

PALEO FOOTNOTES

NEWSLETTER OF THE PALEONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

VOLUME 19 | NUMBER 01

JANUARY 2024



President's Note

I hope everyone had a wonderful start to 2024 and are looking forward to another great year with PSoA!

We have a bit of business to attend to. We have had the first board meeting of the year and will present to you all (at the January monthly meeting) the following items: a proposed budget and the field trip/event calendar. Please plan to attend the meeting, either in person or via Zoom, so that we can all take part in club business. **Should there be inclement weather, such as snow or ice, the meeting will take place via Zoom ONLY.** I will send an email blast, should this occur.

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This Month's Speaker

Micro fauna of the Aguja Formation
by Jamie Shelton

An exploration into the micro fauna of the Big Bend region of Brewster County.

Come hear a new talk from our own Jamie Shelton - PSoA Programs Chair and Field Trip Co-Chair - as she takes us on another fascinating journey into the micro zone - looking at the rich fossil inventory below our feet and beyond the view of many of us in the field.

January 2024

PSoA January Meeting

Tuesday January 16th - 7pm
AGMS Clubhouse
6719 Burnet Lane

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84748778645?pwd=U1Rpd1lieDN3MmNmUzFMb254SmRIOT09>

January Field Trip

Saturday January 20th - 8am
Jacksboro / Mineral Wells
(see details page 2)

President's Note

(continued from page 1)

This month's field trip is to Jacksboro, and I will hopefully be attending, depending on whether Adam's fishing trip takes place or not. However, my goal for the year is to make it to most, if not all, of our field trips. The weather forecast is looking a tad chilly, but mostly sunny. The perfect weather for fossicking!

I am working on planning the April potluck and auction and we have the dates for Fossil Fest 2024 confirmed (November 2nd & 3rd). See you all soon,

Heather Aziz

PSoA President

Join us this month for a trek across the dam!



Outreach - Volunteers Needed!

When: **Monday January 22 6:30-7:30**

Where: **Pflugerville Community Church**

1214 E. Pfennig Lane, Pflugerville TX 78660

We will be speaking with a Boy Scout troop. Please call Jamie at 512-214-2589 if you are able to help out. We need at least three people. We will be doing a "fossil dig", a touch table and a fossil casting station. All materials will be provided, we just need some helping hands!

Jamie Shelton

Programs Chair and Field Trip Co-Chair

January 2024 Field Trip

Lake Jacksboro / Mineral Wells

We will meet at **9am Saturday the 20th** at the Jack County Court House in the Jacksboro Town Square. This site is Upper Pennsylvanian and is replete with fossils from the Finis Shale, Graham Formation of the Cisco Group. Most fossils will be marine in origin, including Brachiopods, Trilobites, Corals, Bryozoans, Mollusks, Crinoids, and the occasional shark tooth. Fossils will generally be small and loose, so bring plenty of small containers or sectional boxes. The drive back into downtown Jacksboro is not far, but coupled with the walk back across the spillway, it will waste valuable collecting time – so bring food and plenty of water to maximize your time.

If you stick around for more collecting on Sunday, we will visit various road cuts and possibly the Mineral Wells Fossil Park. We will meet at 9:00 am in front of the Jack County Extension Office located at 100 N Main St. in Jacksboro (the town square). Look for Jamies blue Scion with turquoise wheels or Melvins blue truck.

Remember that Jacksboro is about four hours from Austin, so either drive up the night before or be prepared to leave early Saturday. Jacksboro motels are somewhat bare-bones, so if you want top quality accommodations.... some people stay in Mineral Wells as we will be in that area for Sunday. We will caravan as a group to the first site, so please be on time.

PLEASE NOTE There will be a \$3-5 admission fee per person (children are free) to cover our parking in and crossing the spillway in the state park. Please have CASH handy to put into envelopes at the pay station. Check the local weather before leaving so that you can dress appropriately. It looks like it will be in the mid 40s for collecting. The walk across the spillway can be particularly chilly.

If you have any questions or need help, feel free to call Jamie (512) 214-2589 or Melvin (512) 468-8914, or email them at fieldtripchair@austinpaleo.org

Melvin Noble + Jamie Shelton

Field Trip Co-Chairs

The club celebrating the holidays with our White Mammoth gift exchange and potluck! Heather is holding the President Emeritus award we gave to Erich Rose in honor of all his years of shepherding the club!





December Field Trip Report: Little Walnut Creek

Normally, the PSoA doesn't have a field trip in December, but since December in Texas is one of the best months with typically lovely weather and before the dreaded Cedar Fever hits, and we had a free weekend, Melvin and I decided to go ahead and have a little "extra" field trip following our White Mammoth Christmas Party. We had a nice little group join us for a jaunt down Little Walnut Creek. Helen Riggings, Eric and Jack Jones, Yoli and Will, Heather and Adam Aziz, Rose

Fig. 1 "Leaverite" Ammonite in situ

Farmer, Ron DiPronio, Ed Elliot, Melvin and myself made our way down to the creek in East Austin and headed upstream to the hunting sites. Yes, we did have to pass near a homeless encampment, but as we were a group, we were not bothered. As we mentioned at the meeting, this is a GROUP ONLY site. No issues, just better to err on the side of caution.



