



FOSSIL CLUB OF LEE COUNTY

MARCH 2013



Message from the President

Greetings fellow members and friends,

We always look forward to getting together in March. That's when we hold our Annual Auction, which is a fun event, lots of good thing to eat, and an opportunity to bid on a wide variety of fossils and other things you just might need!

We need to thank all the good people who make our event an annual success story. First of all, we thank the many members who generously donate items for the auction. We thank the several volunteers who organize the event. And we thank all those members and invited guests who are always generous with their bidding. (No stingy people in our club.)

As far thanking individual members, we always appreciate the Barefoot Beachcombers who have graciously spoiled us with their hospitality----they bring in a variety of beverages, hot and cold dishes and several wonderful desserts.



I am particularly thankful for our VP Mike Siciliano, who always makes a major contribution to the Auction event, for doing even much more this year as he picked up most of the work I usually do in February and March. He and Louis Steiffel, our Club Auctioneer, and Pam Plummer, Club Treasurer will bring you a great auction this year!

As a result of some recent serious on-going health issues I will not be able to attend the Auction this year, but I want everyone to come and enjoy themselves. Have an extra piece of dessert for me!

My best wishes and regards to all,

Bill

Thank you!

Next Meeting

Our next meeting is the auction, **March 21st**, which begins 5:30 pm at Zion Lutheran Church, 7401 Winkler Rd, Fort Myers, FL 33919.

OFFICERS

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COMMITTEES

Jack Boyce, Newsletter Publisher

Cherie Neat, Newsletter Designer

Curt Klug, Web Master

Bill Shaver, Speakers

Louis Stieffel, Auctioneer

Kathy Pawlowski, Club Merchandise

Pam Plummer, Club Badges

Pam Plummer, Membership

Joshua Frank, Refreshments

Dean Hart, Refreshments co-chairman

Gunther Lobish, Pit Trips

Michael Siciliano, Raffle and Dive Trips

Coby Pawlowski, Youth Activities Director

Jack Boyce, Club Photographer & Peace River Trips

Gunther Lobish, Invertebrate Education

Louis Stieffel, Vertebrate Education

CLUB REFRESHMENTS

For the month of March, the Bonita Beach Combers will honor us with their traditional spread, which is a real bonus and another good reason for attending our Annual Auction meeting.

Jack Boyce and Bobby Joe Sherrill have volunteered to do refreshments for April and we thank them for their support.

Joshua and Dean Hart will have a sign-up sheet at the March meeting. Your support of your club is appreciated.

The club will reimburse you for reasonable expenses and also the club provides the beverage coolers. Everyone is invited to participate.

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY MEETING THE FOSSIL CLUB OF LEE COUNTY, INC

Date: February 21st, 2013

Place: Zion Lutheran Church Hall

Attendance: 61

Presided by:

Louis Stieffel announced that Bill Shaver, Club President has health issues and may miss a couple of FCOLC club meetings. In Bill's absence, either Vice President Mike Siciliano or Louis Stieffel would preside over the monthly meetings.

Topics:

- ✓ If you have anything for next month auction please give it to me before you leave tonight. Auction item viewing begins at 5:30pm and the Auction begins at 6:00pm on March 21st;
- ✓ Joshua Frank brought the snacks this month and next month Bonita Beach Combers will bring snacks;
- ✓ Thank you Ray Seguin for the door prizes every month;
- ✓ Jack Boyce is in charge of the trips. Jack will lead a March 2nd trip to Arcadia for fossil hunting; signup sheet is in rear of room and all participants will meet at the boat ramp at 9am;
- ✓ The club will hold Election voting at the April FCOLC meeting
- ✓ Our speaker tonight is Chuck Zietsma and he will combine a slide show and discussion talking about searching for and collecting Ammonites in Canada. Chuck also brought a wide variety of colorful Ammonites for Show and Tell;
- ✓ Additional Show and Tell was provided by: Don Simons, Coby Pawlowski, Vickie Manderfield, and Gunther Lobish.

Submitted by: Club Secretary, Kathy Pawlowski

Zion Lutheran Church

is located at 7401 Winkler Road in Fort Myers.

Directions:

RT 41 going south, turn west on Cypress Lake Drive, then south on Winkler Road. Go a couple of miles, the church will be on your left just before the traffic light.

From RT 41 going north, turn west on Gladiolus, go under the overpass, and turn north on Winkler, the church will be on your right just past the Sweet Bay Market.

Call 239-834-0694 (Bill) or 239-980-1406 (Mike) if you have any questions or need help.

