

Fossil Club of Lee County

March 2006

Message From The President

Hello!! Time for another fossil club meeting. What is special about this month's meeting is that it is our **annual auction**. We currently have about 100 lots to sell, each with great items. They range from books, artwork, gift certificates to fossils, a tent and a telescope. We also have a large glass front cabinet to house your fossils in, and several smaller ready made fossil collections, some jewelry and gems. Make sure you arrive on time, as we start the meeting promptly at 7 p.m. When you get inside make sure you get your bidding number before viewing the auction items. After getting a good look, please sit down so others can also look. We had a great auction last year, doing well financially as well as everyone having a good time. This meeting will be longer than most as it takes a while to auction all the great stuff!! I will be the auctioneer, along with Michael Orchin to help me conserve my voice. Bring a few bucks and hopefully you will go home with some nice items.

Please do not bring any items to be sold at auction on the night of the meeting, especially without letting me know in advance. If any items are brought they will be held back and used another time. Thanks to everybody that contributed the items we currently have.

The Aurora, North Carolina, fossil hunting trip on March 26 has been cancelled. We had to return the spots as a club can only have spots once a year and Sandy Schwartz had already procured 10 spots for April 23. We currently have two openings left for that date, so if you want to go, please let me or Sandy know. The members signed up to go on that trip are Sandy Schwartz, Michael Orchin, Sharen and Tedd Leighton-Herman, Louis and Leslie Stieffel, Donna Johnson and Al Govin. We will probably be able to hunt other pits beside the Lee Creek mine at Aurora. Anyone not knowing about this trip needs to attend the meetings, so as not to miss out on things!!!

A trip to the Orange River is to be held on March 4th

Another trip is tentatively scheduled for March 18 for the Peace River. We will meet at Crews park in Wauchula at 9:30 am. Call me (Louis) or Al with questions.

The **FCOLC** was represented at the Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife Owl Fest on Feb. 18th. We had a table promoting the club with some fossils and two of our display cases. It was amazing how many people believed Ray and me, that the large whale vertebra was actually from the extinct giant ground owl!!!! Of course, dependable Ray Seguin was

there. Also, John and Elsa Reilly and Carl and Amber Fricke, Leslie and I. We handed out literature about the club until it ran out. We answered questions and signed on three new members, all of them owls.

This club, as you can see, does a lot of things, and volunteers are always needed. The club belongs to each and every member, with no one signing on to be served by the others or anyone joining to serve everybody else, so do your part. If the same members do it all they get used up, and one day--no more club!!!!!! Get involved!!!



Ray with giant owl vertebra

This month's meeting will be our auction, so no \$1 raffle table or door prize or show and tell. Be on time and bring lots of money!!! See you there!!

Louis Stieffel, Pres. F.C.O.L.C.

March Meeting

The March meeting will be held on Thursday March 16th at 7:00 p.m. at the Calusa Nature Center located at Ortiz and Colonial Blvd. We will have our "**Annual Auction.**" This is a lot of fun and an opportunity to get specimens you do not yet have. Bring lots of money.

April Meeting

Our speaker in April will be Steven Wilson, who will talk about Invertebrate Fossils of

Southwest Florida. He will deal with collecting techniques and what to do with your fossils when you get them home. He will also talk a little on the vertebrate fossils that are found in association with the Shells.

Michael Orchin's Fossil Outing

Michael invited the club to join him in Wauchula for a hunt on Feb. 26th. Rain was threatening in Fort Myers but a few hearty souls braved the weather. The water was too high at Wauchula so we went back to Brownsville. The water was up a little and the current swift. Sue Coller, Michael with several borrowed kids, Barry Rogers, Paul Rozycki and Sandy

Schwartz showed up. Later in the afternoon it started getting cold but we each found something and had fun. Proving once again that a bad day fossil hunting is better than a good day doing yard work.

Coming Events

Tampa Bay Fossil Show: March 11 & 12

FCOLC Annual Auction: March 16th

Venice Shark's Tooth Festival: April 7,8,9

Fossil Trip to Aurora, N.C. April 23rd.

Minutes of Meeting of Fossil Club of Lee County

A meeting of the membership of the Lee County Paleontological Society was held at the time, date, and place set forth below.

Date of Meeting: February 15, 2006
Meeting Time: 7:00 P.M.
Meeting Place: Caloosa Nature Center
Number in attendance: 39.
Louis Stieffel presiding.

Thanks go to Dr. Charles Connor for his excellent talk on fossils.

March meeting is our annual auction. Get to March meeting on time, so we can start auction on time.

March 4, 2006: Orange River Trip, meet at Cracker Barrel restaurant @ 9:30 AM, need screen and shovel, call Al Govin to Purchase screen.

We are going to have a table at the Owl Festival.

Aurora, N.C. trip have 10 spots for April 23rd and 5 spots for March 26th, see sign up sheet. March 11 and 12 are the Tampa Bay Fossil Show.

Venice Shark Tooth Festival is April 7, 8, & 9. Steve Wilson will speak at our April meeting. Ray Sequin brought a large loggerhead turtle shell and head that belong to Turtletime.