Fig. 2 *Lophopoda panda* (Jamie Shelton)

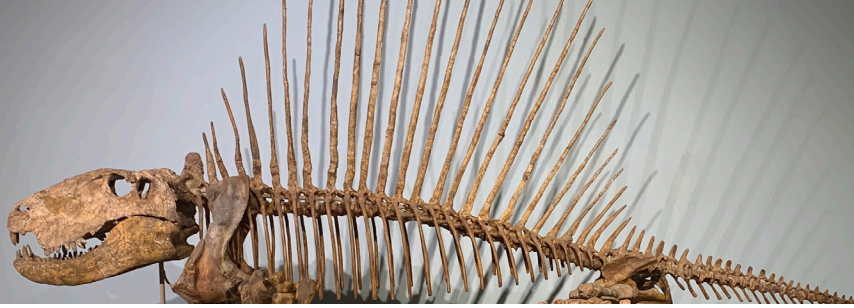
We hiked up a ways past the bridge to get to some better hunting grounds, finding a few nice things along the way. Ed and I both scored small nautiloids and Ed gifted me a lovely *Lophopoda panda* (fig. 2) which are very small thin oysters found in the Dessau Formation (I believe!). As we got further upstream, we found a VERY large ammonite (in situ) that we all got to take pictures of, but it was definitely a “leaverite” (“leave it right” there - Fig. 1) If we had tried to get it out, it would have destroyed it. A few other ammonite pieces were found, but nothing whole, sadly.

But the *Exogyra tigrenas* are the treasure of this spot.... beautiful oysters with a stripey pattern still visible. (Fig. 3) This site is the only one that I know of that has these special oysters. Some were easily extracted and some needed a bit of “encouragement” (rock hammer to the rescue)! After a lot of fun hammering and a few more explorations, we decided to head back as a group. A few more nice little fossils were found along the way – a decent *Trigonia thoracia* and few more good oysters. All in all, while there might not have been a lot of finds, It was a lovely day for a little bit of winter fossil hunting!



Fig. 3 *Exogyra tigrena* (Jamie Shelton)

Jamie Shelton
Field Trip Co-chair



Tailings...

In The News

This 288-Million-Year-Old Fossilized Scrap of Skin Is the World's Oldest

The remains, found in an Oklahoma cave, belonged to a lizard-like reptile

Riley Black, [Smithsonian Magazine](#), January 11th 2024

Early Primates May Have Feasted on Soft, Sweet Fruits

An analysis of more than 400 fossilized teeth suggests the creatures weren't eating many seeds, nuts or other hard foods

Sarah Kuta, [Smithsonian Magazine](#), January 8th 2024

The Top Ten Dinosaur Discoveries of 2023

From uncovering a tyrannosaur's last meal to unlocking the secrets of a dino with a really long neck, these were the year's biggest stories

Riley Black, [Smithsonian Magazine](#), December 11th 2023

Scientists Uncover the Earliest Fossil Evidence of Photosynthesis

Ancient cyanobacteria contained structures for producing oxygen around 1.75 billion years ago, according to a new study

Will Sullivan, [Smithsonian Magazine](#), January 4th 2024

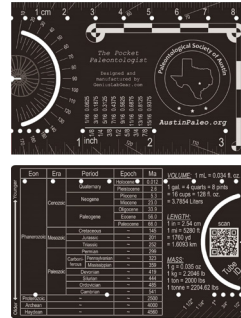
2024 Field Trip Schedule

January	Jacksboro (2 days)
February	Harker Heights Sites
March	Whiskey Bridge East Texas
April	Club Auction + Picnic
May	Oklahoma (2 days)
June	Austin Loop 360 <i>Lower Brazos</i>
July	Johnson City
August	Ross Perot Museum Dallas
September	Texoma Moody / Evant (2 days)
October	Brady / Santa Anna
November	Brownwood
December	White Mammoth and Pot Luck

Locations in italics are alternates depending on weather and availability of sites.

Important Note: Please refrain from visiting sites the club is scheduled to access as part of a scheduled field trip. Doing so can clear a site of quality fossils and negatively impact the experience folks will have, especially new members, if the site suddenly feels "picked over". We do our best to carefully space out trips to allow them to recover, so please be respectful of the club and stay off these sites within 3 months of a planned trip. Please note that dates and locations are subject to change - check the monthly newsletter or come to our monthly meetings for updates.

New Austin Paleo Gear!



The Pocket Paleontologist

Eric Jones, on behalf of the PSoA, produced this awesome laser etched card that includes handy scales and other information for use in the field. The size of a credit card, it fits neatly in you wallet so you always have it with you. Available for sale at our meetings or by contacting Mike Smith. Makes a great gift!

