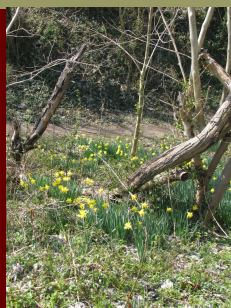


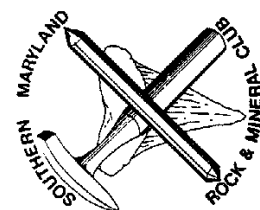
April 2011



SOUTHERN MARYLAND ROCK AND MINERAL CLUB



RockTalk



Message from the President

Attention fellow rockhounds:

Another collecting area is in jeopardy of being closed to collecting. The ALAA (American Lands Access Association) sent out a bulletin to it's members this month about a proposal by the New Mexico parks department to no longer permit rock collecting in Rockhound State Park near Deming, New Mexico. The parks department wants to make it a misdemeanor to remove any geological or biological item from within Rockhound State Park. This land was donated to the parks department in 1964 with the express purpose of providing an area for rockhounds to collect specimens. The parks department wants to eliminate rock collect-

ing and even change the name of the park to Florida Mountains State Park.

With public lands that are accessible for collecting constantly shrinking, this is a major blow for our hobby. Rockhounds are encouraged to get involved in the political process and send letters of protest about this proposal to the parks department in New Mexico. Many people (myself included) have already sent their letters of protest, but many more will be needed to help save this collecting area. A writing campaign can be a very effective tool if enough people participate. For more information on this critical issue, please visit the ALAA website at: www.amlands.org. They have a copy of

the revised Management Plan for Rockhound State Park and sample letters that you can read and choose some comments and points for your letter of protest. We all need to get involved and become rockhound activists if we want to keep public lands open to the public! Please send an email to the New Mexico parks department stating your opposition to this proposal to :

nmparks@state.nm.us

Thank you,
Tina

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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



EFMLS's April newsletter includes information about September's Wildacres classes. There are also a couple of pictures showing Wildacres in the snow, something that will be gone when people arrive for class.

There is also a great safety article on Oxalic Acid. This is something most people use to clean their finds and need to make sure they are being safe while using. A must-read if you are planning on using for the first time!

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



The American Federation Newsletter has a very interesting article about a 12,000 carat Tanzanite found in Tanzania. Check out April's newsletter to see the amazing picture of this spectacular blue stone!

There is also a great poem called "The Geologist's Lament." Every rockhound can see the truth and humor that this poem presents. Go check it out.

For more information, visit www.amfed.org

Upcoming Shows and Events

Submitted by Ralph Gamba

May 7-8, 2011 Primitive Technology Weekend. Oregon Ridge State Park Nature Center, 13555 Beaver Dam Rd, Cockeysville, MD 21030 Directions: Baltimore Beltway (I-695) to I-83 Exit 20-B to Shawan Rd (west) for 1 mile. Left at 1st light onto Beaver Dam Rd. (which forks immediately - take right fork) and follow to Nature Center work area. Phone: 410-887-1815. (Thank you Dave for the information.)

May 14, 2011 Lake Anna Swap. Lake Anna State Park, VA.

May 21 2011 Chesapeake Gem & Mineral Show - Saturday, 10am-4pm
Ruhl Armory, 1035 York Rd Towson MD 21204

If anyone has information on any other local shows or rock events, contact Ralph Gamba at rgamba@verizon.net, so they can be included in this list.

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

Cover Photo taken by Jessica Dixon

March Minutes

By Cheryl Reese

DATE: March 22, 2011 Meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m.

GUESTS WERE WELCOMED AND INTRODUCED. There were 2 new guests

TREASURER: No changes

MEMBERSHIP: There are 77 current paid up-to-date members

PROGRAMS: There are openings for May, June, July and November for programs. Please see Linda if you have a program you would like to give. Bob offered his Opal DVD if needed.

FIELD TRIPS: 4 members attended Dixie iron mine trip, Dave presented his specimens found there.

March 26th Chestnut Ridge - Possibility of cancellation due to weather.