Happy 
St. Patricks Day

Websites & Locations of Interest

Fossil Club of Lee County: www.fcolc.com

Museum of Natural History @ Gainesville
www.flmnh.ufl.edu/

Florida Vertebrate Fossil Permit <http://flmnh.ufl.edu/natsci/vertpaleo/vppermit.htm>

Southwest Florida Fossil Club
www.southwestfloridafossilclub.com

Orlando Fossil Club
www.floridafossilhunters.com

PEACE RIVER Water Levels
www.canoecanoeoutpost.com

Mark Renz's Fossil Expeditions
www.fossilx@earthlink.net

Smithsonian Natural History Museum
www.mnh.si.edu

Florida Fossil Clubs
www.fossil-treasures-of-florida.com

Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife Burrowing Owls
www.ccfriendsofwildlife.org

Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium 3450 Ortiz Av, Fort Myers Tel 239-275-3435
www.calusanature.com

Imaginarium 2000 Cranford Ave, Fort Myers
www.i-sci.org

Southwest Florida Museum of History 2031 Jackson St., Fort Myers www.MUSEUMofHISTORY.org

The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum, 3075 Sanibel-Captiva Rd, Sanibel, FL www.shellmuseum.org

Randell Research Center PO Box 608, Pineland, FL
www.flmnh.ufl.edu/RRC/

Cracker Museum at Pioneer Park in Zolfo Springs, FL Tel 863.735.0119

Lost in Time, 4719 69th Street, N. St Petersburg, FL 33709, Tel. 727-541-2567 Owner Brian Evensen

Tampa Bay Fossil Club
www.tampabayfossilclub.com

Picking Up Isolated Native American Artifacts
<http://dhr.dos.state.fl.us/archaeology/> underwater/ finds

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS AND SPEAKERS

- March 2nd FCOLC River trip – Postponed to April date TBD
- March 9th Calusa Heritage Day, Randell Research Center, Pineland
- March 21st FCOLC Annual Auction at Zion Lutheran Church
- March 23rd/24th Tampa Bay Fossil Fest 2013
www.tampabayfossilclub.com
- March 30th Fossil Show at Cape Coral Parks and Recreation/FCOLC Exhibit
- April 12th, 13th and 14th 21st Annual Venice Shark Tooth Festival
- April 18th FCOLC Monthly Meeting at Iona House Calusa Nature Center
- April 18th Speaker: Steve Koski
- May 16th FCOLC Monthly Meeting at the Iona House
- May 18th Speaker: Charles OConnor
- June 20th FCOLC Monthly Meeting @ Iona House
- June 20th No Speaker: Members Exhibits/Show & Tell/Buy/Sell/Swap Meet

SPEAKER FOR MARCH

There will be no speaker at the March Meeting because the Annual Auction consumes the entire meeting time.

The next speaker will be Steve Koski at the April FCOLC meeting. Steve is a research associate and site manager at the University of Miami Little Salt Spring Archaeological and Ecological Preserve

ANNUAL CLUB AUCTION

Our Annual Auction will be held at the Zion Lutheran Church on **March 21st**. In past auctions we have been fortunate to have several members donate some super items for the auction. Thanks to some of our members, we already have a start toward a goal of about 110 items. However, we still need a lot of items. For those of you who still wish to donate items, please contact Vice President Mike Siciliano directly (239-980-1406) since time is so short to prepare additional items for the auction.

Donated items are generally rocks and minerals, Indian artifacts, pertinent books, pertinent photos, fossil jewelry, fossil shells, display cases, river screens, fossil hunting equipment/tools, and of course vertebrate and invertebrate fossils of all kinds. If you are not sure if an item is acceptable, please ask Mike or any other FCOLC officer.

The money we raise from the auction is primarily used to support scholarship funds at the University of Florida and University of South Florida for deserving students pursuing advanced degrees in paleontology. The club membership votes on the distribution of the funds.

Thanks to everyone of you who generously support your club.

BONES OF CONTENTION

A Florida man's curious trade in Mongolian dinosaurs.

Natural history goes to auction five or six times a year in America, and one Sunday last May a big sale took place in Chelsea, at the onetime home of the Dia Center for the Arts. The bidding, organized by a company called Heritage Auctions, began with two amethyst geodes that, when paired, resembled the ears of an alert rabbit. Then came meteorites, petrified wood, and elephant tusks; centipedes, scorpions, and spiders preserved in amber; rare quartzes, crystals, and fossils. The fossils ranged from small Eocene swimmers imprinted on rock to the remains of late-Cretaceous dinosaurs. That day, the articulated toe and claw of a Moroccan dinosaur sold for sixty-three hundred dollars. A tyrannosaur tooth—ten and a half inches from root to spike—went for nearly forty thousand.

