



Fossil Club of Lee County

July 2007

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Fellow Fossiliers!! Hello again, and time for another installment of the Fossil Club of Lee County newsletter's president message. First off I want to say --Sandy does a bang up job each and every month, and she works hard and puts lots of effort and creativity into this, so I sure hope all you guys read it. You can print it and save in your newsletter archives also, as some of us now do. Sandy would really rather be fossil hunting than editing a newsletter, so I hope each of you appreciate her effort!! (By the way--Sandy says she may want a raise!!)

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the members who volunteer to provide refreshments each month. We all take a turn, and I thank you all!!

The rains have finally come--sort of!! We should be in danger of the banks of the Peace River overflowing with the rainy season, yet it has not risen very much at all!! It is a little too deep for walking the bank and it is at least waist deep or more at the shallow gravel bars, but with effort, it is still hutable, in July!!! I don't ever remembering the Peace River water level as low as it is this late in the season!! I have encouraged all you guys for months now to hunt the Peace while you can, and I think if you can do it still, you better hurry, because it WILL rise soon. Do it now, or wait till the winter.

The sporadic rainy season manages to

July Meeting

Our July meeting will be held on Thursday, July 15th at 7:00 p.m. at the Calusa Nature Center located at Ortiz and Colonial Blvd. Our speaker will be Andreas Kerner from Orlando.

give every place a little rain, even though it's not the daily deluge, so that means that if you can find a land site, it should be washed and hutable. Alice has a trip planned to the Quality pit this month, so sign up and go. You can't find it at home!!

I recently hunted a few "piles" on the side of the road and found some fossils. On the morning of the 4th of July, being off work, and a rain storm washing through, I decided to check out a couple of spots I had been eyeballing on my drive home from work everyday. One place was a row of dumped material laid down in a row of 8-10 piles on the side of the property where they are building the new Saturn dealership on Pine Island road. A little further down the road, next to the Site Station by Nicholas Pkwy and Pine Island Road, some more piles were sitting for construction of the building there. These piles came from a pit somewhere, but I don't know where. I do know that walking around and looking got me horse, gator, tortoise, turtle, garfish, shark, deer and camel fossils!! I also found some great shell material, including some of the biggest Jingle Shells I've ever seen. Granted, these fossils were not articulated skeletons, but it was a pleasant

surprise to find horse and gator teeth and spurs and nuchal skutes, etc. a few blocks from my home. I was gone for about an hour total and had a hunt!! This part of Florida is under construction all over, and opportunities abound, all over, like this if you JUST DO IT!! Good luck! Oh, by the way--don't put it off too long. The very next day the piles at the Saturn dealership were bulldozed into oblivion!!

Another popular place that is productive is Venice Beach. Diving there is a good way to find some great fossils, but walking the beaches allows you to pick up a few small shark teeth in the shelly area by the water's edge. It's also a great beach to go to, as it's just darn pretty!! (It's also the first place I hunted Florida fossils, way back in 1993.) Eat at Sharky's on the beach, by the pier, while you're there, and just have a nice day!

Andreas Kerner has agreed to travel from Orlando to speak to us again. Andreas is a terrific speaker, as he is on our level, yet so much more knowledgeable. He has been there, done that, and is still doing it!! Please attend this month's meeting and support the club and help us have a large audience for Andreas. He will be bringing along some nice fossils for the club members to purchase, this is a great way to add some good ones to your collection. Help show support for these speakers we get so they will continue to come back in the future.

Our treasury is strong, our membership is solid, our trips are popular and we have a great club!! Come to the meeting and show and tell and participate and enjoy. It's YOUR club-- use it!!

Thanks,
Louis

Officers

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Committees

Newsletter: Sandy Schwartz
Speakers: Louis Stieffel
\$1. raffle: Mike Siciliano
Auction: Louis Stieffel
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A DAY ON POSSUM CREEK

When we planned our Gainesville trip for the museum megladon grand opening, Louis was thoughtful enough to plan a side trip to fossil hunt on Sunday. Those of you who were not fortunate enough to attend the museum opening probably don't know that we were assisted in our display by local Josh Mayer-Blaizer. Josh is an avid collector and friend of Louis' from the Gainesville area. I first met Josh when we were last at the museum for the behind the scenes tour approximately 2 years ago. Josh's appearance suited the occasion as he arrived for the megladon exhibit sporting a purple mohawk swept up to resemble a shark fin. This of course drew many folks to our display, just to see Josh and to ask him what he was about. I found Josh to a very personable and nice young man and Louis had arranged for him to be our fossil guide on Sunday.

