbled when broken apart. But inside these rocks were small pockets and vugs of iridescent hematite coated kyanite crystals. I asked Wayne if I could join them and look around for more. Yes.

I spotted a double bread loaf sized rock of black hematite streaked with white quartz --and showing some small areas of iridescence. It was very soft rock, but with a small chisel and a four pound hammer, I carefully began to split off small pieces and soon revealed some nice pockets of kyanite crystal clusters coated with iridescent hematite.

They were small, but gorgeous. In the next hour or so, I collected a full flat of specimens. Meanwhile I had called Rich on the cell phone and he had joined me. As the word spread of this discovery, about a dozen other folks joined the search for more. Everyone was finding something interesting --I saw some nice blue blades of kyanite crystals --including one about 4 inches long and very gemmy.

While this was all going on, young Addison (about 10 years) was nearby pecking gently on the side of a large black rock with a small rock pick about 10 feet above and 20 feet away from our location. He was very intent on his discovery and had found some good thumbnail specimens of iridescent and botryoidal hematite.



Then along came Mike Morris (the mine rep) who immediately recognized that young Addison was in a potentially dangerous situation as the large rock (4 feet tall by 2 feet wide by 1 foot thick) was resting in a vertical position on soft sand and could fall on him and/or others. We were caught totally unaware and we should have been more observant for such dangers. Lesson learned.

Mike asked Addison to move away from the rock and Mike then pushed it over where it remained. Later, after Mike left, Wayne examined Addison's finds and decided to reinvestigate that rock. Throughout the morning, Wayne and I had been comparing our finds, so when he broke open a section of that rock and showed me two nice hand-sized specimens of iridescent hematite, I became very interested. Since it was 12:45 p.m. and time was running out and since Wayne only had small tools, he quit

and gave me the rock---(back to the first two paragraphs). When I broke it apart, I gave the first nice hand-sized specimen to young rockhound Addison. He beamed! The best one went to Mike Morris. And when we returned home to Maryland, Rich and I equally divided the remainder of the specimens. I believe there is much more of this iridescent hematite there, but it will probably be crushed and gone before we return next year.

During our drive home, Rich and I discussed the probable geological source of this beautiful material. Those of us who have collected at Willis Mountain over the years have all found a blend of white or light gray kyanite, white quartz and pyrite. The pyrite is small and is disseminated throughout the material. It is a bright and flashy material that kids love. Anyway, we surmised that when this rock mixture was subject to rain water and the atmosphere, the pyrite probably turned to sulfuric acid and seeped away -- leaving empty spaces. In these empty spaces, the released iron (Fe) combined with oxygen and dissolved in water that had trickled down through the rock. The iron oxide (hematite) was then redeposited in coatings of various thicknesses on the remaining material ---mostly kyanite --- where some of it, depending on conditions, was partly oxidized in a variety of patterns and striking colors --- every color of the rainbow. Rainbow rocks.

SMRMC OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Rich Simcsack
sadsack56@msn.com

Membership Chairman

Polly Zimmerman
polly.zimmerman@verizon.net

Programs Chairman

Penny Masuoka
pmasuoka@gmail.com

Secretary

Christine Proctor

Field Trip Chairman

Jim White
whitejs1@verizon.net

Treasurer

Cheryl Reese
cheryl_59@comcast.net

Editor

Timothy Foard
bmorebugman@yahoo.com

Webmaster

Bob Davidson
Bob.Davidson2@Yahoo.com

EFMLS/AFMS NEWS by Timothy Foard



The EFMLS Newsletter for October has an article on pet safety in the field. The EFMLS president, Hazel Remaley, delivered her farewell address. There is also an article on coffee houses, the introduction of a new club, the Lancaster County Fossil and Mineral Club, the closing of a locally well-known Montana quartz locality, the induction of 5 individuals to the Rockhound Hall of Fame, and the inclusion of a field trip to an amethyst mine during the 2015 EFMLS convention in Hickory, NC.

For more information, visit www.amfed.org.efmls



The October newsletter of the AFMS recognizes the president's concern about the closing of several collecting areas in the country by irresponsible collectors. Also in the newsletter is an article on books on rocks for young rockhounds, the AFMS land use policy, one on conservation/legislation, and a calendar for regional federation shows from 2014-2016.

For these and other information, visit www.amfed.org

Safety in the Field: Venomous Snakes

Timothy Foard

A couple of years ago I was invited to go on a spring herp walk to observe venomous snakes that were coming out of hibernation. On that survey we saw about 30 snakes, 25 of them were venomous. The area where most of the snakes were denning was in a rather remote rocky hillside in Maryland. Although the likelihood of encounter is minimal at that location, there are other, more accessible areas where such encounters are more likely. Last year I went to Mineral Hill, in Carroll County and saw 2 copperheads on the same day. One of them was stretched out on the road leading to the mine dump. I nearly stepped on it, jumping over it instead. At the mine dump, while pounding a few rocks, a second snake crawled out from the rock pile where I was standing, probably annoyed from the hammering.



