



Fossil Club of Lee County

October 2006

Message from the President

Hello friends!!

Another month is passing by quickly, as they all seem to do, and it's time again for our fossil meeting. This month our speaker will be Gunther Lobisch, who is a member of our club. For those who don't know Gunther, he is the guy who always brings such great show and tell items every month, and usually sets it up in the back. Now you know who I'm talking about!! He will speak to us about his collecting of fern fossils and also quartz. Make sure you attend as I know you will learn something interesting. Last month Curtis Klug spoke to us about the different ways fossils fossilize and we all learned a thing or two. Thanks Kurt.

The river is low!!! This is extremely early in the year for the river to be huntable, but unless we get more rain, which seems to be about over, the river level will just continue to drop. Go to our website www.fcolc.com and go to the links and click on the water gauge. When it is 5 feet at Zolfo Springs, the river is low enough to do some good hunting. I checked a little while ago and it was at 5.2 so it's time to try it. We will have a few club get togethers, like last year, so everyone interested can meet up and get the hang of it, if you don't know how to dig and screen. It's also a good bit of fun with everybody there digging away!! (Someone bring a crane this year to help lift Ray up the bank!! He tends to carry a backpack and fill it full of dugong ribs and has a struggle to climb the bank. Of course, if I was still fossil hunting at 82 years old/young I would have a hard time just getting down the bank.) If the river stays low, we will do a canoe trip or two.

Michael Orchin, our trip director, is planning a trip to the Vulcan Mine in Brooksville around the 2nd or 3rd weekend of November, so be ready. More info to come. By the time you read this newsletter, the Orlando Fossil Fair will

October Meeting

Our October meeting will be held on Thursday, October 19th at 7:00 p.m. at the Calusa Nature Center located at Ortiz and Colonial Blvd.

Our speaker will be Gunther Lobisch, our very own club member. He was born in Germany and came to this country with his family in 1955, when he was eight years old. In his twenties (early to mid 70's) he was amazed to learn anyone could actually go out and collect minerals and fossils and he has been collecting, on and off, ever since. The Pennsylvanian age fossils he will be bringing to the meeting are from the first strip mine he ever ventured into and has collected in it at least a dozen times since. Hopefully it will still be producing when he returns to it at the beginning of November.

He moved to Florida in 1988, from New Jersey so most of his collecting was done in N.J., N.Y., and Pennsylvania. He will also be bringing along different types of quartz crystals which he has collected and traded for over the years.

be history. I hope to have seen a lot of you there. It is a good show and well worth the trip to Orlando. Sometime in the future we will have a meeting where we will ask you to "show and tell" on a higher level. Instead of the show and tell we try to have at every meeting, with members bringing in recent finds, we will ask you to bring in your best 5 or 10 fossils in your collection!!! Wouldn't it be great to see everyone's best stuff?? We have members who have collected some really great fossils and they need to share them with us all, so start making a list, because soon we will do it.

Don't forget to volunteer at the Calusa Nature Center. As part of the agreement to meet there we, in turn, agree to donate 4 hours per member, per year, as volunteer help. We have, at this time, 116 members, and have only

had about a dozen members so far, put time in. Please help your club out on this as well as the Nature Center. The work is easy and you may enjoy it so much you will do it again and again!! Thanks.

The Cape Coral Friends of Wildlife will have their festival on Feb. 17. We are committed to manning a booth to help promote our club. Several of their members as well as their president, Michael Orchin, belong to our club, and they all participate actively. Be ready to sign up in January to help man the booth. You will have a good time!!

Our speaker in November is coming from the Randall Research Center, on Pine Island. He will speak to us about the ancient settling of our area by the Calusa Indians. Bring any artifacts you may have found locally in the past years for positive identification. These folks know their stuff!! Our December meeting will be our annual Christmas meeting (already Christmas??!!!). We always have a good time at that meeting, and it will probably be the one for you to show off your best of the best. More on this, later.

Our annual auction is in March. I made room in my garage to store and protect items so bring them in. We do pretty well for the club at the auction, , but need your contributions.

I hope to see lots of you at the meeting. We usually have great attendance and everyone learns something and has a good time. Happy hunting!!

Louis Stieffel,
President

Officers

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Committees

Newsletter: Sandy Schwartz
Speakers: Louis Stieffel
\$1. raffle: Louis Kimsey
Auction: Louis Stieffel
Web Master: Curtis Klug

MINUTES OF MEETING OF FOSSIL CLUB OF LEE COUNTY

A general 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: September 21, 2005

MEETING TIME: 7:00 P.M.

MEETING PLACE: Calusa Nature Center

Number in attendance: 37

Louis Steiffel, President, presiding.

Treasury is sound.

Michael Orkin is getting field trips together such as Handy Phil and Fort Drum, maybe even Vulcan Mines and Miami.

Mike is doing refreshments for October.

November speaker is the Randall Research Center.

December is the Christmas meeting. Auction in March.

Museum exhibit at Collier Museum - Rick in charge.

Need people to volunteer for Calusa Nature Center.

Thank you to our member Dr. Kurt Klug for his talk entitled "Heart of Stone."

Secretary

From the News Press Syria– submitted by Donna Johnson

Bones of giant camel unearthed in desert

Damascus-The bones of a giant camel dating back 100,000 years have been unearthed in the Syrian desert, a government newspaper reported during the weekend.

The bones were discovered by a joint Syrian-Swiss archaeological team at the site of al-Hemel in the Palmyra region about 155 miles northeast of Damascus, the state-run Tishrin daily reported Saturday.

