



Fossil Club of Lee County

August 2006

Message from the president

Boy is it HOT!!! Hello, fellow fossilers!! It is almost too hot to fossil hunt (smile). Yeah, sure, like it can ever get THAT hot!! Anyway, I sure hope, with all the construction and digging going on in Southwest Florida that you guys are taking advantage of the opportunities provided and finding some bones (or shells if that is what you like). I know I have hunted whenever I could and sometimes even find some fossils.

I know that some of you guys are also finding fossils because at our last meeting, which was a pot luck and "show and tell" (and everyone attending had a great time) several members brought a few of their treasures to share with us. That's what it's all about, folks, sharing with everybody else in the club so we all see your goodies and can learn from them. We don't need a speaker every month to teach us when we have all this knowledge right here among us.

Speaking of speakers, this month our speaker will be Andreas Kerner, a very, very knowledgeable fossil hunter, collector and dealer. He has spoken to our club in the past and we have all enjoyed his talks. Please make plans to come to the meeting and learn from him. He will also have some fossils to sell so bring some money too.

In September, Curtis Klug, our webmaster will

August Meeting

Our August Meeting will be held on Thursday August 17th at 7:00 p.m. at the Calusa Nature Center, located at Ortiz and Colonial Blvd. in Ft. Myers. Our speaker will be Andreas Kerner.

speaking. October is still open at this time but in November, someone from the Randall Research Institute on Pineland will speak to us. This will be about their research and findings on the Calusa Indians that were in our area for centuries before the Spaniards settled here. December is our Christmas meeting and we have no speaker that month. (Everyone is to bring a special fossil gift to the president, so start preparing now!) (smile)

I have been hearing reports that, believe it or not, the river is still low enough in places to fossil hunt. The rains are sporadic enough for the water level to be up and down rather than way up the banks, like it usually is this time of the year. Give it a try, maybe, as it surely may be the last for a while. Curtis has updated the website with the latest site on the river gauge. You can now check water information on more gauges than just Zolfo Springs, give it a look and follow the prompts.

A land site we sometimes get to hunt on Saturdays, Handi-Phil pit, in Englewood is

available to hunt again. However, it will be closing soon as it has been sold, you should go while you can. There are some good fossils there, last time I was there, I found about a dozen Ecphora shells, 10-12 fish skulls, 50-100 garfish scales, 25 small shark teeth, at least 200 calcified sea urchin spines and other fossils. A few members from the Tampa Bay Club were jacketing two mammoth femurs, which was most of the last of the mammoth they had excavated! Other hunters were not so lucky, though, which shows you that to find fossils, SLOW DOWN!! Most folks want to cover a lot of territory but take your time and slow down and you will find more. Rarely will you just find a great, large fossil just laying exposed on the ground waiting for the fastest hunter to find. The way to hunt a pit is to search until you see some bone fragments and then totally stop, look carefully around and start scratching dirt to see what is hidden. You will find much more that is not exposed that way. Try it and let me know how successful you are.

The Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife will have their festival on February 17th in Cape Coral. We had a display table last year and will do it again this year. Our members will be asked to sign up a little later on to help man the booth at this event. Lots of attendees are curious about fossils and you get to help these people with information and maybe sign them up to join our club. Mark your calendar, Michael Orchin our trips director and board member is also the President of the CCFOW. He recently had surgery for carpal tunnel but is recovering fast and should be

back to the quest for finding the club places to hunt. Be nice to him.

Last month, at our “show and tell,” among the lots of great finds members brought, was a rather special piece found by Donna Johnson several years ago. She was not aware at that time how special it was and brought it to be identified. A couple of years ago, sifting gravel in the Peace River, she found this object, not a fossil but it was interesting so she kept it. It is an Indian fishhook, and it is worked from stone. I am not sure what type of stone, flint, chert, fossilised coral or whatever, but it was a rare find. The only fish hooks I’ve ever seen from around here were made from bone and usually broken. This was a worked stone hook. The only downside, is she won’t give it to me. It is a beautiful find and very rare and goes to show you that if you don’t go hunting, you won’t find anything. So go!