Northern copperhead, Howard Co., Maryland

Within the continental United States, Maine is the only state which currently lacks venomous snakes of any kind. The number of species increases from north to south, and then again from east to west. Most northeastern states have 2 species: timber rattlesnakes and copperheads whereas most southeastern states harbor 6 species: 3 species of rattlesnakes, copperhead, cottonmouth and coral snake. Arizona holds the record for rattlesnakes; 13, and it is also the home to the coral snake, several mildly venomous rear-fanged snakes (most snakes we recognize as venomous have fangs near the front of the mouth), and the only venomous U.S. lizard, the Gila monster.

Rattlesnakes and copperheads belong to the group of venomous snakes called pit vipers because they all possess a pit organ, which is heat-detecting and is important in locating prey at short distance, close enough for the snake to strike, delivering a fatal injection of venom. These prey items are mostly small mammals, but also birds, amphibian, and other reptiles. Their venom is a cocktail of protein-digesting enzymes, a type of “super saliva”, and is only used for immobilizing food. Pit vipers have long, hollow fangs which can pivot to the rear of the mouth when the mouth is closed, and are replaceable if damaged or lost. Copperheads range in color from reddish brown to nearly pink, with distinct hourglass markings across the back. Immature copperheads have a bright yellow tail.



Timber rattlesnake, yellow phase, Frederick Co., Maryland



Timber rattlesnake, black phase, Frederick Co., Maryland

Timber rattlesnakes come in two color phases: yellow and black. The yellow phase snakes are yellowish brown with dark brown or black chevron patterns across the back. Black phase specimens are dark brown to nearly black, also with the chevrons, but are not easy to make out because they are similar in coloration to the rest of the snake.

The spring and fall are the times of the year when snakes are leaving and entering their hibernation dens, respectively. Venomous snakes, like any other reptile, are poikilothermic and cannot maintain their body temperature, like birds and mammals, but are dependent on heat from the environment to become active. Prior to entering the dens, they will sun themselves for hours daily for several days before disappearing for the winter. In the northern states these sites are often rocky areas such as hillsides or abandoned quarries, but in the southern regions where such sites are absent, abandoned animal tunnels and tunnels formed from decaying tree roots serve the same purpose.

If you are collecting in an abandoned quarry, a rock pile or a mine dump during cool, sunny days in the early spring and fall, pay close attention to where you place your hands and feet. Copperheads and rattlesnakes are incredibly hard to spot because of their cryptic coloration and their habit of remaining motionless. Rattlers do not always warn of their presence—they often rely on their camouflage to avoid detection--and it is possible to get bitten by accidentally stepping on one.

Symptoms of snake bite include severe swelling, discoloration at the site, and a great amount of pain. Antivenom is available, and if administered promptly, bites are rarely fatal. If you are bitten by a pit viper, the first thing to do is remain calm. While remaining calm, call 911 and wait for help to arrive, or get to the hospital immediately. If you are hours from the hospital if possible, remain calm, keep the bitten area below the level of the heart and get to the hospital as soon as you can, or have someone else get you there.

There are a number of snake bit kits available, but current research suggests many of these kits may actually do more harm than good. The kits often include a scalpel or sharp blade for making a small incision at the puncture site and a tourniquet or constricting band to restrict blood flow between the bite area and the heart. Use of the scalpel increases the area of tissue death and improper use of the tourniquet may completely impede blood flow, resulting in amputation of a limb, if the bite occurred there. Despite the controversy surrounding these kits, if you are bitten in a remote area hours away from a hospital, it is probably better to have one on hand than not at all.

Venomous snakes—copperheads, rattlesnakes, cottonmouths, coral, and rear-fanged snakes—are all part of the North American fauna and deserves to be respected. With basic precautions in the field, an encounter with one of these snakes doesn't have to be a feared event, but rather one that we would share with others as easily as we would share the time we found that first quartz crystal or the first shark's tooth.

Member's Finds

Photos are mostly fossils and a few artifacts found at low tide along the Potomac River at Purse State Park, Charles County, Maryland Collected by David Lines.



The Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club

Meetings take place on the 4th Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm

Clearwater Nature Center, 11000 Thrift Road, Clinton, MD.

For More information, call:

(301) 297-4575

We're on the web:

SMRMC.org

Collected any interesting specimens? Send a photo or two to the editor at bmorebugman@yahoo.com for inclusion in the next issue of Rock Talk.