April 12th Morefield Mine - 10:00-4:30 \$12.00 fee. Dave trip leader

April 26-28 Irvine Kentucky Agate hunt. See Tina for info. if interested

April 29-May 1 Lexington Kentucky Rock and Mineral show, info at

www.mountainmushroomfestival.com

May 7,8 Primitive Technology weekend at Oregon Ridge State Park 10:00-4:00

May 9-14 Herkimer Diamond Mine, Herkimer, New York. Bob is leading this trip, must supply own transportation, stay as little or as long as you want.

May 14 EFMLS Region 4 Lake Anna Picnic and Swap, bring a side dish

May 28th Aurora, No. Carolina 18th annual Fossil Festival with tours of PCS mine and fossil auction at 3:00. See Dave for info.

EDITOR: Jessica welcomes new ideas and articles for newsletter

WEBMASTER: New video clip of a rock show and the latest field trips and Rock talk has been added to the site.

OLD BUSINESS: No old business

NEW BUSINESS: Donation of approx. 200 pounds of rocks ,agate etc. to the nature center. Bob has catalogued it, Michael is using some for his programs, and Bob is using some for his cabochon class. The rest will be auctioned off at the August meeting.

There was a discussion about providing gas money or an honorarium for next month's meeting program, that was requested by the presenter. A motion was made and passed not to provide this honorarium. The program will be The Gems of Brazil.

ADJOURNED: Meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m. followed by a short break and a program by Dave about Quartzite Arizona 2011 that he attended in January

No Crowds and Lots of Topaz

By Dave Lines



The Morefield Mine *on a Tuesday* is a beautiful sight to behold. *The place was nearly deserted!* What a great time of week to make a field trip! The seven souls (* Dave, Steve, Polly, Lorna, Ralph, Mary, Jim) from the Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club had absolutely zero competition when we arrived --- we were the ONLY customers.

When we went into the shop about 10 a.m., Sharon welcomed us with a big smile. Sam was working underground on the 60 foot level so we did not see him until he emerged a couple of hours later. After a group picture with Sharon, we trickled --- one or two at a time --- down into the first dump area to see what we could find in the “leftovers” from the dumps of previous week.

We felt no particular sense of urgency. There was plenty of time to carefully search the ground. Stuff was easy to see --- the specimens on top had been washed clean from rains over the previous weekend. Right away, Ralph found a large mica crystal discarded near the sluice, and a few minutes later in the dump area, he scratched out large chunk of amazonite. We all found small pieces of amazonite and smaller mica crystals. “Salted” amethyst pieces and petrified wood (common opal) seemed to be everywhere. Ralph seemed to have a trained eye for the less common specimens --- microlite, tantalite and fluorite --- and began finding and giving them to everyone.

Eventually, a few more customers arrived and joined us in the dump area. Mary from Salem, Oregon was one of these. An older lady --- she was retired and visiting family in Virginia. At first, Mary was unsure what to do, so we (ever friendly rock hounds) came to her rescue and helped her by explaining and showing her how to recognize some of the many different minerals there. As she began finding more specimens, her confidence skyrocketed. She was thrilled that she had “discovered” the Morefield.

Around 11 a.m., a small group of private school kids and their 4th grade science teacher with a couple of parents arrived from Charlottesville. Our solitude instantly became noisy and bustling as the chattering kids fanned out picking up colorful and shiny rocks and digging everywhere. Of course, we helped them, too. It was fun to see their little faces beam when we tossed them a piece of purple amethyst or a shiny quartz crystal.

The second dump area opened soon after the kids came and we spread out to find more goodies. We found many interesting minerals --- did I mention “topaz”? About 30 minutes earlier, I had found a small piece in the first dump area while scratching through some red muddy dirt. It was pure luck. It was heavy, clear, had a classic greasy feel and quartz would not scratch it. I was ecstatic --- my first topaz crystal find in my 16 years of coming to the Morefield. I happily showed it to everyone.

Well, wouldn't you know, I found another one in the second dump area --- laying right on top --- well almost. I was down on my knees scratching through the old material from the previous week, when I spotted a clear and very shiny face of a stone in the ground laying flush with surface. As I flipped it out with my garden scratcher, I looked over and realized that Jim had seen it almost at the same time. We both knew instantly that it was another topaz crystal. It was larger --- about 1 inch long by 3/4 inch wide by 1/2 inch thick --- and seemed very clear. Lorna said it would facet into a nice

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No Crowds and Lots of Topaz

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stone, but I said “Never!!!”