Along one wall, behind ropes, loomed the skeleton of a *Tarbosaurus bataar*. *T. bataar*, as it is known, was a *Tyrannosaurus rex* cousin that lived some seventy million years ago, in what is now the Gobi Desert of southern Mongolia. Eight feet tall and twenty-four feet long, the specimen had been mounted in a predatory running position, with its arms out and its jaws open, as if determined to eat Lot No. 49220—a cast Komodo dragon, crouching ten yards away, on blue velvet.



Mounted skeleton on exhibit in [Cosmo Caixa](#), Barcelona. Photo from Wikipedia.

Heritage brokered the *T. bataar* on behalf of a thirty-seven-year-old bone hunter named Eric Prokopi, who lives in Florida, a great state for fossils. For roughly the first half of the past fifty million years, the region lay beneath a warm, shallow sea. As land repeatedly surfaced and receded, the remains of marine creatures got mixed up with those of terrestrials, forming one big Ice Age graveyard: sea cows, prehistoric sharks, spike-tailed armadillos the size of refrigerators.

Shark teeth attract kids to fossil hunting because they're so easy to find. Sharks shed thousands of teeth per year, and have been doing so for eons. The teeth, exposed by erosion and tides, can be as big as a human hand. The largest look like the arrowheads of giants, and can sell for thousands of dollars.

Prokopi, who grew up outside Tampa, is the son of a music teacher and a homemaker. He found his first shark tooth as a small boy, in the late seventies, at nearby Venice Beach. By age ten, he had a diving license. His mother, a competitive swimmer, accompanied him on river expeditions. As he explored underwater, holding a rope, she rode in a canoe, tugging the line if she saw an alligator.

Through fossil clubs and field trips to quarries, Prokopi got to know older hunters who spent their lives beachcombing or standing chest deep in muck, searching for bone. Paleontology books explained what he'd found and taught him what to look for next. When he was in high school, fossils began to take over the family's house, and around 1990 he started selling them, making eight hundred dollars at his first trade show, in Lakeland. At such events, he bartered with other hunters, who often brought entire trailers filled with specimens. Some fossils were still sheathed in "field jackets"—the lumpy white plaster encasements that excavators apply at dig sites, for safe transport, making the artifacts look like misshapen mummies.

If you were mapping the geographic evolution of Prokopi's inventory, you'd pin Florida to start, then move on to Alabama, Texas, China, Japan, Peru, Morocco, Argentina, Kazakhstan, and elsewhere. He sold sloth claws, elephant jaws, wolf molars, dinosaur ribs—a wide range of anatomical fragments that went, mostly,

for between ten and fifty dollars. Increasingly, Florida Fossils got into triple digits, especially when Prokopi started selling dinosaur parts. In the fall of 2011, he sold two Mongolian oviraptor nests for more than three hundred and fifty dollars each, a tyrannosaurus ileum for five hundred and sixty-one dollars, a tyrannosaurus tooth for three hundred and twenty-five dollars, and a tyrannosaurus tail vertebra for four hundred and ten dollars. He built up a 99.7-per-cent-positive rating with eBay customers, who praised his wares as “unusual” and “exquisite.”



Eric Prokopi, of Gainesville, in the five-thousand-square-foot fossil workshop that he built in his back yard. Photograph by Richard Barnes.

On December 27th 2012, Prokopi pleaded guilty in a New York courtroom to customs-related crimes that carried a maximum seventeen-year sentence and hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines. The plea agreement required that he abandon all claims on the *T. bataar* and the duck-billed dinosaur, and on four more Mongolian and Chinese dinosaurs to which federal prosecutors could now connect him: two oviraptors and two more *T. bataars*, one of them believed to be somewhere in Great Britain.

“Tell me what you did,” the judge said to Prokopi.

Prokopi responded that he had instructed an associate in China to undervalue one shipment, and had imported fossils with “vague” and “misleading” labels.

“So you mislabelled it to make sure it would be imported?” the judge said.

“Right,” Prokopi said.

Nothing more was revealed about how his dinosaur business worked: about who had dug the original *T. bataar*, or when, or how it had been removed from Mongolia. The judge set the sentencing hearing for April, and court was adjourned.

“My client is radioactive when it comes to being able to earn a living in his business,” Lederman had told the court at Prokopi’s arraignment. In fact, a dealer, once tarnished, is not necessarily finished. Convicted hunters have been known to return directly to the field. In Prokopi’s case, Mongolia will be out of the question. But the Florida waters and quarries are still full of Ice Age bones. At the start of 2013, eBay alone had more than forty thousand fossils, rocks, and minerals for sale.

Note: **These excerpts are taken from a fantastic and well written article in the New Yorker about fossil shows and dealers and specifically Eric Prokopi, a Gainesville Florida fossil dealer that should be of interest to everyone in our fossil club.**

Read more: http://www.newyorker.com/report-ing/2013/01/28/130128fa_fact_williams#ixzz2MUCRyv3M



What's luck got to do with it?

