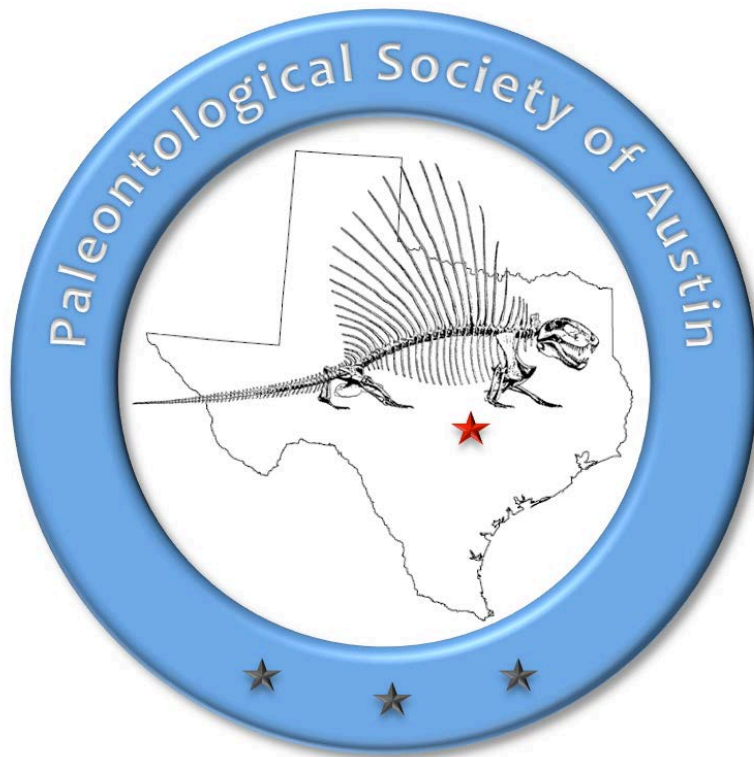


# Paleo Footnotes

Newsletter of the  
Paleontological Society of Austin

Austin and Central Texas



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## **President's Note**

The return of warm weather! I'm itching to get out on the rocks to do some serious collecting. And the photos I saw from Jacksboro, Union Hill and other sites up that a way just got me even more wound up. Unfortunately, with my current work schedule, I will not be joining you all on weekends for a while. That includes this month's trip to Whiskey Bridge. For those of you looking for a trip closer to home this one is great. A relatively short drive at about 1-1/2 hours from Austin and the fossils are numerous and super easy to find. If the weather holds this will be a fine time on the Brazos. See the field trip section for details.

Our speaker this month will be one of our own members, Bill Thompson, who has taken on a rather ambitious project to photograph and print a book on Texas Echinoids. This has been something we have all wanted for a long time and discussed *ad nauseam*. Bill has picked up the gauntlet and will talk about the project and the challenges involved. If you want to learn more about echinoids and maybe see some great photos please attend the meeting. Bill will be asking us if we can fill in some of the missing species from his long list and maybe you can help.

We have a few requests for outreach coming up and I would like to encourage members to volunteer. You do not need to be an expert on fossils, just enthusiastic about the hobby and the club. We can pair up old and new members for some great interaction with kids and adults alike.

We have a request from Laurel Mountain Elementary for a presentation on fossils and dinosaurs. They were looking for someone to come out on a Friday morning (8-9) sometime this month. Weekdays are always hard for getting volunteers but we do have some retired members and others with more flexible schedules. If you are interested, I can provide more information.

That's all for now,

--Erich

## **Fossil Fest Update**

Save the date! The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Fossil Fest will be held November 14-15, 2015 at Old Settlers Association in Round Rock. Our show theme will be marine reptiles, so I encourage you all to start gathering fossils from your collections to exhibit at the show. I'm also looking for mini-workshop topics and activities for show attendees. A mini-workshop is a short demonstration or activity, such as a brief educational discussion about a fossil exhibit that you have pulled together; an informative topic for fossil beginners or enthusiasts (starting your own fossil collection, prepping fossils, etc.); or a fun, hands-on activity for the younger attendees. Ideally, these mini-workshops should be different from year to year to keep the interest of repeat attendees. Please send your thoughts and ideas to [showchair@austinpaleo.org](mailto:showchair@austinpaleo.org). I would be most grateful!