After that, we were all really pumped for finding more topaz. And guess what? That lady from Oregon dug another one up about 10 feet from where I had found mine. It was about the size of mine but was only a corner of a larger crystal --- pretty clear --- a nice specimen. And later, near the end of the day, Jim found another one about 15 feet away from that. His was smaller, but I think it is definitely topaz. Sam was less sure and said it could also be phenakite --- a bit lighter mineral with a higher refractivity index.

About 12:30 or so, Sam started up the dozer and made a fresh dump in the second dump area. Interestingly, I took a picture of the customers awaiting Sam’s “okay” signal. Wow --- only 21 people were lined up. Compare that to some previous Saturdays when several *hundred* people lined up to pounce on each fresh load of material. I could get used to these mid-week trips. Incidentally, I think any club member can call Sharon at the Mine or at home (phone numbers are on the web at www.MorefieldGemMine.com) and if you explain who you are, she would probably let you come down on a weekday --- especially on Tuesdays --- as long as there was room.

The fresh dump was a bit “thin”. There seemed to be less amazonite than in previous years, but it was enough to keep everyone interested. The little school kids did very well and, being quicker than us old folks, did a great job of scooping up the larger specimens of mica and amazonite.

Later when things calmed down, I was talking with Jim and he said that Sam had told him that they were now selling the amazonite from the 60 foot level to a buyer for \$25.00 per pound. Wow --- that just increased the value of our Morefield amazonite collections by a factor of five! Last October, Sam was selling it in the mine store for only \$5.00 a pound. (We should have purchased more!) During mid afternoon, I also noticed that a hired worker was picking out all the larger chunks of amazonite from the stockpile area and setting it aside in buckets. I guess the good old days when Sam spread out everything for the customers are over.

Our new member Steve (my good friend from our UVA college years together) --- despite being a farmer and a retired pharmacist --- has always been interested in rocks and minerals. In fact, he was the person who first showed me where to find blue quartz and unakite over in Madison County back in 1995. Anyway, he had a great first visit to the Morefield enjoying all that it has to offer and took home a nice selection of minerals.

Jim was persistent --- especially in the afternoon when he found a 1 inch by 1 inch section of yellow beryl crystal near the “salted garnet area”. Later he spent quite a while digging a good sized hole in the middle of the second dump area. He had the whole place to himself when the school kids left about 3 p.m..



And I should mention --- the weather was absolutely perfect. Mostly cloudy and about 65 to 70 degrees. Again, the National Weather Service had been predicting 60 percent chance of rain all day right up to when I left the house that morning. Thanks again, Big Guy in the



Fossil Trip-April 9, 2011

By Sandy Lyon

The Northern Virginia Club invited others to a fossil hunting field trip near Wolf Gap, VA and Sam and I attended. In total, over 20 people attended including a 5 year old and a well acclaimed 15 years old fossil identifier named Alec Brennen. We met the group at I 81 and Rt 42 at Woodstock, VA. The weather was nice, the roadside where we stopped had amply parking, and the people were cordial! The first rock I broke open also had a nice totally in tack brachiopod. My fossil sniffing husband immediately climbed the cliff of loosely packed shale and starting finding several 1.5 " brachiopods. These fossils are within the Mahantango Formation. We stayed there until we thought the rock above was just a tad unstable. Across the road was a nice creek and others were finding crinoids and horned coral. The largest horned coral, pictured below, was found by Mary from the Northern Virginia Club. With help splitting the 2 foot boulder that it was in, she secured both parts of the fossil. I on the other hand was checking out the feasibility of kayaking in the creek! Larry Kerston , from the Kentucky Club, who lives in West Va. shared some quartz from Arkansas, two types of coral and gastropods found near Bardstown, Kentucky.

