



# **FOSSIL CLUB OF LEE COUNTY**

**AUGUST 2011**



## *Message from the President*

Greetings to all members and friends. Also, welcome aboard to our new members and a special welcome to our friends who just rejoined. We are pleased to have you back with us.

A few of us are still trying to hunt for fossils, but Mother Nature is hampering our efforts. Its typical August weather and the pits are blazing hot and the rivers are running high. The only reported fossil finds so far this month is from the divers in the club. They have found some fossils in the Venice location.

If you want to learn more about Florida fossils and can't find your own at this time of the year, you might want to consider visiting some of the museums. There are some excellent exhibits in Bradenton, Mulberry, Clewiston, Zolfo Springs, and of course Tampa and Gainesville. Our club has fossil exhibits in Ft. Myers at the Imaginarium and at the Calusa Nature Center. Also, the local museum in Fort Myers has some great fossils that some of our club charter members helped to find several years ago.

Preliminary work is in progress for our Annual Fossil Show which will be held on December 3rd, 2011. As of this date, six of our major vendors have signed on and a few others may commit

later this year. This is a major fund raising event for us and also a wonderful event for our local community. We have already received a few donations of fossil specimens and other items for the kid's games, raffles, and silent auction. If you want to donate some items, bring them in to one of our meetings. Your support will be appreciated.

We have lined up speakers for the rest of 2011. Our speakers for the next two meetings are from the University of South Florida and October's speaker is from the University of Florida. We appreciate their support. We also want to thank Louis Steiffel of our club for the excellent vertebrate fossil identification program he presented at the July meeting.

In addition to our speaker program, show and tell, and monthly raffle, we will have a Swap, Sell, and Exhibit event at the August meeting. All members are invited to participate. I look forward to seeing everyone at the meeting. Regards, Bill

### **Next Meeting**

Our next meeting will be August 18<sup>th</sup>,  
7:00 pm at the Iona House at the  
Calusa Nature Center.

## **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

Bill Howat

Richard and Linda Kemper

Our Club is pleased that you chose to join us. Its your club now, so participate in the activities and enjoy the fun and camaraderie.

### **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**

Dean Hart, 941-979-8217

Gunther Lobish, 941-268-7506

Charles OConnor, 239-246-5526

Pam Plummer, 239-573-7807

Joshua Frank, 239-248-5094

### **COMMITTEES**

Cherie Neat, Newsletter

Curt Klug, Web Master

Bill Shaver, Speakers

Louis Steiffel, Auctioneer

Kathy Arnold, Club Merchandise

Pam Plummer, Club Badges

Ray Seguin, Membership

Joshua Frank, Refreshments

Dean Hart, Refreshments co-chairman

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

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

Date: July 21, 2011

Place: Iona House at the Calusa Nature Center

Attendance: 36

Presided by: Bill Shaver

Bill welcomed all members and guests. He informed club members that there were some recent changes in management at the Calusa Nature Center, but those changes would not affect our club.

The treasurer presented an abbreviated treasurer's report and stated that the club is in sound financial shape.

It was announced that the Annual Fossil Show is scheduled for Saturday, December 3rd, 2011 and has been coordinated with the new management at the Calusa Nature Center.

Louis Steffiel was the speaker and presented an excellent program on vertebrate fossils which included extensive specimens and how to identify them.

The Club is attempting to arrange some field trips for the fall and will keep everyone informed. Dive trips can be arranged with Joshua Frank or Mike Siciliano.

Show and Tell was presented by four members and the monthly raffle was held. Bill thanked all the presenters and invited everyone to participate in Show and Tell.



## **SPEAKER FOR AUGUST 2011**

The speaker for July is Jack Hutchings from the University of South Florida who is studying under Dr. Greg Herbert in the geology department. Jack has a BA in Philosophy from USF and is currently pursuing his Master degree in geology. His talk will be about the behavior of the drilling gastropod family, commonly referred to as moon snails (officially, the Naticidae), and their effect on their environment. Club members are encouraged to bring in their specimens of predator and prey fossil shells that might be appropriate to his presentation.

## **2011 SCHEDULE FOR REFRESHMENTS**

June—Joshua Frank and  
Melanie Hutchinson

July—Dennis Von Linden

August—Marilyn and Ray Villarreal

September—Kathy Pawlowski

October—Marc Cantos

November—Need a Volunteer

December—Holiday Dinner

Thanks to everyone for their support and thanks to Joshua Frank and Dean Hart (refreshment committee) for organizing this club function. Everyone is invited to participate and your efforts will be greatly appreciated. The Club will reimburse you for your expenses. See our Treasurer for details.

