



# FOSSIL CLUB OF LEE COUNTY

MAY 2011



## *Message from the President*

Greetings to all members and friends of our Fossil Club. Our Club has grown considerably over the past few years and membership now stands at 179. We have a number of families that recently joined the Club and now we have several "junior" paleontologists. Its wonderful to have so many people with similar interests enjoying the many facets of paleontology.

We are now in the dry season in Florida, but in the near future that will change and we will go into the hurricane season. Meanwhile, the water level is low at the creeks and at the Peace River and it is ideal for fossil collecting. Several of our members have been out recently and it is reported that they found a wide variety of fossils so we expect a pretty good "Show and Tell" at the May meeting. Incidentally, all members are encouraged to participate in Show and Tell so bring in something you acquired, found, or have in your collection to show to your fellow members. Many of us have learned a lot from hearing about and seeing the specimens that you bring to the meetings.

Speaking of learning, we expect to learn about certain fossil plants at the May meeting. Alex Kittle from the Invertebrate Department of the University of Florida Museum of Natural History will tell us about a fossil plant he discovered

"out west" and how that plant correlates to another similiar plant. He will tell us the details and implications.

Last month, the Club elected two new directors to serve on the Club Board. Let's all congratulate Pam Plummer and Joshua Frank; we are pleased to have both of them in our club and we know they will do a great job. Also, let's say thanks to Michael Orchin who served us well, but was unable to continue on as a director.

This month we will have our usual agenda, which includes the raffle. We use the proceeds from the raffle to offset the cost of refreshments and other miscellaneous expenses. Please continue to support the raffle by bringing in items you wish to donate and also by buying tickets to win more things for your collections. All of us like this event and the young people always look forward to winning "treasures" from the raffle table.

Thanks to everyone who helps make our club a great club. I look forward to seeing all of you at the meeting on Thursday, May 19th.

Best regards, Bill

### **Next Meeting**

The next Club meeting will be held at the Calusa Nature Center Iona House on May 19th starting at 7 pm.



## **EMAIL NEWSLETTER**

Most members now receive their newsletter on-line and it does save the club the postage and printing costs. For those of you who receive the newsletter in the mail and would like to now receive it on-line, please let us know. Thanks

## **MEMBERSHIP DUES**

Members are expected to pay their club dues at the beginning of the year. We have always been liberal and asked members to try and pay by end of March, Technically, membership ceases on April 1st if not paid. If you have not paid your dues, this will be the last newsletter you will receive.

## **REFRESHMENTS**

Thanks to Kathy, Kevin, and Joseph Arnold for volunteering to do their part for the Club. They will do the refreshments for May. We need volunteers for June and other future months, so please sign up to help with the program for your Club. A sign-up sheet will be available at the next meeting. Since we do have many new members, we want you to know that the Club reimburses you for your expenses---all you need to do is buy and bring the items to the meeting. Everyone enjoys a cold drink and a snack, so lets keep the program going by helping out at least once in a year.

## **MINUTES OF APRIL MEETING THE FOSSIL CLUB OF LEE COUNTY**

Date: April 21, 2011

Place: Iona House at Calusa Nature Center

Attendance: 49

Presided by: Bill Shaver, FCOLC President

Bill opened the meeting and Treasurer, Ray Seguin, announced the net amount from the 2011 Auction.

Election of Club Directors was held. Pam Plummer and Joshua Frank were elected and will take office on May 1, 2011. Bill congratulated both of the new directors and commended Michael Orchin, outgoing director, for his contributions to the club.

Curt Klug, FCOLC Webmaster, who is a professional geologist, was the speaker for the April meeting.

