

# The Paleo Times

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Rick Poropat, Editor

## Fossil of the Month



The fossil of the month is the Mississippian blastoid *Pentremites conoideus*, shown here in association with an undetermined bryozoan colony from the Salem Limestone of west St. Louis County. The specimen was found on top of the highway right-of-way outcrop at the intersection of I-44 and I-270, northwest of the entrance to Powder Valley Nature Center. The limestone in this area offered a variety of fossils, including shark teeth and several other types of blastoids, including *Schizoblastus* and *Metablastus*.

The limestone and shale layers found in the hollow below the entrance were once a great source of crinoids, echinoids, gastropods, large brachiopods, rare starfish and other Mississippian fossils of the Warsaw Formation. When MoDot re-routed the ramp from west-bound I-44 to north-bound I-270, the site was covered with about six feet of rock. The loss of this locality was felt by many collectors.

Shortly before construction began, our club held a fossil recovery trip to the site. More than 60 of our members attended and many great Mississippian fossils were saved.

## DUES ARE DUE

The Treasurer is now accepting dues for 2017. Dues are payable in January and are \$20.00 per household per year if receiving the newsletter by e-mail or \$25 for those receiving the newsletter by regular mail. Since the January meeting was cancelled, the deadline for being dropped from the mailing list has been extended to the last day of February. Please see Rick at the February meeting or mail your check (payable to Eastern Missouri Society for Paleontology) to:

**EMSP**  
**P.O. Box 220273**  
**St. Louis, MO. 63122**

## February Meeting

Our next meeting is **Friday, February 10, 2017** at 7:30 pm on the second floor of the Earth and Planetary Sciences building on the Washington University campus. Our program for the evening will be presented by Dr. Andrew McDonald, staff paleontologist at the St. Louis Science Center, who will speak about *high-latitude Late Cretaceous ecosystems from Alaska and Antarctica*, including their dinosaurs and other vertebrates. A business meeting, led by Vice-President Tom Lee will follow the program.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The remains of an organism must be dated to at least 10,000 years old to be officially considered a fossil by the scientific community. This means that you can't bury your left-over turkey or chicken bones in the compost pile for a few months and call them fossils. There are fake 'Pleistocene' varmint skulls on the market that were created in that manner. We'll probably see a few in Tucson. Buyer beware!

## Calendar

Feb. 10	EMSP Meeting, 7:30 pm Washington, University
Feb. 17-19	Cabin Fever Show Kirkwood Community Center
Mar. 4	Dinosaurs & Cavemen Expo. Columbia, Missouri
Mar. 10-12	Greater Kansas City Show KCI Expo Center
Mar. 24-26	Gem, Mineral & Fossil Show Machinist Hall, Bridgeton, MO.
Mar. 31-Apr.2	MAPS Fossil Exposition. Sharpless Auction Center, Iowa City, Iowa

## Treasurer's Report

A detailed report is available by request from the treasurer.

## Rick's Ramblings

The Tucson Show is upon us! Every year, for about 2.5 weeks in January and February, the rock, gem, mineral, fossil and jewelry worlds cosmically align in Tucson, Arizona. Researchers, gemologists, authors, artists, miners, commercial collectors, museums, scientific establishments and nearly 4,000 trade companies gather here from every continent to share their treasures, knowledge and expertise with the show's tens (if not hundreds) of thousands of attendees. Earth's gem, mineral and fossil riches are on display at over 44 venues unfurled all over town, for sale in huge circus tents, expo halls, hotels, warehouses, and in the city's fine Convention Center. Every type of polished and rough rock and fossil specimen and every kind of faceted jewel that you can imagine is being peddled everywhere-on blankets, on sidewalks or in sophisticated exhibits brought in by the world's finest museums and collectors. All of the shows are free except the Tucson Gem & Mineral Show held at the Convention Center and all are open to the public except for a few bead and jewelry shows restricted to licensed buyers. Indeed, Tucson hosts the Giant of all Gem Shows, the largest of its kind in the universe

This year, nine members of our club will be heading west. The weather will be cool and so will all the great

fossils, minerals, artifacts, shells and myriad of other things we will see. Youngest son Tim will be making his first trip this year, so we will be doing a few side trips in addition to the shows. I highly recommend everyone attend this show at least once in your lifetime! Look for my show report in the March newsletter.

## How Dealers Get Their Specimens

Going to the Tucson show brings to mind an important question. How (and where) do the dealers get their specimens? Fossil dealers face the constant challenge of having fresh, high-quality specimens to offer their customers at affordable prices. EMSP faces the same challenge in obtaining specimens for its show booth. To compete successfully, dealers need new material from new locations as well as what are considered to be classic specimens from classic locations sought by collectors. There are three ways to acquire fossils:

1. Purchasing from suppliers at the source.
2. Self-collecting at the source.
3. Acquiring collections.

To obtain a variety of specimens and keep current on new localities, dealers sometimes travel around the world or attend shows where their suppliers bring new material to sell. Acquiring specimens in this manner means negotiating a wholesale price so the material can be resold at an affordable price. Because dealers can't be everywhere at once, many maintain buyers (middlemen) in other states or foreign countries.

