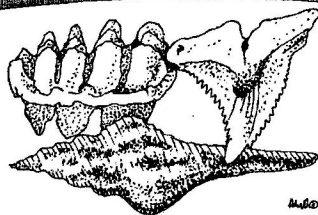


PALEONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LEE COUNTY



Volume 1, Issue 1

September, 1993

IN THIS ISSUE:

* "Florida's Fossils" author Robin Brown promises to present a "whale" of a slide show...

* Let's roll up our pants' legs and see what we can find in the shallows of the Peace River...

* VP Carl Hensel outlines our plans to record our finds and share the information...

* CO-VP David Cale cites an example of important contributions made by amateur paleontologists...

* Dues are due!

AUGUST RECAP

It was decided by all attending that our infant club will be called the PALEONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LEE COUNTY. Mark Renz was voted in as President, with Carl Hensel and David Cale sharing Vice Presidential roles. Secretary and Treasurer were not yet elected. Elections will be held annually.

NOTE: The Nature Center has informed us that the Audubon Society DOES normally meet on the fourth Thursday, so from now on, we are going back to the third Thursday of each month for subsequent meetings. That means that October's meeting will be on the 21st at 7:30 p.m.

Dues will be \$3.00 for youth (under 18), \$10.00 for individuals, \$12.00 for couples, and \$15.00 for families. At the September meeting, we hope to elect a treasurer. Then we will open a bank account and incorporate. Of course, all this takes money. So we're asking you to pay your dues as soon as possible.

Please fill out the enclosed enrollment form and send your check or money order to the address on the form. If you aren't able to pay by then, please attend anyway.

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ABOUT THE OFFICERS

MARK RENZ

Renz, a Fort Myers native, is a seasonal natural history guide for Babcock Wilderness Adventures. He also operates Fossil Expeditions, a guide service to some of the area's fossil hot spots.

Renz is a newcomer to bone sleuthing, having started three years ago. Last year he discovered over half of a giant ground sloth while snorkeling in an area creek. He continues to unearth more of the extinct 20-foot animal upon each visit to the site.

Before Renz took country singer Randy Travis' song, "Diggin' Up Bones" literally, he was a music publicist and freelance photojournalist in Nashville.

CARL HENSEL

To fully appreciate Carl Hensel, you have to get to know him. He has a sense of humor as dry as the Sahara Desert and an interest in fossils that is even larger. He especially wants to see our club accurately record our finds so that we not only know what our finds are, but how and why they were there to begin with.

Hensel graduated in 1979 from S.U.N.Y. at Stony Brook in Long Island, New York, emerging with a Bachelor's Degree in Geology and a Minor in Anthropology.

Between 1980 and 1985, he ran a consulting firm in Tennessee and Kentucky,

focussing on drilling gas and oil wells.

Since 1985, Hensel has imported and wholesaled gemstones, minerals and fossils. Currently, he owns and operates International Gem and Jewelry on Winkler Avenue in Fort Myers.

DAVID CALE

David Cale is unassuming on the surface. But inside he is quick-witted, knowledgeable, gentle and above all, serious about our club making a difference in the paleontological world.

Cale's interest in fossils extends back to the days when he was six years-old and discovered a fossilized fern in a neighbor's house foundation.

He has an undergraduate's degree in Archaeology, and has taken numerous college classes in geology and vertebrate paleontology.

From 1980-83, he and his wife Lee Ann traveled to gem and mineral shows from New York to Texas. In 1983, they opened their first store in Sanibel called Prehistoric Gem Company. Currently, they have a store in Sanibel and one in Fort Myers, specializing in custom jewelry work and repair, as well as selling minerals and fossils.

Cale has been a member of the Southwest Florida Fossil Club for two years.

SHARING KEY TO CLUB'S SUCCESS

by Mark Renz, President

I believe it was the late paleontologist, George Gaylord Simpson, who said that the thrill of fossil hunting is "not what you find, but what you find out."

How true a statement. A fossil is so much more than just an old bone. It represents an era far removed from our own, and with it, information that may prove useful toward understanding our past enough to prepare us for our future.

That is why the other officers and I would like to see this group record our finds and share the information with other amateurs, as well as the professional community. We want the whole of paleontology, not just a handful of us, to benefit from our club. We are eager to learn, too. As well as have fun. Lots of it.