WhatsApp for PSoA Members

This would be handy for folks to have on their phones for Fossil Fest - or just an easy way for the board to communicate with you when email is not practical.

We are not setting this up for random interactions, like "anyone know what this fossil is". The goal is to have something we can use to broadcast last minute field trip changes, emergency notifications (like "we are locked out of AGMS, meeting cancelled"), pleas for help at Fossil Fest, etc.

To start you need WhatsApp installed on your phone. If you don't already know, WhatsApp is an app similar to normal texting and will show up as a text message on your mobile devices. If you want to get real-time information without having to check the app, then make sure to allow push notifications when you set it up. Then just scan the QR code and an Admin will approve your joining the group.



Good Field Trip Etiquette

1. Arrive on time or early. At the prescribed meeting time (often 8AM) you should be out of your car standing with the field trip leader, signed in and ready to hear the day's schedule, directions and helpful pointers.
2. Do your homework. Use one of the online mapping programs to determine travel time and directions from your home the day before. Take the map with you and leave at least 15-30 minutes early. This is critical when we are going to quarries, private property or if the first stop is a meeting-point, not the collecting site. The field trip leader will not wait more than 15 minutes beyond the scheduled time.
3. Make sure you have the field trip leader's phone number. Their number will appear in the field trip notice. Bring a copy of the notice from the newsletter or e-mail blast so you have the information. That is the best way to find the group if you do get delayed or lost. But do not count on it. Some of our remote sites have poor cell reception. We have no way to guarantee you will get there if you miss the meeting spot.
4. The first stop is not breakfast. Please do not expect the rest of the group to wait while you order food or take care of business. If you need to do that, arrive 30 minutes early and then be ready to go at 8:00AM sharp!
5. The field trip leader sets the schedule. Gather near the leader at the beginning of every trip and listen carefully. The leader will describe where and when things will happen. That will include directions, plans for breaks and everything else you need to know about how the day will unfold. If you are not sure about directions or the schedule speak directly with the field trip leader. Do not count on hearsay.
6. Do not ask the entire group to stop for unscheduled breaks. If you need to take a break during the day, do it after you know where the collecting site is located. The field trip leader will usually schedule a break around lunch but not between every stop. Follow the group to the site and then circle back for food or facilities. This is why we suggest bringing your own food and beverages. Also being prepared with TP, or whatever else, for "emergencies".
7. Sign in and don't forget to report to the leader when you leave. This is not critical, but he or she will greatly appreciate those two things. Having everyone's name let's him know how well attended the trip was and we like to list everyone in the follow up reports. Secondly, getting a chance to hear and see what you found that day and being able to keep track of who is on site at the very end is just a good thing.
8. Be prepared. Make sure you have the materials you need to collect safely. In particular, water, hat, sunscreen and food.

9. Don't crowd the next guy. Please be courteous of your fellow collectors space. If someone says "Hey I found a good one!" don't come rushing over and crowd into their collecting zone. Let them offer to share the space. You can ask them where they found it and then move off to one side or the other, but don't just flop down next to them.

10. Be safe. If someone is working an area on a slope do your best not to pass above them. If you need to do so, please let them know you are passing and do your best not to send any debris down on top of them. If someone is working above you and you must pass below, please alert them for the same reasons. Generally speaking, if someone is working a spot respect that they "own" that area and your passage through or around that location should only be done with their permission and/or invitation.



Editor's Note:

I would like to extend an invitation to all members to submit stories of their own travels for publish in future episodes of SIDE TRIPS. All I need is a short write up (and I can assist with this) as well as some photos of your trip (iPhone or Android photos are perfect - just make sure to send me the full resolution version). Fossil hunting trips are always welcome, but so are trips to museums, fossil/mineral shows, and other adventures that explore the world around us. You can reach me at editor@austinpaleo.org and I will do my best to include your stories in future issues.

Brian Bedrosian
Newsletter Editor

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 normally 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 for more information.

Please note, our monthly meetings are currently held in a hybrid format, with in person gatherings at the AGMS Clubhouse which can also be attended virtually via Zoom. Please see information provided on page one of this newsletter each month. While we are not currently requiring masks at any in person gatherings, we ask that you maintain a safe distance from others when socializing. Please note all virtual meetings are recorded and the Society may elect to publish the video of these meetings, in part or in total, to the Society's website or another publically accessible venue as benefits the goals of the club listed above.

Membership Information

Annual Dues: **\$18/individual**
\$24/family
\$12/associate (non-voting, receiving newsletter)

Pay on-line at: <https://www.austinpaleo.org/newMembership.html>

Send payment to: **Treasurer, Paleontological Society of Austin,**
P.O. Box 90791, Austin, TX 78749-0791

PSoA Web Site: www.austinpaleo.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/austinpaleo>

Twitter: [@Austin_Paleo](https://twitter.com/Austin_Paleo)

Current Club Officers

President	Heather Aziz	president@austinpaleo.org
President Emeritus	Erich Rose	
Vice President	Eric Jones	vicepresident@austinpaleo.org
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