--Suzanne

## **Next Meeting**

Tuesday, February 17 – 7 p.m.  
Austin Gem and Mineral Society Building  
6719 Burnet Lane, Austin

### **Texas Echinoids**

Bill Thomson will talk to us about his ongoing project, “Texas Fossils: Echinoids.” Bill is working to compile a photo book of the echinoids that can be found in Texas and has learned a lot about the process of creating a book. Specifically, he will talk about the mechanics of putting the book together, including photographing and identifying fossils. Bill will also talk about the echinoids he’s missing and how members can contribute to the project.

--Ron

## **Upcoming Field Trip**

February 21, 2015  
Whiskey Bridge  
Stone City Bluff, Middle Eocene Marine Fossils

Known for excellent fossils since the mid 1800's, this site continues to produce a wide variety of well-preserved marine fossils. More than 220 species of molluscs, corals, bryozoa, and worms can be found alongside shark, ray and fish teeth.

The collecting is easy. All you need is a small tool like a pointed trowel, screwdriver or knife to carefully dig into the soft matrix. There is some hard matrix to sample, so a rock hammer can be handy, but not necessary. More than anything you will want to bring PLENTY of small containers such as plastic divider boxes, pill bottles, Ziploc bags, etc. The fossils are small and delicate, so tissue paper for packing is a must. A magnifying lens, tweezers, small brush and dental pick would also be useful.



Typically we start in the sun and end in the shade. The current forecast calls for morning showers and temperatures in the 50s and 60s, so layer up and be ready for mud. Boots are better than sneakers in that instance. We will be sitting, kneeling or crawling in the dirt or mud, so you may want to pack a change of clothes for the end of the day. Poison Ivy is rampant along the upper levels of the river bank, so beware.

We will be halfway between Caldwell and Bryan, so food and facilities are less than 15 minutes away in either direction on TX-21. However, it's best to pack a lunch and lots of water to maximize your collecting time.

Whiskey Bridge is an old train bridge crossing the Brazos River at Texas State Highway 21. From Austin, take either US-290 or TX-71 east and turn left onto TX-21 heading north toward Caldwell. Eleven miles past Caldwell, just after FM-50 on the right and County Rd-221 on the left, you will see the rusty railroad bridge. SLOW DOWN and prepare to turn left across the highway and onto a small pull-off along the left side of the road just before the bridge. If you miss the turn, cross the bridge, make a U-turn, and come back to the pull off. DO NOT PARK near the railroad equipment, but instead park along the small road/grass above the river. We will be collecting along the west bank of the river just below the parking area, so if you get there late just walk down to the river and you will find us.

--Ed

## January Field Trip Report

January 24, 2015

Jacksboro and surrounding vicinity

Meeting at the square in Jacksboro were fifteen members: Kevin Bills, David Lindberg, Jimmy Hendricks, Melinda and Frederick Falk, Danny, Laura and Dave Bloemker, Janet and Ron Root, Melvin Noble, Cathy and Gary Rylander, and Dax Gonzalez. A nice turnout for what started out as a cold North Texas day.



After a short caravan, we arrived at the Lost Creek Reservoir. This is the Finis Shale, which is a lower unit of the Graham Formation which is in the Cisco Group. The series is Virgilian and is approximately 290 million years old. It is without a doubt the most fossiliferous Pennsylvanian site we collect. As an example of that abundance, I've collected more than thirty different species of brachiopod from the Finis and keep finding more. It is an exciting exposure and we found some nice things on this trip.

My first find of the day was a very nice little Rostroconch. Melvin found another of these unusual finds about four times the size of mine. It was a great day for cephalopods, as Gary said that he and Cathy found six whole ones and Melvin and I each found a good specimen. I had another six of various species that were between 50 and 90 percent complete. In most places in the U.S., a cephalopod from the Pennsylvanian is rather rare. David, Kevin, Dax and Melvin all found some nice conularids. I know that both David and Cathy found Palaeacis corals. Both Kevin and Melvin found a partial conostichus, an unusual fossil in the category of problematica (jellyfish track, sea anemone?) And Kevin had the find of the day with a large partial dorsal (caudal?) spine from a shark. Very nice! My personal find of the day was an Orbiculoidea, an inarticulate brachiopod that still had both valves.