We stayed at this site till noon then explored another site in West Virginia, just a few miles away, in search of trilobites. After some patience, we found samples perfect for my micromount collection! Alec identified them at lace trilobites. There were also small crinoids in the shale. The trip ended about 2 or 2:30 as folks departed for home. We thanked Ted for opening up his trip to us and other clubs. Pictures will be emailed to him from the rest of the group.

Planning Ahead

By Dave Lines

"Now is the time to plan longer range trips. These events and websites are for those of us who would like to plan and execute field trips to famous mineral collecting locations on an "on-your-own basis". Dave Lines can give you further info based on his experience at these locations.

<u>Days/Dates</u>	<u>Location</u> <u>Minerals found</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Website (key info)</u>
Fri-Sat-Sun, April 29-30, May 1 commercial-gravesmountain.html	Graves Mtn, GA rutile, iridescent hematite, lazulite	Swap and Dig	www.gamineral.org/
Fri-Sat-Sun, October 7-8-9, 2011 commercial-gravesmountain.html	Graves Mtn, GA rutile, iridescent hematite, lazulite	Swap and Dig	www.gamineral.org/
Sat-Sun, October, 8-9, 2011 tronagemclub/GEM-O-RAMA.html	Trona, CA hanksite, pink halite	70th Gem-o-rama	www1.iwvisp.com/
Thu-Fri-Sat, October 7-8-9, 2011 ber.com/crystal_dig_rules.html	Mt. Ida, AK quartz crystals"	25th World Championship Quartz Crystal Dig	www.mtidacham

Message from the Editor

By Jessica Dixon

Happy Spring everyone. I hope as the weather continues to warm that everyone is finding a way to get out and do some Rockhounding. Spring is extremely busy for me and I am always lucky to be getting out on any trips at all. I was pleased to be able to experience something new with the club, however. I finally took Bob's Cabochon Class!

I have seen some of the amazing pieces others have done by using the equipment downstairs at the Nature Center. And I keep telling myself I need to take the class. At the beginning of April, I finally took the class. I got up Saturday morning, found some clothes I knew I could get dirty, grabbed a cup of coffee, and headed to the class. I took the class with 3 others, 2 of whom had some experience on their own, but needed to learn our equipment.

Bob began by running us through all of the different machines. We then got to choose our first piece that we wanted to cab. Then we were walked step-by-step of the process: cutting out the piece we wanted, grinding to make our oval shape, grinding to make the rounded top, moving to higher grits in order to smooth out our shapes, and finally polishing and mounting our finished pieces. It was such a good feeling to finish that first piece. My first piece reminded me of a candy corn. I loved it!

After finishing our first piece, we were then able to pick out another piece and work our way through the process on our own (with Bob keeping a watchful eye). I chose a piece of the jasper Bob cut a slab of to demonstrate the process. It was too good to pass up. I was pleased to discover I had picked up on the process quickly and felt comfortable using the machines.

I am so glad I finally took the class. I can't wait to go back and do some more. I am even looking forward to doing some free-form pieces, just to see what I come up with.

So, this spring, try something new, go somewhere you've never been before. You get to experience something awesome and feel a sense of accomplishment and pride.

And, remember...you can write up a short article and share your new experience with everyone else in the club. You might even convince others to try it too!



If the Weather Forecast is Bad, Just Keep Praying

By Dave Lines



Planning a long distance trip around the weather is a matter of patience, perseverance and praying. Since Chestnut Ridge in Virginia is 200 miles from Southern Maryland and since it was late March and since the weather forecast cycled all week from good to terrible --- the outcome was simply above my pay grade. On Monday the weather guys said it would be cloudy and 43 on Saturday. On Tuesday, it changed to 40% chance of rain on Saturday. On Wednesday, they said 80% chance of rain on Saturday. On Thursday, they said 70% chance of rain and snow on Friday night with a 40% chance of rain

all day on Saturday. On Friday morning, the forecast changed again to cloudy with a high of 43 on Saturday --- so we decided to go and an email went to everyone saying to meet at the Burger King in Staunton at 8 a.m. on Saturday morning.

The weather on Saturday turned out to be perfect --- especially for a long hike up a steep mountain --- cool (mid 40's), cloudy and a calm wind. Thank you, Big Guy in the Sky!!