Our first meeting and field trip promises to be educational as well as fun. Check out the rest of this newsletter and see if you don't agree.



AMATEUR CONTRIBUTIONS

by David Cale, Co-Vice President

You (yes you!), can make contributions to the science of paleontology. Many important fossil finds have been made by amateurs, whether by accident or by design. The state of Florida provides one of the most abundant stores of the recent fossil records. Our beaches, rivers, quarries and canals provide a

fascinating glimpse into the past. We are indeed fortunate to live here. You maybe the next nonprofessional to make an important find.

The contributions of amateurs to paleontology have been innumerable. If we were to eliminate all the finds made by nonprofessional, the science of paleontology would greatly suffer.

Fossils have been mentioned in historic records since Greek and Roman times. Here in the United States, our third president, Thomas Jefferson, was an avid novice who had a great interest in fossils. In the 1700's he excavated mammoth remains in Virginia. As the settlement of the United States expanded into Florida in the late 1800's and the early 1900's, scientists began to realize the scope of the recent fossil records in our state.

With this column I wish to laud the efforts of these amateurs who have contributed so much. For the month of September there could be no better choice than Ben Waller, who recently passed away.

Waller began diving for fossils in the 1950's. Since then he has been responsible for discovering the existence of thirty-four new animal species in Florida. One such find was a six-to-ten-foot tall, extinct carnivorous bird with a huge hooked beak and three-inch-long talons. Reaching speeds up to fifty miles an hour it could easily run down prey such as the three-toed horse. The fossil bird later became known as *Titanis walleri* in honor of Waller.

UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL

by Carl Hensel, Vice President & Librarian

Have you ever watched a National Geographic special about the Mayan or Egyptian archaeological digs, where the graves, tombs and mounds have been plundered and/or destroyed? Didn't you wonder what was lost, never to be found? This is how I feel about Florida's prehistoric legacy.

We should protect, locate, identify and classify Florida's legacy before it's removed, built on or destroyed. Many people are currently ruining our prehistory, randomly, just so they can say, "I found it and I own it." To me, owning the largest "whatever" doesn't amount to a hill of beans unless you can tell me where it was found, why it existed, plus a whole host of questions.

Pooling our brains and resources as a club, we can systematically put the missing pieces of our past back together. Collectively, we can take a small step toward putting together the prehistorical environment of Florida.

If you have ever put together a jigsaw puzzle, you know that as the puzzle progresses, it gets easier and easier to fill in the blanks. If everyone began to put together their "own" pieces, more areas would show up to search AND the whole picture would become clearer.

If you found the world's largest "whatcha-ma-call-it", wouldn't you want to know why it died (old age or maybe eaten by something larger!), or what was it doing in that area? I could

go on and on about the benefits possible if we cast off our feeling that what we find is "mine!" If everyone throughout history felt that way, there would be no history to record.

I feel we should begin to develop a sublime map on paper and by computer data base, detailing our finds. First, we'll create a file for each fossil site. Your personal discovery will then be listed, categorized and spotted as an approximate location. The description of the discovery will be available immediately to club members, the state and the general public.

If you request it, the exact location of your find will be kept in a sealed file and made available only to the club librarian and state officials. It would require written permission from you to further release the information to club members and the general public.

There will be problems, but the dissenters will see that with us there are hundreds of more areas and possibilities than without us.

Which brings me back to the beginning. United we stand, divided we fall!



DEDICATION

by Mark Renz

It's funny how, if you are able to trace certain important events in your life, they often have rather uneventful beginnings.

Take my interest in fossiling. Four years ago, a man named Terry Hacker took my brother Dave out to look for sharks' teeth along the banks of the Caloosahatchee River. One trip and my brother was hooked.

A year later, Dave took me to the same spot. Yet another amateur paleontologist was born.

In July of 1991, Terry Hacker died when his pick-up truck slammed into a tree near Alva. He will probably never know it, but the seed he planted has grown immensely. My brother and I have introduced countless people to the world of paleontology, and those who also became hooked have no doubt told others as well.

I would like to dedicate our first fossil hunt to Terry Hacker and call it the FIRST ANNUAL TERRY HACKER PEACE RIVER FOSSIL HUNT in his memory.

Thanks Terry, the seed continues to grow.