See you at the meeting,

Louis Stieffel



Donna Johnson's Fishhook

Officers

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Trip Director: Michael Orchin

Committees

Newsletter: Sandy Schwartz

Speakers: Louis Stieffel

\$1. raffle: Louis Kimsey

Auction: Louis Stieffel

Web Master: Curtis Klug

COMING EVENTS

Auction of the estate of **Charles Nelson** to be held at 846 Whispering Pines Road in Cape Coral. Preview of auction material which includes fossils, gems, coins, guns, tools, tractors, household items on Friday August 25th from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. This will be a 2 day auction starting on Saturday Aug. 26th at 9:30 a.m. and starting Sunday Aug. 27th at 10:30 a.m. View a selection of merchandise at www.flauctions.com Double click on the date and scroll down to view selections. Fossils at end. This is a very large auction.

CLUB TRIPS

Proposed trip to Handy Phil on Saturday, August 19th, pending permission from owner. This is generally not a problem but due to the

expected closing soon, we need to check and let you know at the meeting where we will have a sign-up sheet. Bring lots of water, maybe an umbrella and chair for resting. There is no shade but we can park close to where we will hunt. Questions answered by Michael Orchin at 574-6318 or Sandy Schwartz 772-8015.

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: July 17, 2006

MEETING TIME: 7:00 P.M.

MEETING PLACE: Calusa Nature Center

Number in attendance: 35+

Louis Stieffel presiding.

We did not have a speaker for this meeting but instead had a pot luck dinner and "show and tell" by different members. A good time was had by all.

Secretary

Refreshments

August 2006 Ian

September 2006 **member volunteer needed**

October 2006 **member volunteer needed**

Fellow members of the FCOLC

We have been meeting at the Calusa Nature Center since the club's inception. Now in addition to paying our annual membership fee, they are asking for us to **donate volunteer hours**. There are different tasks and odd jobs that are necessary for their needs and we need to do them to help them be a viable community organization. Call the nature center at **275-3435** and speak to **Mary Ann** who is the volunteer coordinator. She will arrange for a mutually agreeable time for you to help and pick a task you are able to do.

If every member volunteers 4 hours a year, we will meet our obligation and you will have contributed to our ensuring that we have a meeting place for our club as well as helping the Calusa Nature Center to grow. **Four hours a year is all we ask.**

Please report all volunteer hours worked to me at cameraqueen@earthlink.net

Sandy Schwartz

The Oldest Fossil "rabbit"

Unearthed

The fossilized skeleton of a rabbit-like creature that lived 55 million years ago has been found in Mongolia, Science magazine reports.



Gomphos elkema, as it is known, is the oldest member of the rabbit family ever to be found.

Gomphos was surprisingly similar to modern rabbits - and probably hopped around on its elongated hindlimbs.

The fossil adds weight to the idea that rabbit-like creatures first evolved no earlier than 65 million years ago.

"This skeleton is very complete," co-author Robert Asher, of Humboldt Universität, Berlin, Germany, told the BBC News website.

"*Gomphos* gives us valuable information about the anatomy of early rabbits - it tells us what they looked like.

" *Gomphos* had a true 'rabbit's foot'; that is, a foot more than twice as long as the hand that could be used for hopping."

But the ancient creature did have some traits that were unlike its modern relative. For example, *Gomphos* had quite a big tail and some of its teeth were more squirrel-like than rabbit-like.

Scanty evidence

Prior to this discovery, the oldest, most complete fossil lagomorphs (the family which includes rabbits, pikas and hares) were about 35 million years old.

Scanty fossil evidence has led to some uncertainty about when modern placental mammals first appeared in evolutionary time.

One camp believes that modern placental mammals (which include elephants, bats, rabbits, lions etc, but not kangaroos, opossums or echidnas) existed long before the famed "KT" boundary 65 million years ago, which marked the demise of the dinosaurs.

The other camp disagrees with this view, and instead claims that modern placentals did not originate until close to, or shortly after, this event.

Great extinction

Gomphos has waded - or hopped - into the debate, adding evidence to the latter theory.

Hitherto, there was a strong school of thought that suggested lagomorphs are more closely related to an extinct group of Cretaceous animals called the "zalambdalestids", than they are to other, modern mammal groups.

Zalambdalestids lived before the great mass extinction event 65 million years ago. So, if they were close relatives of the lagomorphs, it would suggest modern placental groups were diverging during the Cretaceous period.

But an analysis of *Gomphos* suggests this is not the case, Dr Asher and his colleagues believe. This makes it more likely that modern lagomorphs - and other placental mammals - originated after the dinosaurs went extinct.

"This skeleton gives us more data to throw into the analysis," he told the BBC News website. "And using this new information we favour the second idea."

Story by BBC News

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