Eighteen (18)* eager rock hounds from 3 clubs showed up for our (more or less) "Annual Field Trip to *Quartz Crystal Paradise*" --- at least around these parts, it is "crystal paradise". Plenty of quartz crystals for everyone. *But* --- and there is always a "but" --- you have to hike up over 1,000 feet vertically during a one mile *vigorous* hike (think *Marine Corps* vigorous) over loose rocks, boulders, old logs, fallen leaves and a steep mountain side to reach the best ones.

Despite the challenges, everyone who is determined to reach the top, will do so. The hike up takes anywhere from 1 to 3 hours. [The trip back down is usually faster --- about an hour.] This day, those in the lead --- following Dave's survey-tape-festooned-trail --- reached quartz crystal paradise in 1 hour.

One of those very first club members was 8 year old Christopher. Within seconds, he began picking up crystals. The intensity of purpose displayed by this young man was a sight to behold. Head bent down, eyes focused on the ground, searching carefully for the slightest telltale sparkle. It would make all old rock hounds everywhere grin and nod with knowing approval that the future of our hobby was going to be in good hands. And within a very few minutes, Christopher held up his first big crystal --- a nice clear one --- his face beamed --- his eyes said "Eureka!! I found it!!"

As the others reached the top and spread out to search for crystals, the oohs and aaahs increased. The satisfaction and joy of finding crystals was evident in everyone. When the second youngster (Anna) arrived, I sent Anna and Christopher a few more yards further to the very top to search the ground for exposed crystals --- they found lots of them in short order. They were very happy.

But I was not --- because the ground (much to my surprise --- and dismay) had been extensively torn up by a recent unknown person or persons. Across a 20 by 20 foot area there were several holes up to 2 feet deep that were still open and not filled in. There was trash. The bare dirt and rock piles had been rained on several times, but mud and silt had washed down from the area --- and also left the crystal faces easy to spot --- nice for the kids to find crystals,

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Weather Forecast

CONTINUED

but terrible for the image of rock hounds. This person is not a rock hound. In my opinion, whoever left this devastation is a jerk. I hope they read this.

Here is another message for them: "Don't come back --- unless you fill in your holes, spread some old leaves over your digging area to reduce erosion and pick up all your trash and take it back down the mountain with you. Your actions were reprehensible and could get this area closed to all future crystal collecting."

For the record, before we departed, we filled in all the holes and smoothed down the dirt and rock piles and scattered dry leaves and old rotten logs and limbs over the entire area. "Thank you" to our group for doing a super job of clean up. We left it looking more like the surrounding woods --- instead of the eyesore that we found upon arrival. Nuff said.

Overall, the crystal collecting for everyone was good --- especially so for the experienced folks who had been there previously. The first timers always find many, many crystals but I am sure that when their items were cleaned at home, there may have been some disappointment because the material looked better on top the mountain. The keys seems to be: (1) keep searching until you find a spot that has whatever you are seeking --- clear crystals, small or large clusters without damaged points, larger singles; (2) be selective and keep only the very best; (3) use a small, stiff scrub brush to remove the dirt and clay from the specimens so you can examine them before you decide to keep them; (4) wrap your specimens well in old newspaper before you take them down the mountain to prevent damage caused by the specimens rubbing against each other.

Safety-wise, there were no accidents, although one club member had some trouble with the return trip downhill because his shoes soles were *smooth* --- as a result, he kept slipping on the dry leaves. The last folks returned to the parking area by 5:30 p.m.. Overall, we had a great trip.

(* Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club members included Joe and Paula, Jim, Rich, Harry and Tina, Steve and Christopher, and Dave L.;

Northern Virginia Mineral Club members include Ted and Anna and Tai (sp?);

Shenandoah Valley Gem and Mineral Society members included Dean, Scott G., Leonard, Jerry, Sue and Sherry.)





ROCKTALK

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

Next Meeting
April 26, 2011
7:00 PM

We're on the web:

SMRMC.org

April's
Refreshments/
Programs

Refreshments:

Linda Conboy

Program:

Colors of Brazil

Guest Speaker : Denise Nelson

Will discuss the gems of Brazil. She will also have gems to sell.