UPCOMING EVENTS



FIRST MEETING - Our first meeting as a new club will be Thursday, September 23, at 7:30 p.m., at the Lee County Nature Center's Iona House.

Guest speaker will be Robin C. Brown, author of "*Florida's Fossils*." Brown will conduct a slide presentation called "The Whale in the Back Yard."

Several years ago, Brown discovered and successfully excavated an intact, 5-million-year-old skeleton of an extinct whale. The skeleton, 45 feet by 9 feet, was found in Hickey's Creek, which runs right behind his family cabin in east Lee County.

Brown is an ear, nose and throat doctor practicing in Lee County since 1964. He grew up in Tampa where he hunted sharks' teeth and assorted archaeological remains from age 4.

RAFFLE

David Cale is providing a number of fossils for an after-meeting raffle, so bring some extra cash with you and take a chance. Robin Brown has also provided us with an autographed copy of *Florida's Fossils* for the raffle.

FIRST ANNUAL TERRY HACKER PEACE RIVER FOSSIL HUNT

A fossil hunt is planned for Saturday October 23, at 8:00 a.m. in the Peace River near Brownville, which is an hour north of Fort Myers. Anyone can participate in this one because you don't need a canoe, and the water will be ankle to knee deep, providing we don't have any heavy rainfall. Ways to hunt will include snorkeling or screening.

Once at the site, you will be able to choose from several locations that are a short to moderate hike (200 feet- 1/16 mile) from your parked car.

The type of finds that have come out of the Peace River include the teeth and bones of such prehistoric animals as giant armadillos, 20 foot sloths, jumbo beavers, bears, saber-tooth cats, mammoths, mastodons, sea cows, dire wolves, antelope and bison. Shark teeth are frequently found, and it's not uncommon to scoop up a 3 to 4 inch tooth from the extinct giant white shark.

We'll be asking for donations of \$2.50 per person to place in the treasury to cover other club expenses. Fifty cents from each donation will go into a pot. Whoever comes up with the most unusual fossil of the day wins the pot.

Please call first (728-3382) and make sure the weather is in our favor.

WHAT TO BRING

Mask and snorkel, if you want to lie down in the water and search.

Swim suit or shorts. If the weather is cold, you might consider renting a "shorty" dive suit from a dive shop (\$8.00 to \$10.00), or purchasing one for approximately \$45.00 for Wal Mart.

Old tennis shoes or dive boots.

AHacker. Awhat? AHacker. It's a foot-long garden tool with two prongs on one side and a mini-shovel on the other. It's what Terry Hacker used to rake through the bottom or bank material, or to scoop items into his screen.

Screen for sifting, or a Florida Snow Shovel. A Florida Snow Shovel is a common tool at Venice Beach. It's simply a four or five foot stick with a square, screened scoop on one end. You drag it along the bottom to search for fossils.

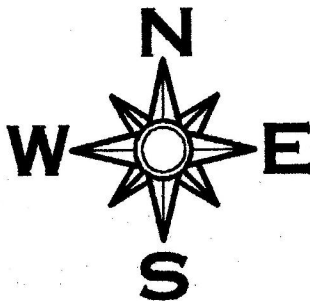
Old gloves or dive gloves (in case of broken glass on the bottom)

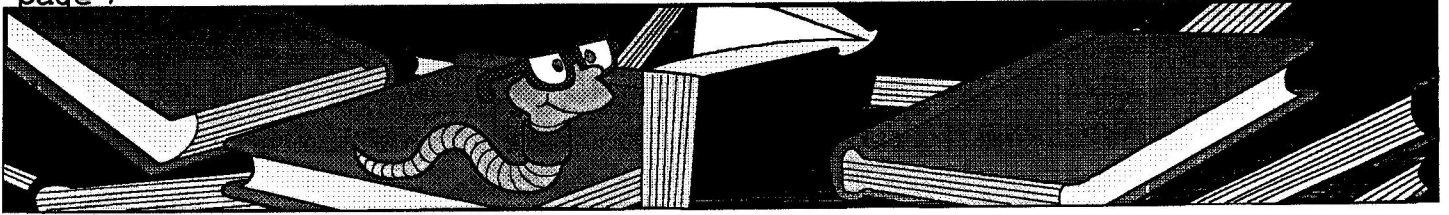
Ice chest with sandwiches and drinks

Cameral & film (optional)

DIRECTIONS

Find Arcadia on your map. Brownville is eight miles north on Highway 17. Turn left onto Brownville Road, then turn left again at the unmarked road just before Peace River Bridge. Look for signs or follow that road to the end. You are there!





