

PALEO FOOTNOTES

NEWSLETTER OF THE PALEONTOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTIN

VOLUME 20 | NUMBER 01

JANUARY 2025



President's Note

Happy New Years, everyone!

This year, I hope you are as excited as I am for all that lies ahead—a year full of fossils, community outreach, and expanding our understanding of the animals and environments that shaped our planet's history. Whether through digs, public events, or sharing knowledge with others, every effort we make brings us closer to unlocking the secrets of the past and inspiring future generations.

Thank you for sharing your love of fossils with us. Your enthusiasm, curiosity, and dedication to
(continued on page 2)

This Month's Speaker

A Spreadsheet Based Fossil Database

Speaker: **Mike Smith**

Once you've found the fossils, then what? A Cataloging system is imperative to keep track of your fossil finds. Important data such as scientific name, location, and date can be stored in a Database for ease of access. Mike will walk us through how he creates a database based on spreadsheets.

Mike Smith is a long time member of Paleo Society, our esteemed treasurer and extremely knowledgeable about not only fossils, but the technologies
(continued on page 2)

January 2025

PSoA Regular Meeting
Tuesday January 22nd - 7pm
WEATHER ALERT
Out of an abundance of caution - the meeting will be held solely on ZOOM

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88451710052?pwd=Uy9hV05BTy9rUmIzYlMzdVVnNTVjdz09>
Meeting ID: 884 5171 0052
Passcode: 603270

PSoA Club Field Trip
Jacksboro / Mineral Wells
Saturday January 26th + 27th
(see page 2 for details)

President's Note

(continued from page 1)

paleontology continue to make a difference. Here's to a fantastic year filled with discovery, learning, and connection!

Heather Aziz

PSoA President

This Month's Speaker

(continued from page 1)

that can be used to support our fossil hunting adventures. He is a volunteer at the Invertebrate Paleo Lab at UT, helping them reduce their backlog of cataloging finds and locations.

January 2025 Field Trip: Jacksboro / Mineral Wells

Date: **Saturday January 25th - 8:30am**

Meet-up: **Jacksboro TX Town Square / County Courthouse**

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 from the site 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. **We will meet at 8:30 am in front of the Jack County Extension Office located at 100 N Main St. in Jacksboro (the town square). We will caravan as a group to the first site, so please be on time.**

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. If you stick around for more collecting on Sunday, we will visit various road cuts and possibly the Mineral Wells Fossil Park.

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 - there are NO credit or debit card options. 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 is long and it can be particularly chilly and windy.

If you have any questions, feel free to email Melvin Noble at fieldtripchair@austinpaleo.org before the weekend or you can call him at (512)468-8914 the day of. See you there!

Melvin Noble

Field Trip Co-Chair

Minutes of the Board Meeting

The Board meeting was held virtually on January 7th, 2025.

PSoA Annual Budget: PSoA Treasurer Mike Smith presented the budget for 2025. This budget makes use of data from the last few years and makes adjustments based on how our finances have evolved over time. After some discussion and a few tweaks, the budget was approved unanimously by the group.

PSoA Field Trips: PSoA Field Trip Co-chairs Jamie Shelton and Melvin Noble presented the proposed field trip schedule for the year that attempts to mix local trips with overnight trips in order to be more accommodating for members of all age groups and abilities (please see page 8 for the current schedule). Jamie mentioned that she is in contact with Midlothian Quarry - a site we have not had access to for some time - and that we will try to include that site in our mix depending on their availability. Floating the Brazos River was also discussed as a possibility this year. Melvin will look into and include as an alternate trip (on a separate weekend) sometime during the warmer months.

Fossil Fest: Heather recommended that we hold quarterly Fossil Fest meetings to better include the membership in the entire planning process.

Brian Bedrosian

PSoA Editor

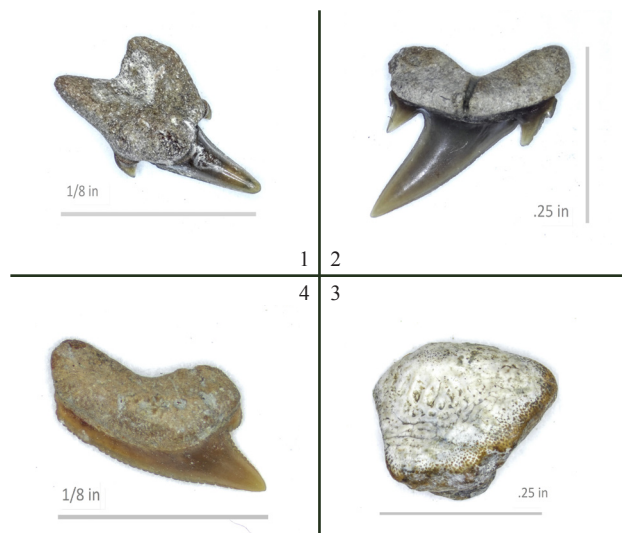
The Micro Matrix

This months installment of The Micro Matrix is Eagle Ford Finds in Travis County - Shark Teeth!