Josh met Louis, Leslie, Donna, Pam and

I at our motel Sunday morning and we packed our goodies for the trip. We took just two vehicles and parked in a residential area and were introduced to the man whose house we parked in front of. The gentlemen said he would like to see our finds at the end of the day.

Possum Creek lies in the middle of a subdivision surrounded by rather large properties. As we walked along the creek, the vegetation got thicker and thicker to the point where you thought you were in some jungle miles and miles away from civilization. Josh has hunted this creek extensively for several years and took us to several spots he has not hunted out yet. It is your typical river hunting, shovel, sift and sort. The difference is that possum creek is 3 feet wide and the water is only several inches deep. I ultimately ended up in a spot that held about 2 feet in depth of fine gravel and sand and I spent my day there.

My finds for the day consisted of several hundred shark teeth of different kinds, ray pavement teeth, fish skulls, shark vertebrae, dugong vertebrae process, and some UB's. As the day progressed I complained that there was an occasional strong smell of dead animal to which the others laughed. Finally about mid afternoon, I spotted the source of the smell. On the bank about 8 feet away was a complete skull and lower jaws of a raccoon with all of its flesh etc. gone. I have since bleached and butvared it for a nice display. Louis said it should have been a possum since we were on Possum Creek. At 5:00 p.m. I announced 15 more minutes and it was time to go. I went back to digging and in my last screen, in the very middle was a perfect 2" Meg for the find of the day. I know Louis must have found something nicer.

Josh asked us if we were interested in seeing his collection and of course, no one said no. We followed Josh to his home in the country and viewed his finds. He has all sorts of

skulls, shipping crates full of dugongs, and collections of all sorts. He has many beautiful Megs that he has found. He has a string of approximately 12 dugong vertebrae put together. His front yard and porch are truly a collection of various fossils. It was a pleasure to see the many beautiful fossils he has collected.

We headed for home, tired, of course, I can't be sure but several times I thought Leslie was sleeping in the back seat. Louis, Leslie and I stopped at a Cracker Barrel for supper and arrived back in the Cape around 10:00 p.m. It was a fun filled weend that of course ended way too soon.

Al Govin

Minutes

MINUTES OF MEETING OF FOSSIL CLUB OF LEE COUNTY

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

DATE OF MEETING; June 21, 2007

MEETING TIME;7:00 P.M.

MEETING PLACE; Calusa Nature Center

Number in attendance: approximately 31

Louis Stieffel presiding.

Thank you to Rick Piper and Chuck Ferber for bringing refreshments for our June meeting.

The following people have graciously volunteered to bring refreshments: Ethel Atanasov (July), Mike Siciliano (August) and Sandy (September).

Coming Events

Sandy's T-shirt design got good comments from the other clubs in Gainesville.

For our fossil identification project with the Florida Museum of Natural History, each club is looking for 2 volunteers to learn photography.

Alice Thorne is the trips coordinator and has suggested the following trips; July 21st –Gunter has an opening at Quality Pit in Rotunda, Florida and Ichnetucknee water tubing in August.

Need volunteers for Hale Quarry dig with Florida Museum of Natural History. Thanks go to Ms. **Jennifer Siko, a doctoral student at the University of South Florida** (Tampa), for her excellent talk on "Climate in Florida During the Plio-Pleistocene Extinction." and for making the trip to speak to our club.

Next months speaker is fossil dealer Andreas Turner. The following month will be fossil dealer Terry Saleri.

Secretary

WASHINGTON, D.C.

2 million-year-old skull belongs to proto-panda

The first skull of the earliest know ancestor of the giant panda has been discovered in China, researchers report.