Submitted by: Kathy Pawlowski, Secretary

## **OFFICERS**

Bill Shaver, President, 239-834-0694

[billshaverpeaceriver@hotmail.com](mailto:billshaverpeaceriver@hotmail.com)

Michael Siciliano, Vice President, 239-980-1406

Ray Seguin, Treasurer, 239-939-1921

Kathy Pawlowski, Secretary, 239-267-6130

## **DIRECTORS**

Joshua Frank

Dean Hart, 941-979-8217

Gunther Lobish, 941-268-7506

Charles OConnor, 239-246-5526

Pam Plummer

## **COMMITTEES**

Cherie Neat, Newsletter

Curt Klug, Web Master

Bill Shaver, Speakers

Louis Steiffel, Auctioneer

Kathy Arnold, Club Merchandise

Ray Seguin, Membership

Gunther Lobish, Pit Trips

Michael Siciliano, Raffle and Dive Trips

Coby Pawlowski, Youth Activities Director

Hollie Tiner, Club Photographer

Gunther Lobish, Invertebrate Education

Louis Steiffel, Vertebrate Education



## **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

The Fossil Club of Lee County is pleased to welcome the following named people as Club Members:

Suzanne Wiedinger  
Joey Weatherwax



## **MAY SPEAKER**

### **Alex Kittle**

*"Discovery and Discussion of a new compression flora fossil"*

Alex is a graduate of Georgia College, located in the Piedmont Region of Georgia. There he received his bachelors and masters degrees in biology. He was involved with the set up of the first university based natural history museum in central Georgia. The museum is a fossil repository for the National Park System, and has an extensive collection of fossil mammals from the White River Badlands of South Dakota. Alex assisted with multiple collecting trips to the Badlands of South Dakota, Yellowstone National Park, Tetons National Park, and Grand Canyon National Park. Alex is currently, a curatorial assistant in the Invertebrate Paleontology Division at the Florida Museum of Natural History. His duties include collection, preparation, and identification of fossil invertebrates from the SE USA and Caribbean. He is also, newsletter editor and member of the board of directors for the Florida Paleontological Society. Along with Roger Portell, he has produced a series of identification guides for fossil mollusks found in Florida for the society.

As a graduate student Alex discovered a new fossil plant locality in McKenzie County, North Dakota. It represented a new compression flora in a region already famous for its siliceous shale floras, which are unusual since the plants are preserved both morphologically and anatomically. The floras come from the Late Paleocene Sentinel Butte Formation. The two floras represent different environments of deposition and provide a broader picture of what the forests and vegetation of the midcontinent would have looked like at the end of the Paleocene Epoch. There are some elements that they share and some that are conspicuously missing from each. The new flora includes well articulated branches of *Zizyphoides* and *Nordenskioldia* and fruits and leaves of a cercidiphyllaceous plant, each are plants with relatives common to modern Southeast Asia. Leaf types assignable to *Aesculus* and platanceous leaves and fruits, plants representative of eastern North America assemblages, are also present. This compression flora occurs in association with a molluscan assemblage that allows for assignment to a middle Tiffanian age (NALMA). Many of the vertebrate fossils recovered from the area are from soft shelled turtles and crocodiles. The depositional environment is interpreted as an oxbow lake-type environment on a floodplain based on the fine grain size, high fossil content, the presence of lignite coal, and the thick channel sands. Alex will be presenting on the new flora and how it will provide insight into different modes of plant preservation and contribute to our understanding of the environment and climate of North America during the early Cenozoic.

## **COBY'S COLUMN**

### **Gompothere Fossils**

Gompothere lived from about 13 to 1.6 million years ago, and were ancestors of the mastodon. They were only eight feet tall and had four tusks, unlike mammoths and mastodons which only had two. Although very rare, gompothere fossils can be found in Florida, including the Peace River and local quarries. Their teeth are very similar to those of the mastodon, but the cusps are positioned closer together. Also, their tusks have a band going down the side.

Coby Pawlowski





## WEB SITES & LOCATIONS OF INTEREST

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Fossil Club of Lee County: [www.fcolc.com](http://www.fcolc.com)

Museum of Natural History @ Gainesville  
[www.flmnh.ufl.edu/](http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/)

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

Southwest Florida Fossil Club  
[www.southwestfloridafossilclub.com](http://www.southwestfloridafossilclub.com)

Orlando Fossil Club  
[www.floridafossilhunters.com](http://www.floridafossilhunters.com)

PEACE RIVER Water Levels  
[www.canoecanoeoutpost.com](http://www.canoecanoeoutpost.com)

Mark Renz's Fossil Expeditions  
[www.fossilx@earthlink.net](http://www.fossilx@earthlink.net)