1. *Cretoxyrhina agassizensis*
2. *Dallasiella willstoni*
3. *Ptychodus* sp.
4. *Squalicorax falcatus*

Jamie Shelton

PSoA Member, Programs Chair, Field Trip Co-Chair



Volunteer Opportunity: Texas Science & Natural History Museum - Texas Memorial Museum

Texas Science & Natural History Museum is looking to expand its volunteer team. Are you or someone you know passionate about informal science education?

Volunteers at Texas Science & Natural History Museum are part of the Education Team and are called Gallery Guides. Gallery Guides interpret up-to-date and engaging scientific information to visitors to the museum's exhibit galleries, lead guided tours, participate in museum events, and provide identifications of local fossils. Join us by applying to be a Gallery Guide. Please send your resume to TMMEducation@austin.utexas.edu and complete the following application form. [Apply Now](#)

Liam A Norris

Graduate Research Assistant
Texas Science & Natural History Museum



General Announcement: Austin Gem and Mineral Society Celebrates 75 years!

This year is the 75th Anniversary since AGMS was founded! To mark the celebration, we are hosting a year-long celebration culminated by our Gem Capers Show in October with "Diamonds" as the theme.

The kickoff event is our General Club Meeting which will be held on Saturday, March 22 starting at 2:30 PM at the clubhouse (6719 Burnet Lane, Austin). We are planning a cookout with hamburgers and hot dogs, speakers, presentations, etc. Dan Shurtz, SCFMS President will be attending as well as representatives from ACC and other community partners.

Please extend our invitation to your club members to join us for a fun afternoon and help us celebrate our Diamond Jubilee! If any of you would like to say a few words about AGMS, our history together, remembrances, etc, please email [me](#) or [Mark Barber](#) so we can include you in the event.

We look forward to seeing you in March!

John Connors
AGMS President

**Become a Gallery Guide at
Texas Science & Natural History Museum!**

- Join the Education Team
- Engage & inspire visitors
- Lead guided tours
- Learn more about natural history of Texas

Volunteers needed!

Scan me to learn more and apply!

Side Trips: Friendship in the Field

There are many benefits to being a member of PSoA - but one we do not talk about enough are the friendships that are made along the way. This month our two Side Trip reports are about friends made in the club and the sharing of experiences that results. In the first, Eric Jones and I make good on our often discussed promise to meet up on a random weekend and spend some time in the field. In the second, Melvin teams up with Gary and Jazz Hendricks for a jaunt down to the Rio Grande Valley in search of some illusive oyster beds.

I hope you enjoy these two reports and I encourage you to consider including a report of your own in future issues this year. Happy New Year and happy hunting!

Brian Bedrosian
PSoA Editor



Side Trip:
Hunting in Copperas Cove





Fig. 1 Shark Tooth in situ (Eric Jones)

On a gorgeous day in December, Eric Jones, myself, and my two boys headed to the Copperas Cove area to explore some new sites. We met first at an outcrop that I had once visited with Erich Rose - a productive outcrop of the Walnut Formation. The site produces a steady stream of *Heterasters* (fig. 2) though most are a little beat up by the time they weather free. We did manage to collect some very nice *Phymosomas* (fig. 3) along with a host of bivalves and gastropods typical of the formation.

After 3 hours or so at that site we headed over to Fire Street Pizza - a locals haunt that Eric recommended. Featuring wood fired pizza and an awesome outdoor space - it would make a fantastic stop on the clubs trip up north next month. We sat in the shade of a group of large oak trees while the boys played the many games they have out in the large open yard space. Rejuvenated with pizza and root beer - we were ready to get back to the hunt. The next stop had us all hunting once again for echinoids, but it was Eric who had one of the finds of the day - a gorgeous sharks tooth in a bold gold color against the grey/tan background (fig. 1). He thought it was a pieces of brown beer bottle glass at first - so unexpected and sizable was the find.

Our final site of the day, with the sun quickly setting on us, was on one of the many blink and you miss it sites that are uncovered by rapidly progressing housing developments. The boys uncovered a pile of ammoties in an outcrop Eric had spotted early in the year and knew should be productive. They joyously excavated chunk after precious chunk until well after the sun had set - Eric and I standing vigil with flashlights in hand to illuminate their work.

A wonderful day of friendship and fossils, brothers and pizza, out in the limestone outcrops of Texas.