BOOK OF THE MONTH

FLORIDA'S FOSSILS, Guide to Location, Identification and Enjoyment, By Robin C. Brown. (Pineapple Press, 1988, now in its fourth printing).

My copy of this book is beginning to come apart at the seams, I use it so much. The back cover states modestly that it tells how and where to hunt fossils - with maps, means of identification, and the history of the fossil treasures mentioned. It's all that and more.

The book also shows how to construct your own screenwashing box, how to preserve your finds, and how to date them according to geological time scales. It stresses safe fossiling, courtesy, and respect for the law.

Brown includes scores of black and white prints that he shot and developed himself, as well as a lengthy list of other available publications about paleontology. He even devotes a chapter to the adventures of some of the top fossil hunters in Florida.

Finally, he gives great credit to his wife, Jan, who he feels should be named as co-author. But she stubbornly refused.

I only wish the book had come with a water-proof carrying case so that I could take it with me into the creeks and rivers I frequent.

- Mark Renz

AGENDA FOR SEPTEMBER'S MEETING

- Reintroduce officers
- Reminder about committees - please check one on the application
- Board of Directors - please suggest one, or several
- Advertising - Can we do it legally?
- Any other business to discuss?
- Introduce Guest Speaker
- Nighty-night all

As soon as we can bring more folks into our fold to help out, we plan to schedule more fossile hunts, snorkeling, diving or walking on solid ground. Also planned are shell hunts, museum visits, trips to see private collections and other activities the club might request. To do it though, we are going to need some volunteers to secure these activities and make them work. Don't be shy - volunteer!

MEANWHILE, AT OTHER CLUBS...

The SOUTHWEST FLORIDA FOSSIL CLUB has been extremely supportive of our new group, and for that we thank them. If you added up all the years of paleontological knowledge between their members and put it in a bone, it would no doubt become fossilized. And these folks are young! We're looking forward to learning from their experiences. For more information on their club, contact

A.M. BRIDELL,
2265 GULF DRIVE, 240 E,
SANIBEL, FL 33957 (472-1637)

The TAMPA BAY FOSSIL CLUB has also been willing to share their knowledge and we thank them as well. They meet the first Saturday of the month at 7:30 p.m. on the USF campus in Tampa.

They are planning a field trip to Cargill Phosphate Mine in Mulberry on September 25. If you are interested, contact Karen Douglas at 813-681-2174.

Their 10th Annual BVFS Florida Fossil Fair is being held October 9 -10 this year at the Winter Haven Complex gymnasium. You haven't seen a fossil fair until you've been to one sponsored by this club. Call 813-665-3226 for more information.

They are also planning a Peace River fossil hunt on October 12. If you are interested, check with Karen Douglas. You may need to be a member. Their membership address is:

TBFC MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN
P.O. BOX 290561
TAMPA, FL 33687-0561

While you have your check book out, you really ought to write one for \$15.00 to join the FLORIDA PALEONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY. These folks will keep you abreast of happenings in the

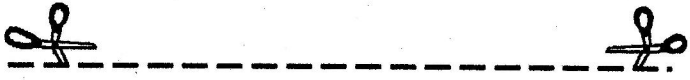
professional world of paleontology. Their address is:

SECRETARY, FLORIDA PALEONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY, INC.
FLORIDA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
GAINESVILLE, FL 33611

OTHER CLUBS:

FOSSIL FINDERS,
LARRY ELLIS
151 N. ORLANDO AVENUE
APT. 151
WINTER PARK, FL 32789

FOSSIL CLUB OF MIAMI
12540 S.W. 37TH STREET
MIAMI, FL 33175



SECRETARY/TREASURER

NOMINATIONS

If you would like to nominate a Secretary or Treasurer for our club during the September 23 meeting, please write in their name below. It will be up to you to nominate them during the meeting.

Secretary: _____

Treasurer: _____

NOTE: Whoever is elected for these two positions, the first round of business is to get our group incorporated and to set up a charter, by-laws and a bank account. We already have several examples from another club, which should help matters greatly.