Smithsonian Natural History Museum  
[www.mnh.si.edu](http://www.mnh.si.edu)  
Florida Fossil Clubs  
[www.fossil-treasures-of-florida.com](http://www.fossil-treasures-of-florida.com)

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

Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium 3450 Ortiz Av, Fort Myers Tel 239-275-3435  
[www.calusanature.com](http://www.calusanature.com)

Imaginarium 200 Cranford Ave, Fort Myers  
[www.cityftmyers.com/imaginarium](http://www.cityftmyers.com/imaginarium)

Southwest Florida Museum of History 2300 Peck St., Fort Myers [www.swflmuseumofhistory.com](http://www.swflmuseumofhistory.com)

The Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum, 3075 Sanibel-Captiva Rd, Sanibel, FL [www.shellmuseum.org](http://www.shellmuseum.org)

Randell Research Center PO Box 608, Pineland, FL  
[www.flmnh.ufl.edu/RRC/](http://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](http://Www.tampabayfossilclub.com)

Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife Burrowing Owls  
[www.ccfriendsofwildlife.org](http://www.ccfriendsofwildlife.org)

## Saber-toothed prehistoric creature was a vegetarian

WASHINGTON (AP) - Surprised scientists have discovered the remains of a saber-toothed vegetarian.

The leaf-crunching animal \_ about the size of a large dog \_ lived 260 million years ago in what is now Brazil, researchers report in Friday's edition of the journal Science. Its upper canine teeth were nearly 5 inches long.

Such large teeth are more often the mark of a meat-eating animal, used to capture and kill prey.

The enormous canines were likely used by the plant-eating animals to fight each other or protect against predators, said research leader Juan Carlos Cisneros of the University of Piaui in northeastern Brazil.

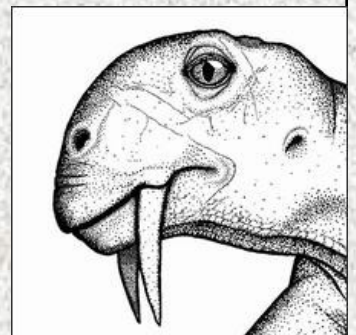
For example, they might have fought for territory, resources or females, like the modern musk deer, which also have a pair of large, tusklike teeth, he said via email.

"These situations are extremely important for the survival of an individual and the success of a species," he said. Discovering animals like this "shows us how nature is extremely creative in providing solutions for several life tasks."

In addition to its saber shaped fangs, the newly discovered animal named *Tiarajudens eccentricus* (tee-AH-ruh-HOO-denz ek-SIN-trik-us) had rows of teeth on the roof of its mouth for chewing, the researchers said. The lower jaw was incomplete, but they expect it would have had similar rows of teeth.

*Tiarajudens* was part of a group of animals known as anomodonts, sometimes called "mammal-like reptiles" and a major plant eater of their time.

The discovery provides novel insights into early tooth differences in these ancient animals and the evolution of plant eating and its complex social interactions, commented Joerg Froebisch of Humboldt University in Berlin, who was not part of Cisneros' research team.





## Gunther's Story

I spent some time on the Peace River on May 2nd with some old "river rat" friends. By name, they are Bill Shaver, Jack Boyce, and Dave Flynchbaugh. The river rats took me to a spot they call the Rhino Hole---a place where they have found or know of people who have found rhino molars and a rhino canine. The rhino species, teleoceros proterium, inhabited the area during the Miocene Epoch. The place was pretty well dug up, but that didn't deter us. It was a beautiful day and the water was warm and clear so it was ideal for digging. In addition, we were entertained by a four foot alligator who seemed to be trying to trap fish in a little cove about 100 feet from us.

At the end of the day, after lots of labor of love, Jack found a three-toed horse molar---a beautiful specimen. Bill, got a croc tooth with a small amount of matrix at the root and a partial rhino molar---they were also great specimens. Dave did not find any "keepers" for the day and I found a porpoise inner ear bone, which all three of my friends declared it to be a rock. Apparently, these seasoned collectors did not know about porpoise ear bones and thinking they were rocks, they were throwing them

away in the past----no wonder I was finding so many! To convince Dave, I later showed him a matched pair and a picture in a book. I'll have to convince the other two at the next club meeting. This goes to prove that if you find something that might look to be a fossil, take it with you and show it someone who has more knowledge.