## **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/vpppermit.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.canoeoutpost.com](http://www.canoeoutpost.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)



## FOSSIL KNOCKS 'OLDEST BIRD' OFF ITS PERCH

By Alan Boyle

The newfound fossil of a 155 million-year-old feathered dinosaur has led scientists to claim that Archaeopteryx, the species long held forth as the "oldest bird," is no bird at all.

Chinese researchers made the claim in Thursday's issue of the journal Nature, and an outside expert says the study "is likely to rock the paleontological community for years to come." Ohio University paleontologist Lawrence Witmer noted that the latest research, focusing on a fossil species dubbed Xiaotingia zhengi, comes 150 years after the discovery of Archaeopteryx, which marked a milestone in the study of the origin of birds.

"It's fitting that 150 years later, Archaeopteryx is right back at center stage," Witmer told me.

Xiaotingia was found by a collector in China's Liaoning Province, a hotbed for feathered-dino fossils, and sold to the Shandong Tianyu Museum of Nature. Paleontologists led by Xing Xu of the Chinese Academy of Sciences analyzed the fossil's skeletal measurements in detail and fed them into a computer database with measurements from 89 fossilized dinosaur and bird species, including Archaeopteryx.

Without Xiaotingia, the computer analysis put Archaeopteryx on the evolutionary line leading to modern-day birds. But when Xiaotingia was included, Archaeopteryx was placed in a group of birdlike dinosaurs known as deinonychosaurs. The differences had to do with details such as the shape of the wishbone and the skull's snout.

Archaeopteryx was about the size of a modern-day crow, and Xiaotingia was as big as a chicken.



Pictured left: Xu et al., Nature  
The fossil skeleton of Xiaotingia zhengi  
is splayed out in rock.

"If you just looked at Xiaotingia, you'd say, 'Oh, boy, another little feathered dinosaur from China,'" Thomas Holtz, a paleontologist

at the University of Maryland at College Park who reviewed the study for Nature, told me. "In and of itself, it is not a particularly unusual animal. But the combination of traits, at least in their analysis, pulls Archaeopteryx over to the deinonychosaur side of things."

The researchers acknowledged that their reclassification was "only weakly supported by the available data," but they said this kind of fuzziness was to be expected when the fossils being analyzed are close to the common ancestor of now-extinct dinosaurs and modern birds. "This phenomenon is also seen in some other major transitions, including the origins of major mammalian groups," they wrote.

Witmer agreed: "We're looking at an origin, and consequently it's going to be messy."

The 150 million-year-old Archaeopteryx fossil, which was discovered in southern Germany in 1861, was long seen as the oldest evidence of a bird species because the rocky imprint bore traces of



feathers. But over the past decade or two, many dinosaur fossils have been found with evidence of feathers — to the extent that some scientists have been able to figure out how the feathers were colored. As a result, some researchers have argued for years that Archaeopteryx should be reclassified.

In the past, creationists have used Archaeopteryx in their arguments against evolutionary theory, contending that birds always existed in their feathered form and did not evolve from dinosaurs. Evolution's critics may try to spin these latest findings to their advantage as well, Witmer said.

"It may well be they're going to suggest that we evolutionists don't know what we're doing," he told me. "In reality, it's just the opposite. It just shows what evolution is all about. A prediction of evolutionary theory is that it should be really hard for us to figure out what's going on in an origin."

Archaeopteryx's dethronement means the title of "oldest bird" could fall to other ancient species, such as Epidexipteryx hui, Jeholornis and Sapeornis, Witmer said. "They're not exactly household names," he noted. "These new characters have been known only for 10 years or less." Archaeopteryx, meanwhile, would be lumped in with Xiaotingia as well as another feathered-dino species called Anchiornis huxleyi.

Pictured right: G. Mayr / Senckenberg  
An Archaeopteryx specimen highlights  
wing and tail feather impressions.



The renewed debate over Archaeopteryx's classification is far from finished. Holtze said he knew some researchers who were inclined to go with a completely different classification scheme, which would put the deinonychosaurs along with Archaeopteryx on the evolutionary line leading to modern-day birds.

The debate could also require a rethinking of how birds arose, and how features such as feathers and flight developed. Holtz said some paleontologists have suggested that Archaeopteryx was not a particularly good flier, and putting it in the deinonychosaur category would make more sense on that score. It may turn out that deinonychosaurs gradually evolved from so-so fliers into feathered but flightless animals. "They would have been nasty predatory analogs to ostriches," Holtz said.