There is a lot of excellent fossil advice that you can get and usually fossil hunters are more than happy to give you advice. That is, as long as you do not ask: Where exactly did you find that large Megalodon? Most of the advice that I give on looking for fossils is basic and valuable: Get as far away from the access points as possible; dig as deep as you can; if there are NO fossils where you dig then it is likely to be someone's discard pile; fossils correspond to the size of the gravel you dig and bigger gravel means bigger fossils. These are all variations on the theme that "the early bird catches the worm". I have followed all that advice for years and some days none of it works.

At least 3-4 times in the last couple of months, I have been digging within 10 feet of a fossil hunting partner and I have been finding a few small or broken teeth in each sieve while my partner has been pulling out bison teeth, horse teeth, numerous Megalodons, Makos, and Snaggles most of them perfect. This even continues when we both move to new digging spots. As my Mom used to remind me "Life is not fair". Many times luck is a huge factor. You can only hope that it balances off over time.

I prefer to write about the days when I was the lucky one. November 8th, 2012 was such a day. I found both a Jaguar Medial Phalanx and a Sloth Claw. I wrote about the Jaguar bone in the December newsletter. In this article, I'll focus on the Sloth Claw.

When I kayak on the Peace River looking for a likely fossil location, I frequently have a desire locked deep in my subconscious that says this could be the day. This could be the day when I find a special fossil: maybe a mastodon tooth; maybe a sloth claw; or maybe an extremely rare predator fossil from a dire wolf or saber cat. One fossil buddy has a very large Jaguar canine and another has a Dire Wolf Carnassial. In the spring of 2012, I found a broken Jaguar Carnassial and I returned to a close location on November 8th as the water depth receded. On this day I was "prospecting", seeking a new location as I was probing for gravel about 8 feet off the east bank of the Peace River. A couple of inches of sand covers about 8 inches of gravel which is on top of 8 inches of gray clay. Usually I put 4 or 5 shovels full of gravel in each sieve-load, but on the 3rd shovel of the 1st sieve, there was an odd looking bone. I stopped and then danced around the river with glee: it was a perfect 3 inch Sloth claw, likely from *Megalonyx Leptostomus*.

Peace River Sloth Claw – 3 inches in length on the dorsal curve. I have blown up this photo to give a sense of the



excellent detail. The grooved lines on the outside of this Sloth Claw are the imprints produced by the animal's blood vessels. This specific fossil had to be in a protected location (maybe sand, more likely clay) or erosion caused by sand or water would have smoothed the surface. Since the claw was found in a top layer of gravel above the clay, there is some likelihood that this fossil was "exposed" from the protected location and deposited in the spot I found it. Sounds pretty lucky to me!! This was the second Sloth Claw I found in 2012. I try to remember that fact on those days when my fossil partner is finding all those horse teeth and Megs.

While there were many types of ground sloths in South America only a few different types moved north into North America. What is interesting is that one type, called the megalonychids, a long word that merely means "great claw" in reference to the large claws on the hands and feet, actually entered North America about nine million years ago. This was long before the formation of the Panamanian land bridge that let the North American animals move south. In addition to reaching North America, members of this group of sloths were also able to reach some of the islands in the Caribbean and their fossils have been found in Cuba, Hispaniola and Puerto Rico. Not a bad trick for a group of animals that are supposed to be "slothful". The best known member of this group is *Megalonyx*. The *Megalonyx* lineage continued in North America right up until the end of the Ice Age. One of the trends was that it got larger so that the last species, *Megalonyx jeffersonii* at 10 feet and 900 pounds, was much larger than smaller species like *Megalonyx Leptostomus*. Unfortunately the success of *Megalonyx* along with all other sloths ended and all became extinct by 10,000 years ago at the end of the Ice Age. The picture below is a complete claw with Phalanx of family member *Megalonyx Jeffersoni*.



Leptonyx = lepto (narrow), onyx (claw) so *Megalonyx Leptostomus* literally means big claw, narrow claw. This animal was a medium sized "giant" ground sloth around 6-7 feet tall with large but narrow claws. Note the narrow width.



Shark's Tooth Festival 2013

21st Annual BB&T Venice Shark's Tooth Festival



Location:

Venice Airport Festival Grounds
120 E. Airport Avenue
Venice, FL 34285

Dates and Times:

Friday, April 12, 2013 - 4pm - 9pm
Saturday, April 13, 2013 - 10am - 9pm
Sunday, April 14, 2013 - 10am - 5pm

Sorry No Pets!

Admission Prices:

\$3 Per Person; Children 12 years of age and under are free.
For Festival directions please click on "Contact" tab above.