The discovery revealed that the Syrian desert “is the first origin of the camel,” Bassam Jammous, director general of the Antiquities and Museum Department in Syria, told the newspaper. The discovery of the bones was first reported in 2005.

Integrity and Fossil Hunting

By Sandy Schwartz

Paleontology is the study of prehistoric nonhuman life through the study of fossil remains. These fossil remains have scientific, educational and commercial value. It is unfortunate when someone locates an important site but gets involved in the excavation for purely personal and commercial value without looking at what we can learn from it.

People use the excuse that if they reported a big find, the University would take it away from them. That just isn’t so. Andreas Kerner is involved in excavating an important site. He is donating things to the University but they are not demanding anything. They already have more material than they can handle but new species and notes on dating and other information are very important to the study of paleontology.

When a big find is located, it should be treated with respect. At The Pit in Englewood, a mammoth was excavated, different people took different parts. One person stated that he had a leg in his garage. Other people had taken other parts. This was a big find and, while it was not in good condition, it could have been used by a club to teach excavation techniques and not be distributed helter skelter. To dismember it and distribute it around causes it to lose any scientific and educational value.

I have also become aware of another large find. It is on private property and the owner has given permission for it to be excavated by a few select people. I doubt if he understands the value of what he has given away. The site is being cleared, not in a organized manner by scientific procedures but by filling boxes and hauling it away in trucks like so much rubbish. They even switch trucks to keep people from recognizing them at the site. These people are only interested in the personal or commercial value, while they are systematically destroying the scientific and educational value. They don’t even know what they have until they get it home and wash it off. The site may be a sink or watering hole in which they have found camel, snake, otter, raccoon, possum, alligator, deer and large and small sharks’ teeth. Do they care whether the dating is preserved? No. Do they care that they may have new species? No. Do they care that they may have completely articulated specimens where none existed before? No. They just want to get it all out of there before someone gets wind of what they are doing. They are members of a fossil club, I am happy to say, not ours! So much for their present or past position in the club, their interest is not scientific or educational, it is pure greed.

I hope people understand there is a responsibility to paleontology when they make an exceptional find. By sharing that information with the University or museum they will get credit for the find which will live after them. The information becomes available to all and very likely, they will keep any fossils they want.

Volunteer Hours

Thank you to the members who have gotten out and done some volunteer work for the Calusa Nature Center.

Total hours so far- 71.5

Call the nature center at **275-3435** to set up a volunteer opportunity that is convenient to you. Report the date and time spent there to Sandy Schwartz Cameraqueen@earthlink.net or 7728015

Woolly mammoth may get second shot on Earth

Scientists have created mice from frozen sperm
The Associated Press News-Press August 15, 2006

Descendants of extinct mammals such as the giant woolly mammoth might one day walk the Earth again.

It isn't exactly Jurassic Park, but Japanese researchers are looking at the possibility of using sperm from frozen animals to inseminate living relatives.

So far they've succeeded with mice—some frozen as long as 15 years—and lead researcher Dr. Atsuo Ogura says he would like to try experiments in larger animals.

"In this study, the rates of success with sperm from 15 years-frozen bodies were much higher than we expected. So the likelihood of mammoth revival would be higher than we expected before," Ogura said in an interview via e-mail. While frozen sperm is commonly used by sperm banks, the team led by Ogura, at Riken Bioresource Center in Ibaraki, Japan, worked with sperm from whole frozen mice and from frozen mouse organs.

"If spermatozoa of extinct mammalian species can be retrieved from animal bodies that were kept frozen for millions of years in permafrost, live animals might be restored by injecting them into (eggs) from females of closely related species," the researchers said in a paper appearing in today's issue of Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Intact mammoth bodies have been excavated from Siberian permafrost.

Dr. Robert W. Mc Gaughey, laboratory director the Institute for Reproductive Studies in Scottsdale, Ariz., commented that since some of the whole frozen mice had been held for 15 years before obtaining the sperm nuclei "it clearly is possible that some day we may be able to obtain offspring from extinct animals frozen at reasonable temperatures for very long periods of time."

The down side, added McGaughey, who was not part of the research team, is that an extinct animal probably would have to have been continuously maintained at a low temperature to avoid thawing/refreezing damage.

Elephants would be a potential candidate for insemination with frozen mammoth sperm, Ogura said. He also suggested experiments might be tried with extinct feline species and their modern relatives.

Less enthusiastic was Dr. Peter Mazur, a biologist at the University of Tennessee who has worked with frozen eggs and sperm and is a past president of the Society for Cryobiology.

Mazur thinks the chance that frozen sperm from mammoths could be used to fertilize

a related species is near zero.

"The storage temperature of frozen mammoths is not nearly low enough to prevent the chemical degradation of their DNA over hundreds of thousands of years," he commented. And "even if the temperature were low enough to prevent chemical degradation, that would not prevent serious damage over those time periods from background radiation, which includes cosmic rays."

Bringing back extinct species is an interesting suggestion, Dr. Douglas E. Chandler of the Arizona State University School of Life Sciences commented.

"The trick however is to find an acceptable species that would act as the mother," added Chandler, who was not part of Ogura's research team. If an elephant egg were used "the offspring would not be a mammoth but a hybrid between an elephant and a mammoth. If one wanted a true mammoth one would have to find a source of viable mammoth (eggs) to fertilize and implant and this is a much dicier proposition."

McGaughey agreed, "It is unlikely eggs from such frozen animals would survive; therefore only the sperm would be available to put into eggs from an existing and appropriate modern mammal to approximate the extinct one."

Refreshments

October Mike Siciliano

November **volunteer needed**

December No speaker, pot luck dinner.