The ideal situation is to be able to collect your own specimens. This method is fun, but also a lot of work. A collector must travel to the site, collect specimens and clean, prepare, properly identify and display them so they are appealing to the customer. Some dealers visit pay-to-dig sites across the country and collect in quantity (u-dig trilobites in Utah or fish quarries in Wyoming). Others hunt quarries and roadcuts. The drawback to self-collecting is that high quality specimens are often hard to find.

A third method of acquiring fossils for resale is to purchase existing collections. This often requires travel to view the material. Many dealers advertise that they will buy individual specimens or entire collections and have business cards printed for that purpose. Over the years, a dealer will establish a reputation for a fair deal and collectors will contact

them when they are ready to sell.

Some dealers are also collectors themselves and will buy a collection to obtain a few choice specimens for their own collections, selling the remainder to pay for the deal.

Collectors sell their collections for a variety of reasons. They might decide to specialize in a particular thing and sell off the excess or they might have a financial need or are at the age where they need to downsize their lifestyle. Whatever the reason, the buyer must negotiate favorable terms so the material can be resold. This can be nearly impossible if the seller has a sentimental attachment to the material.

Finally, the internet is becoming a good place to acquire fossils for resale, replacing the need to travel to the source or shows to make purchases. Some sellers are now offering bulk material at a wholesale price. Don't forget to factor in the cost of shipping.

### **Selling Your Collection**

If you decide to sell your collection, there are a few basic guidelines to follow. Understand that dealers must make a significant mark-up on a specimen to operate their business and their overheads will vary.

Don't expect to build a collection in a few years and expect to sell it at a big profit. Unless you have something really unusual, it will take many years just to break even. Remember, if you purchased your collection, you probably bought at retail but are selling at wholesale.

Selling to another collector might bring a higher price, because they don't have the overhead or other costs associated with reselling material. Most collectors will want to buy your collection to incorporate it into their own.

Be careful not to let a dealer or another collector "high grade" your best specimens unless you have a buyer lined up to purchase the remaining pieces. The low-end material is generally much harder to sell, often at a much lower price.

Regardless of how you dispose of your collection, enjoy it while it is yours and be careful and informed when you sell.



### **What Does PRPA Mean to Me?**

The PRPA is the Paleontological Resource Preservation Act of 2009. The purpose of this law is to establish a comprehensive national policy for managing fossils on the lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Bureau of Reclamation, the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These agencies were already managing and protecting fossils under many different existing laws, regulations, policies and procedures. PRPA is designed to help agencies manage their resources more efficiently and in a unified manner. The Act kept the BLM's permit procedure, and expanded it to other agencies under the DOI. It also prohibits commercial collecting of any kind by removing access to the permit process for commercial collectors. PRPA does not apply to Indian lands.

The PRPA is a step in the right direction and is the solution to most problems the federal government experienced under previous statutory authority. Rather than a jumble of separate regulations and policies promulgated by multiple federal agencies, the PRPA provides a unifying policy enforced by the Secretary of the Interior. Whereas previous cases of fossil poaching were pursued hesitantly, unevenly, and under outdated authority, the federal government now has explicit authority to act and to punish those responsible.

In conforming to the PRPA each agency was tasked with developing strategies and regulations to support PRPA. From the point of view of both amateur and professional collectors, this is where all the problems have arisen.

The interpretation of the law by certain agencies, in particular the BLM and the U.S. Forest Service, have created much confusion and discontent within the paleontological community. The regulations these agencies have written are filled with poorly defined terminology that, if interpreted to the extreme, effectively eliminates casual fossil collecting on Federal land by all amateurs and most professionals.

Why is the PRPA important to you? Even if you don't currently collect fossils on government land, you most likely do collect on state or locally-owned property such as roadcuts and along streams like the Meramec River. Keep in mind that Federal laws, regulations, and policies have a way of being adopted by state /local authority. Access to your favorite roadcuts may soon become illegal.

The Eastern Missouri Society for Paleontology (EMSP) is a registered Missouri not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting the enjoyment of fossil collecting. It is open to all individuals interested in learning about the history of ancient life on earth. The club membership includes professional paleontologists as well as amateur hobbyists. EMSP provides an open forum for the exchange of information and access to expertise on collecting, identifying, preparing and displaying fossils.

EMSP meetings are held on the second Friday of every month (except July, August and December) at 7:30pm on the second floor of the Earth and Planetary Sciences Building on the campus of Washington University. The building is located at the SW corner of the intersection of Forest Park Parkway and Hoyt Drive. Each meeting includes an informal exchange of information and speakers on a variety of fossil-related topics. Note: the building doors automatically lock at 7:30pm.

Club activities include field trips lead by experienced collectors and are a fun way to augment discussions at the monthly meetings. The club also participates in joint field trips with other paleo clubs, visiting fossil sites throughout the United States. EMSP is also proud to be involved in partnerships with the St. Louis Science Center and the Greater St. Louis Association of Earth Science Clubs, Inc; as well as STEM outreach to classrooms, community events and science fair special awards.

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