We started out Sunday at the Union Hill road cut. This is Salesville Shale of the Whitt Formation, Strawn Group, lower Missourian. Approximately 295 million years old. This is a site

that seems to have limited fossils (after Jacksboro) but produces with patience. We found bivalves, gastropods and a few brachiopods and the infrabasal cones of the crinoid *Paragassizocrinus*. Gary and Cathy each found a *Rostroconch*. Kudos! After a few hours we moved over to Highway 337.

The part of the site we hunted is the Wynn limestone of the Graford Formation, Canyon Group, Missourian. This is a steep hill covered in loose rock and is hard to hunt. Once you sit down and stare at the rock, fossils start to appear. A small gastropod called *Trachydomia nodosa* with bumps covering the outer whorl is popular (and abundant). There are many other gastropods, at least five corals, many brachiopods, one common cephalopod, sponges and other fauna. I have only hunted here a few times, but it is becoming a favorite.

For North Texas in January, we had lovely weather and good sites to hunt. Everyone I spoke to had a good time and I think it was an excellent trip. I'll see you on the banks of the Brazos next time.

--Ed

### **January Meeting Minutes**

January 20, 2015

Austin Gem and Mineral Society Building

Erich called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. He reminded us that the order of the meetings is switched to have the regular announcements and business portion of the meeting first, and the speakers' presentation portion after the break. He then announced the slate of candidates for the 2015 Officers and Board. The Officer candidates are:

- Erich Rose for President,
- Suzanne Galligher for Vice President and Show Chair,
- Dale Vargo for Secretary, and
- Mike Smith for Treasurer.

The Board Member candidates are:

- Dax Gonzalez for Board and Newsletter Editor,
- Ron Root for Board and Programs Chair, and
- Ed Elliott for Board and Field Trip Chair.

Ron motioned that that we accept this slate of candidates to serve in 2015. The motion was seconded and then voted on and passed by the members. Melvin Noble will again serve as Hospitality Director, and Gordon Galligher will serve as the association's Webmaster.

Ed and Erich then announced the 2015 field trip schedule:

- January: Jacksboro
- February: Whiskey Bridge
- March: East Texas
- May 2: Oklahoma

- May 25: Brownwood
- June: Waco or Midlothian
- July: Museum trip, possibly to the Waco Mammoth Site
- August/September: Brazos River canoe trip or Harker Heights (depending on river level)
- October: Lake Texoma and possible field trip associated with the South Central Federation of Mineral Societies national mineral convention and show, which is hosted by the Austin Gem and Mineral Society
- November: Clifton

Ed asked members for feedback on this schedule as proposed. Dr. Sprinkle told members to be on the lookout for blastoid fossils in the Finis shale of Jacksboro. Erich acknowledged new members Laura and Dan, who planned to attend the Jacksboro field trip.

Erich turned the subject to the 2015 Budget and announced that the Officers and Board submitted this upcoming year's budget modeled on the same general expenditures as last year's budget until further notice and possible revision. Cathy noted that membership is \$18 for Single and \$24 for Family memberships. Suzanne announced upcoming outreach opportunities at Murchison Elem. and Anderson Mill Elem. and Feb. 27 at Eanes /Cedar Creek Elem. Outreach volunteers and logistics was discussed. Dale said that the club will have a Meetup.com page this year, and Bill said Meetup works well as publicity.

Dr. Sprinkle mentioned the commendation letter to be drafted on behalf of Linda McCall. Outgoing Treasurer Frederick asked for membership payments and any other reimbursements to be completed. The door prizes were won by Grayson, Cruz, Cathy and Dax.