Brian Bedrosian
PSoA Member and Editor



Fig. 2 *Heteraster* echinoid test (Brian Bedrosian)



Fig. 3 *Phymosoma* echinoid test (Eric Jones)



Side Trip:
Wandering the Rio Grande Valley





Before the Christmas holiday I got chance to explore the upper Rio Grande Valley area with Gary Kendrick and his wife Jazz - traveling from Rio Grande City to Roma and up to Falcon Lake. We did some asking around and searching for a Eocene oyster reef. The oysters, *Crassostrea Gigantistissima*, can get up to 18 inches in length! They are in the Roma sandstone and part of the Jackson Formation reef. In Starr and Zapata county there are oyster reefs from an Eocene intertidal lagoon. We asked locals but were not able to locate the reefs but we did find some cool petrified tree trunks in front of the Pena House in Roma - a lot of Oligocene petrified wood has been found in this area. Apparently a volcano eruption in Mexico spread volcanic ash into the neighboring counties creating a petrified forest and the uranium deposits in South Texas. A good deal of petrified wood is also found further up around Live Oak and Karnes county from the same event. It is estimated that around what is now Rio Grande City the ash was 60 feet thick - no wonder the trees got covered!

The landscape along the Rio Grande starts out Eocene at Zapata County and gets younger as you head toward the Gulf. Pleistocene vertebrate fossils have been found closer to the ocean in Cameron and Willacy counties. Mammoth material has been found in Starr county as well. If you would like to see some of what was found, the Museum of South Texas History in Edenburg has a Mammoth skeleton on display as well other animals of those time periods. If you want to find out more information about this diverse area, the University of the Rio Grande Valley is a great resource - search for Ancient Landscapes of South Texas on their web site.

All in all it was a great trip - always good to get out and explore the far corners of our state!

Melvin Noble
PSoA Member / Field Trip Co-Chair



Tailings...

In The News

Homo Erectus Thrived in a Desert, Study Finds, Suggesting the Early Humans Could Adapt to Extreme Environments

New research suggests modern humans aren't the only hominin species capable of "ecological flexibility"

Sarah Kuta, [Smithsonian Magazine](#), January 17th 2025

Everything You Want to Know About the Sex Lives of Dinosaurs, From Scratching the Ground to Battling With Horns

By evaluating fossils, scientists are learning what creature features may have been used to attract mates and fight off sexual competitors

Riley Black, [Smithsonian Magazine](#), January 13th 2025

Meet Punk and Emo, Two Angry-Looking Fossils From 430 Million Years Ago That Shed Light on Early Mollusk Evolution

The prehistoric creatures look to be sporting a punk hairstyle and emo bangs, and one of them seemingly moved like an inchworm

Margherita Bassi, [Smithsonian Magazine](#), January 13th 2025

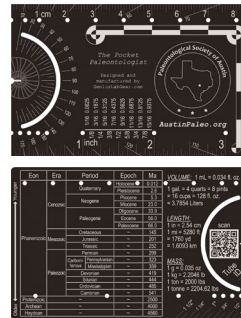
2025 Field Trip Schedule

January	Jacksboro / Mineral Wells
February	Harker Heights
March	Whiskey Bridge / East Texas <i>Midlothian Quarry</i>
April	PSoA Picnic and Auction
May	Ada Oklahoma
June	Midlothian Quarry <i>Whiskey Bridge</i>
July	Loop 360
August	Texas Through Time <i>Evant/Moody</i>
September	North Sulfur River
October	Lake Texoma / Post Oak Creek
November	Brownwood
December	White Mammoth and Pot Luck

Locations in italics are alternates depending on weather and availability.

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.

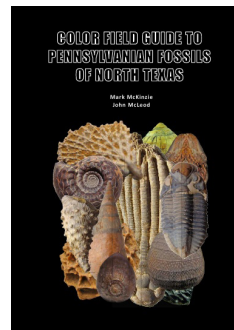
Austin Paleo Gear!



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!

Great Resource for Jacksboro Fossils!



Color Field Guide to Pennsylvanian

Fossils of North Texas by Mark McKinzie and John McLeod 2021

This is a spiral bound field ready version of their seminal volume available for \$22 from Lulu.com. The book includes descriptions of the exposures at Lake Bridgeport, Wilson Claypit, Jacksboro and other Texas Pennsylvanian sites frequented by PSA members with color images of specimens.

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.
11. Over the past year we have had several new members joining the club from all walks of life - it is important to remember that we may have differing views on the world. However, we are all united by our common appreciation of paleontology and science. When meeting in the field or at the clubhouse, please be respectful and refrain from topics that may be alienating to others - such as religion and politics - as we want all people to feel welcome and a part of the club.



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
Treasurer	Mike Smith	treasurer@austinpaleo.org
Secretary	Paul Hammerschmidt	secretary@austinpaleo.org
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