

An Impromptu Nanjemoy Wildlife Management Area (formerly Purse State Park) Field Trip

by Dave Lines



So many times, I have emailed a very short notice field trip announcement for a fossil trip during the winter months. Often as not, there is seldom any feedback from other club members who may have taken advantage of the tidal conditions and ventured out to find for some fossils. The winter months have lower low tides than the summer months because of two factors --- first, the gravitational pull from the moon and the sun are greater in winter because the earth is actually closer to the sun. 2nd, due to the north-south arrangement of the Chesapeake Bay, the tides are lower when the wind is from the north or northwest --- a condition which occurs more often during the winter months. And from personal experience, the best months are usually November and December because the river water and the beaches are still relative warm and well above freezing --- so there is no ice and snow on the beaches.

I emailed all club members early on Nov 23rd that it would be a good day to go fossil hunting because of the new moon and NW winds --- and for the Potomac River because the low tide was at mid-day in western Charles County. So, my visiting son Jeff and I went to Purse and arrived about 10 AM. The tide was already way out and still falling. And the NW winds were very light. The river was flat calm. Perfect conditions.



Some of the turrifera fossils we found



Patuxent River Stone (Maryland State Gemstone)

Jeff and I headed downriver and spent about 4 hours looking. We found turritlella fossil molds, Patuxent River Stone (Maryland State Gemstone)



2 interesting rock we found
1st one is Smokey Quartz
(unusual to find at this location)
2nd one was tan quartzite which had lines created
by thin quartz plates (very unusual)



The only 3 sharks teeth I found, too much new sand and gravel had covered up the beach.



and various odd rocks, but only a few shark's teeth. My guess is that recent storms/high waves had thrown up a great deal of fresh sand on the beach, although some areas were predominantly gravel.

I noticed lots of fresh deer and coyote tracks in the beach sand. In fact, in one area there were the signs of a major fight between two groups of coyotes --- perhaps over territory. For about 50 yards on the beach, the coyote tracks showed that many coyotes had been running and jumping and leaping --- the beach sand was all torn up -- and there were tufts of coyote fur laying on top --- a sure sign of a ferocious fight. You never know what you will find out there. Further down the beach I saw where a pack of 6 coyotes had tried to ambush a group of 4 whitetail deer. The deer had fled and out run the coyotes. Kind of creepy as to what goes on out on those lonely beaches.



Anyway, my son and I had a good day. When we returned along the beach, all those kids that came with there parents had constructed several large forts out of driftwood --- and were still building more as we passed by. Just goes to show you how different people have fun.