April nominate and vote on officers and take office in May.

Need volunteers for chairman of next years Fossil Festival.

Peace River is reportedly low right now.

Secretary

Officers

Louis Stieffel, President: (239) 458-9818
E-mail Cape187@earthlink.net
Ray Sequin: Treasurer 939-1921/936-5019

Chuck Ferber, Secretary: 541-9424
Jerry Graham: (941) 423-0803
John Reilly, Vice President: 482-7787

Committees

Website: Curtis Klug
Fossil Show: Michael Orchin and Louis Steiffel
Trip Director: Al Govin and Debra Powell
Newsletter: Sandy Schwartz
Speakers: Louis Stieffel
\$1. Raffle: Jerry and Loretta Graham
Auction: Louis Stieffel
Publicity: Carl Fricke

Visit our web site www.fcolc.com
For club information, trip
pictures and links

Brownsville River Trip

By Donna Johnson

On January 14th, approximately 15 diehard fossil hunters braved the 30 mph winds and fairly high water of the Peace River. The River has not cooperated in a long time and although the level was not as low as we would have liked, it was finally "do-able".

Club members were met in the parking area by Al Govin who showed us the way to our hunt location through the wooded area along the riverbank. We turned left at Ray's hat. We crossed some water to an area perfect for fossil hunting. We had such fun! I noticed that Michael Orchin used his shovel as a pole stand for his screen and immediately started using mine in the same way....much easier on the back. DJ Lorenze learned to have a pocket or waist bag on for future trips to secure treasures. This trip, she looked like a chipmunk as she was holding many small sharks teeth in her mouth. She was finding these in piles left by those using larger mesh screens.

As I looked for my "finds" in my screen, I

also enjoyed watching the kayaks and canoes flying down the river...the tide and strong wind at their backs. I also enjoyed the extra attention our president and trip director give to every club hunter. They make you feel included and help you identify your fossils as well as help you disregard those rock mimics. Thank you Louis and Al.

Wauchula River Trip

By Donna Johnson

On February 4th, a group of about six decided that rain or snow, we were going fossil hunting. Al Govin, our fearless trip director, met us at Crews Park. We all had driven through a nasty storm to get there, but the rain was South of us and although it was overcast, we stayed dry until we waded into the water. The river was quite high and at 5'2", I could not go very far from the shoreline. We all found a few fossils but the river continued to get higher and we ended the day after a couple hours just as it started to drizzle. Before we left though, Al pointed out the best areas to try in the future and where you can snorkel to check out the bottom as well (when it is warmer for this tropical girl). I had a great time and now know another place I can explore. We all appreciate the time it takes to plan these trips.

Fossil News February 23, 2006

Journal of Sciences

Fossil Overturns Ideas of Jurassic Mammals

By Randolph E. Schmid

The discovery of a furry, beaver-like animal that lived at the time of dinosaurs has overturned more than a century of scientific thinking about Jurassic mammals.

The find shows that the ecological role of

mammals in the time of dinosaurs was far greater than previously thought, said Zhe-Xi Luo, curator of vertebrate paleontology at Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh.

The animal is the earliest swimming mammal to have been found and was the most primitive mammal to be preserved with fur, Luo said in a telephone interview.

For over a century, the stereotype of mammals living in that era has been of tiny, shrew-like creatures scurrying about in the underbrush trying to avoid the giant creatures that dominated the planet, Luo commented.

Now, a research team that included Luo has found that 164 million years ago, the newly discovered mammal with a flat, scaly tail like a beaver, vertebra like an otter and teeth like a seal was swimming in lakes and eating fish.

The team, led by Qiang Ji of the Chinese Academy of Geological Sciences in Beijing, discovered the remains in the Inner Mongolia region of China. They report their findings in Friday's issue of the Journal of Science.

An important factor is how specialized the creature was, said Matthew Carrano, curator of dinosaurs at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History.

"It gives a hint that early mammals were not just these shadowy creatures at the time of dinosaurs" but were having their own evolution. There have been hints of such animals in the past but nothing equal to the remains found by Luo and colleagues, he said.

Thomas Martin of the Research Institute of Senckenberg in Frankfurt, Germany, said the discovery pushes back the mammal conquest of the waters by more than 100 million

years.”This exciting fossil is a further jigsaw puzzle piece in a series of recent discoveries,” commented Martin, who was not part of Luo’s team.

It’s the first evidence that some ancient mammals were semi-aquatic, indicating a greater diversification than previously thought, the researchers said.

Modern semi-aquatic mammals such as beavers and otters and aquatic mammals like whales did not appear until between 55 million years ago and 25 million years ago, according to the researchers.

The new animal is not related to modern beavers or otters but has features similar to them. Thus the researchers named it *Castorocauda lutrasmilis*. *Castoro* from the Latin for beaver, *cauda* for tail, *lutra* for river otter and *similis* meaning similar.

The researchers found imprints of the fur, both guard hairs and short, dense under fur that would have kept water from the skin.

Weighing in at between 1.1 and 1.7 pounds, about the size of a small female platypus, *Castorocauda* is also the largest known Jurassic early mammal.