Discovery of the skull, estimated to be at least 2 million years old, is reported by Russell L. Ciochon in today's (June 19) edition of Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Ciochon, an anthropologist at the University of Iowa, and a team of U.S. and Chinese researchers, made the find in a limestone cave in south China.

The animal would have been about 3 feet long, compared to the modern giant panda, which averages in excess of five feet.

July 21st hunt Quality Pit in Rotunda Florida

Oct. 13th and 14th Florida Fossil Hunters 2007 Fossil Fair at Central Florida Fairgrounds. For more information; FossilFair @florida fossil-hunters.com

Eric Jacobs in Australia

After purchasing a very expensive metal detector, Eric has had no luck in finding gold. He is sending this piece of equipment back to the factory (in Australia) and is getting a new unit. We hope that he will then be able to report success. He has, however, found and almost stepped on a crocodile and touched a 15' python while hiking through incredible gorges.

Eric was last reported in the Northern Territory heading toward Darwin and then south and east toward Mt. Isa and opal and sapphire country.

Have fun Eric, try not to touch any more pythons and keep us posted on your travels.

Did comet over Canada wipe out mammoths?

The Washington Post

There are intriguing new clues in the mystery of how the woolly mammoth met its demise in North America some 10,000 years ago.

For decades, scientists have debated whether the giant, elephant-like beasts were driven to extinction by the arrival of overzealous human hunters or by global warming at the end of the Ice Age.

Recently, a group of more than two dozen scientists offered a new explanation. They have found signs that a comet — or multiple fragments of one—exploded over Canada about 12,900 years ago with the force equivalent to millions of nuclear weapons. That unleashed, they said, a tremendous shock wave that destroyed much of what was in its path and ignited wildfires across North America.

Another group, with the help of DNA evidence extracted from mammoth bones, teeth and ivory, has for the first time identified two distinct genetic groups among mammoths. They found that one group had died out by 40,000 years ago for unknown reasons, leaving the second to continue until the species went extinct.

The comet blast and firestorm could have dealt a death blow to the mammoth and 15 other species of large mammals, including the mastodon, saber-toothed cat, American camel and giant ground sloth, researchers said. They presented their findings last month at a meeting of the American Geophysical Union in Acapulco.

MAMMOTH SKELETON SELLS FOR \$421,200. The associated Press (April 18, 2007)

If you were looking for the skeleton of a prehistoric mammoth, Monday was your day to buy. Christie’s auction house sold one for \$421,200.—a world record.

The unidentified buyer was a European who collects contemporary art and 19th century furniture, Christie’s spokeswoman Capucine Milliot said.

The mammoth sale was one of a dozen world records set during Monday’s auction of paleontological curiosities that brought in a total of more than \$1.53 million, Christie’s said.

The 10,000-year old skeleton of a 13.5 foot long rhinoceros sold for a record \$162,000. That of a 7.5 foot high prehistoric cave bear from the Russian Urals sold for \$63,180.

The skeletons previously were owned by private owners.

Most were bought by individuals, although a German museum and a French museum— neither identified— purchased fossils for smaller sums, Milliot said.

The Siberian mammoth from the High Pleistocene era, dubbed “The President,” was the star item at the auction. At 12.5 feet tall and 16 feet long, it had been estimated to sell for about \$199,000.

The last such item sold at auction, last year in Paris, went for \$254,340, Milliot said.

Among other items sold was a bezoar, a sort of pearl formed in the stomach of some herbivores, made of a stone or hair covered by a layer of calcium phosphate. Bezoars that reach or exceed the size of an egg become tremendously valuable. This one went for \$45,360.

The molar of a Siberian mammoth sold for \$6,480.

Volunteer Hours

Our club goal is to provide volunteer hours to the **Calusa Nature Center** in exchange for our free meeting room each month. This is voluntary but we hope all those who are able will participate.

Please call **Laurel La Croix at 275-3435** to volunteer. Laurel is there Monday to Friday from 9:00—5:00. There are no special events planned at this time but there are always mailings, front desk work and help needed in the butterfly garden as well as other outdoor things to do. Please report the number of hours and date worked to me at; Cameraqueen @earthlink.net or (239)772-8015 Sandy