Holtz acknowledged that Archaeopteryx "has been our image of what early birds are like, for the historical reason that it's been known for 150 years as having all these feathers." The fact that the fossil was found just two years after Charles Darwin published "On the Origin of Species" added to its image as an evolutionary icon. A dramatic change in that image might come as another scientific shock to folks who are already being told that there's no such thing as a brontosaur, and that Pluto no longer ranks among the solar system's major planets.

"To which I say, 'Get over it!'" Holtz said. "Science is about changing ideas based on evidence, not about ignoring evidence to conform to our comfortable ideas."





## COBY'S COLUMN

### Moon Snails

Moon snails are mainly found in the northern Atlantic U.S. states. They can grow up to seven inches, and are known for their drilling. They will drill into other shells to release acid that will kill the animal inside. They mainly feed on clams and other snails. They live in muddy and sandy bottoms, especially in estuary environments. They have been recorded up to 1,427 feet deep.

Happy Hunting, Coby Pawlowski

## EXHIBIT, SWAP OR SELL EVENT

Several members have suggested that the Club periodically have a Swap, Sell and Exhibit event. So in addition to having a speaker and the other regular segments of our monthly meetings, we will have a Swap, Sell and/or Exhibit for the August 18th, 2011 meeting. Everyone is invited to participate. Limit your stuff to one table. Please email [billshaverpeace@river@hotmail.com](mailto:billshaverpeace@river@hotmail.com) if you wish to participate. Because of space constraints and availability of tables, only the first eight (8) to respond can be accepted. Show and Tell and the monthly raffle will be held as well.

## CLUB MERCHANDISE

The Club has received a large shipment of Riker boxes which will be available at the August 18th Meeting at the Iona House. There is a large selection of boxes and if there is a size you want that we don't have, please let Kathy Arnold know what you want---we'll try to get it for you. Other items of merchandise on hand are VINAC preservative, club tee-shirts, and several key books for people who appreciate fossils. Thanks to the Arnold family for tending to the club merchandise and to Kathy Pawlowski for helping out when needed.

## PALEONTOLOGICAL PROJECT IN PANAMA

Charles O'Connor has just returned from 3 weeks in Panama – exploring the rainforest jungle and its wildlife, and working with the UF paleontological **PIRE** project (<http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/panama-pire/>), that's investigating (in part) paleo sharks' habitats and the flora/fauna in the Canal area before the isthmus formed. Watch for his 2 part article beginning next newsletter.





## **20 MILLION-YEAR-OLD APE SKULL FOUND IN UGANDA**



[KAMPALA, Uganda](#) — Ugandan and French scientists have discovered a fossil of a skull of a tree-climbing ape from about 20 million years ago in Uganda's Karamoja region, the team said Tuesday.

The scientists discovered the remains on July 18 while looking for fossils in the remnants of an extinct volcano in Karamoja, a semi-arid region in Uganda's northeastern corner.

"This is the first time that the complete skull of an ape of this age has been found. It is a highly important fossil," Martin Pickford, a paleontologist from the College de France in Paris, told a news conference.

Pickford said preliminary studies of the fossil showed that the tree-climbing herbivore, roughly 10 years old when it died, had a head the size of a chimpanzee's but a brain as large as that of a baboon, which is bigger.

Bridgette Senut, a professor at the Musee National d'Histoire Naturelle, said that the remains would be taken to Paris to be X-rayed and documented before being returned to Uganda.

"It will be cleaned in France, it will be prepared in France and then in about one year's time it will be returned to the country," Senut said.

Uganda's junior minister for tourism, wildlife and heritage said that the skull was a remote cousin of the Hominoidea fossil ape. The paleontologists said it was a specimen of a species they called [Ugandapithecus major](#), which was first described by Senut in 2000 on the basis of fragmentary remains. *This report was supplemented by msnbc.com.*

### **SCHEDULE OF EVENTS AND SPEAKERS**

AUGUST 18th—Jack Hutchings (USF) Invertebrate Paleontology

SEPTEMBER 15th—Dr. Greg Herbert (USF) Last Ice Age

OCTOBER 20th—Luz Helena Oviedo (UF) Horse Evolution

NOVEMBER 17th—Kim Westberry Field Plaster Jacketing

DECEMBER 3rd—Annual Fossil Show @ Calusa Nature Center

DECEMBER 15th—Club Holiday Dinner @ Zion Lutheran Church

JANUARY 19th, 2012—Greg Shanos Meteorite Lecture

FEBRUARY 16th, 2012—Dr. Charles OConnor Panama Paleontology Project

MARCH, 2012—Club Annual Auction @ Zion Lutheran Church