After the break, Dr. Ann Molineux, along with some of her colleagues: Chase Shelburne, Kelsey Stilson, Dawn Comford Wilcox and Cissy Geigeman, each reported on recent important work being undertaken at the Non-vertebrate Paleo Laboratory (NPL) at UT. Ann gave the intro and overview of their efforts to conduct a mass inventory and the various aspects of this project: Digital conversion of the entire fossil collection into database access, with Chase explaining conservation and preservation techniques being used to prevent further deterioration of the specimens. Dawn discussed producing updated publications, digital library cataloging of written records and the presentation of the data in accessible formats. Cissy outlined her work in digital imaging using an iPad and the mass inventory and Lift Project grant work of mapping the extensive fossil collection. Ann acknowledged the local and society volunteers that assist this mass inventory work and noted some of the sites to see the NPL collection online. Kelsey reported on her use of Google Glass devices for efficiently imaging and organizing large numbers of items in the collection. Ann then discussed how these efforts at NPL are supported with grants and noted how essential volunteers are to this ongoing work. She noted that they are trying to obtain new facilities and generate interest in the collection through popular social media exposure on Tumblr and a new app that Kelsey is working on called "Adopt-a-Fossil," which allows people to donate funds toward the care and promotion of their favorite featured fossils. After a question and answer segment, the meeting adjourned. Some members stuck around to chat with NPL staff and test the Google Glass devices.

--Dale

## **January Board Meeting Minutes**

January 20, 2015

Austin Gem and Mineral Society Building

The Board meeting convened shortly after 6 p.m. with Erich, Frederick, Mike, Ron, Dale, Dax, Suzanne and Ed all present. Ron spoke to the need to inform our speakers that our meeting order has been reversed and that they would begin later than the previous 7 p.m. start time. There was a question of how to split speakers' fees in the case of multiple presenters. Ron asked if we have a full slate of candidates for the board and officers to present for this year, as no candidates have stepped forward to fill the Treasurer position. Mike outlined the Board and Officer positions for the membership to vote on. Erich said that we need to get Dax set up with a debit card. Frederick said he would be able to obtain the debit card with Dax if we present an authorization document from the club. Mike looked up the currently elected officers and board to verify the descriptions for the slate. Dax noted that he will mail out the newsletter tomorrow. Erich stated that the other item on our agenda is the budget. We can have Frederick give the 2014 actual club financial numbers to base the 2015 budget on, adding the display warmer and advertising expenditures. Erich referred us to the 2014 budget document as a guide for the next budget. The various budget items were discussed, among them including the newsletter, speakers' pay, the postal box, AGMS, SCFMS, storage, Christmas party, and dealer dinner costs. Mike suggested that we create the 2015 budget essentially the same as the 2014 budget, allowing for revisions that may become necessary later. There were comments on the smaller proceeds from the past year's Auction. Upcoming outreach was brought up and outlined. Frederick returned to budget discussion and made a motion that the board members approve the items of the 2015 budget based on 2014 with allowance for future revision. Suzanne seconded it and we voted and passed the motion. Then the discussion of the slate of board positions continued, with Mike suggesting we present the general membership with the present slate of position holders as 2015 candidates – with the Newsletter Editor change – and discuss with the general membership the need for a new Treasurer. Dale asked whether our presence on Meetup needs to be addressed, and Frederick said that Gordon has said he will work on it. Ed described the field trips proposed for this year, Jacksboro in Jan., Whiskey Bridge in Feb., East TX in Mar., a possible field trip in April in addition to the Auction, and destinations of the Brazos, Harker Heights, a museum in July, Texoma, and Waco Mammoth Site as likely during 2015. Frederick motioned to accept the field trips as outlined, with Dale seconding, and the motion was passed. Comments were made by Suzanne and Erich about issues of answering e-mail requests for information on various subjects. The Board meeting ended at 6:45 p.m.

--Dale

The purpose of the **Paleontological Society of Austin**, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is the scientific education of the public, the study and preservation of fossils and the fossil record, and assistance to individual, groups and institutions interested in various aspects of paleontology.

Meetings of the **Paleontological Society of Austin** are held on the third Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Austin Gem and Mineral Society building located at 6719 Burnet Ln. in Austin, Texas. The public is welcome to attend. Visit [austinpaleo.org](http://austinpaleo.org) for more information.

Annual Dues: \$18/individual, \$24/family and \$12/associate (non-voting, receiving newsletter) Send to: Treasurer, Paleontological Society of Austin, P.O. Box 90791, Austin, TX 78749-0791.

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