Since the water level was low and we had a few places where we would need to drag the boat upstream, we left the rhino hole---hot, wet, and tired----what great fun!

Switching subjects, we are not having much fun at our Quality land site. The operators have not done any material washing for at least three weeks because the wash pump is broken and awaiting parts. The best I have been able to find in the last two months is a real large sand dollar that is about five inches by five inches and a small Clypeaster about an inch across. I will keep everyone posted on the status. In the meantime, keep your spirits up and keep on looking.

Gunther



Gordon Ahl and Jana Russell at the Peace River Club Trip



## Fossil collector donates life's work to Florida Museum of Natural History

Filed under [Florida](#), [Natural History](#), [Research](#), [Sciences](#) on Wednesday, May 4, 2011.

GAINESVILLE, Fla. — The vertebrate paleontology division at the [Florida Museum of Natural History](#) on the [University of Florida](#) campus recently received its largest private donation, an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 identifiable specimens.

The specimens formerly comprised the world's second-largest collection of Florida vertebrate fossils. The museum will honor Lake Wales resident John Waldrop for the donation of his collection during the fourth annual meeting of the Southeastern Association of Vertebrate Paleontology at 7 p.m. Saturday at the Paramount Plaza Hotel in Gainesville.

"Over the decades, Waldrop has had a longstanding influence and impact on what we've been able to do, and it's always been through his collections," said Florida Museum vertebrate paleontology curator Bruce MacFadden. "He's always been extremely generous and encouraged us to use his collection, but now it will be in the public domain forever, which sustains its value."

Vertebrate paleontology collections manager Richard Hulbert said the specimens span the entire range of Florida's fossil record, from about 10,000 to 40 million years old. The donation increases the museum's collection by about 10 percent, and the fossils are especially valuable because Waldrop had been collecting since the 1960s and maintained detailed records about locality and age, Hulbert said.

Waldrop, a retired middle school science and community college teacher, said many of the fossils were collected in areas now covered by subdivisions.

"The collection could never be duplicated," Waldrop said. "I felt it was a really important collection and I fully intended it to go to science. Richard Hulbert asked me one day if I would consider donating it and he caught me at the right time."

For about 10 years, Waldrop focused his fieldwork first on phosphate mines in South Florida, then rivers, shell pits and quarries, some of which no longer exist, he said. One of his most productive sites was the Peace River, which Hulbert said has become a hotspot for hobbyists in the last 20 years.

"We don't have many fossils from Peace River, but Waldrop very early on realized it was a problem, and he and his team got in there in the '70s before everyone," Hulbert said.

In addition to the vertebrate fossils, the donation includes about seven times as many invertebrate specimens.

"The real value of his collection isn't yet known, but what we've picked up so far indicates there are many surprises," said Florida Museum invertebrate paleontology collections manager Roger Portell. "I pulled out one box just to see what was inside, and with a brief look could tell there were dozens of species absent from our collections."

When possible, Waldrop also collected materials stratigraphically, meaning he recorded the specific rock layers in which they were found, a method seldom used 20 years ago, Portell said. While he did not know the exact number of specimens in Waldrop's invertebrate collection, Portell said there were up to 3,000 boxes, each containing a large number of fossils.

"We're very happy to accept his collection because it will expand our holdings and give greater breadth to the number of taxa we have in our collections," Portell said. "Most of his collection sites are no longer accessible, so it greatly enhances certain aspects of our collection, and what we have leftover will go to education. It's all going to be useful."

Although Waldrop's collection was private, he said he was always willing to lend specimens to researchers from the 40-by-40-foot air-conditioned warehouse he dubbed the "Timberlane Research Organization" after the road on which it was located. He collected most of the specimens himself, with occasional assistance from his students at McLaughlin Middle School in Lake Wales and Polk Community College in Winter Haven.

Waldrop said his interest in paleontology began with a science assignment as a student at Gainesville High School. His project on shark teeth found in the creek near the school later led to his master's in geology at UF and life's ambition to understand the geology of Florida. As a teacher, he also helped influence some of his students to pursue paleontology.

"I wanted to know more about the geology of Florida than anybody else, and in some ways I think I achieved that," Waldrop said.