



Rock Talk

The Official Newsletter of the Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Emerald

Best known as the birthstone of May, the green of emeralds also symbolizes royalty.

Emeralds can actually be a variety of hues from bluish-green to green and yellow-ish green. There are also green beryls that are not "true" emeralds.

Chromium and vanadium play the biggest role in an emerald's color, with iron playing a role occasionally. Emeralds need ingredients from both felsic and mafic rocks to get their color, preferably close in proximity, quite a rare condition in the field.

Emeralds are classified as a type III gemstone, meaning inclusions are very common and acceptable. Type I gems are inclusion-free more often than not, such as topaz and aquamarine, and type II gems are usually included such as rubies and sapphires.

The unique set of inclusions an emerald gem has is often referred to as its jardin. This is Spanish for "garden" since the term is most often used in Colombian emeralds. Such inclusions are typically elongate and rod-like, resembling tree branches and roots, hence the moniker.

If an inclusion-free emerald is spotted on the market, you are probably dealing with a fake.



This Month's Roundup of Stories

- [Emerald](#)
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May's Birthstone - Emerald

Carnaiba emeralds are nothing to shake a stick at as some major record-breakers have been mined from this area. The first was discovered in the summer of 1974 when a cut specimen weighed in at a whopping 86,136 carats (nearly 38 pounds)!

The largest natural uncut single emerald crystal was found in Colombia (1969) weighing in at 7,205 carats (nearly 3 pounds), called the Emilia Crystal. In more recent times, Carnaiba struck the record books again when a 794-pound, 4.3-foot high, matrix specimen was unearthed in 2017. It took a team of ten, a week, to transport the specimen from 200 meters (656 feet) underground. With an estimated value of \$309 million.

The specimen serves as a very close cousin to the infamous Bahia emerald, which was found in 2001 and only 100 meters (328 feet) away. The Bahia was once a subject of a decade-plus long legal battle over its rightful ownership.

Read the entire article at RockNGem.com

Secretary's Report

Minutes and More from Club Secretary - Melodye Steverson

*Withlacoochee Rockhounds Monthly Meeting - Minutes
Date 4/10/2024*

The meeting was called to order by Vice President Michael Steverson at 7:06pm.

We all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence.

Chris Ward was recognized as a new member.

There were no new guests in attendance.

Janet Wheeler made a motion to accept the minutes of our March meeting as printed in the newsletter, Janice Wojcik seconded. Passed by all members.

Treasurer Janet Wheeler gave the Treasurer's report. Carla Howell made a motion to accept the Treasurer's report subject to audit. Seconded by Janice Wojcik. Approved by all.

Vice President Steverson began by announcing that club member Mike Stone's wife Peg Burns had passed away on April 2nd. The club sends its deepest condolences to Mike.

Janice Wojcik had signup forms for the upcoming silversmithing classes, and encourage all who wanted to attend the classes to sign up and pay the cost for the class that night.

VP Steverson reminded all present that club dues were due as of January, if unpaid, they are late at this point and should be paid immediately.

If you are not a paid-up member at this point, you are technically not a member of the club. Please send in your dues, or pay them at the next meeting. We don't want to lose you!

VP Steverson announced to the meeting that he had the applications for members to sign up for the William Holland Scholarships that the club offers. He explained the parameters for being considered for the scholarships. He further explained that the club would pay for the tuition, but that members selected would need to pay for their expenses to get there.

We had a nice lady contact the club regarding a large quantity of agatized coral her daughter has in her yard, that she wishes to donate to the club. VP Steverson was attempting to coordinate a time for interested members to meet her and take the coral off her hands.

Ralph Barber made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Virginian Steverson seconded, passed by all.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:27pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Secretary Melodye Steverson.

*Withlacoochee Rockhounds Board of Directors Meeting - Minutes
Date 4/17/2024*

The meeting was called to order at 6:39PM. In attendance were Board of Directors members Michael and Melodye Steverson, Janet and Roger Wheeler, Leslie Newberry, Ralph Barber, James Roush and Hunter Mellring.

The board discussed the William Holland Scholarship forms that had been submitted so far. The Board agreed to extend the deadline for applying for an additional month.

We further discussed that membership dues need to be paid, if you have not paid already.

The Board discussed and agreed to change the opening time for the Gem Show to 10AM. Additionally, the Board discussed and voted to raising the cost per table for vendors to \$100, up from the present \$85.

The club discussed and voted on offering Mark Moore a financial donation for making the trip and putting on his Hellcreek Fossil presentation.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:09pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Secretary Melodye Steverson.



**Clubhouse Address:
3357 Susan Dr.
Spring Hill, FL 34606**

Echinoderms: Fossils of Marine History

Echinoderms are interesting to the fossil collector as there are more identified fossil (extinct) species than living (extant) species.

Both the 6,500 plus living species and the 14,000 plus fossil species are marine. Fossil echinoderms give clues to the ancient past including the depth and conditions where they lived.

Echinoderms are more closely related to the higher forms of life than any of the other invertebrates.

This group of marine animals includes sea lilies (Crinoidea), blastoids, cystoids, starfish (Asteroidea), brittle stars (Ophiuroidea), sea urchins and sand dollars (Echinoidea) and sea cucumbers (Holothuroidea).

Echinoderms are found as fossils as far back as 540 million years, the most common being crinoids and blastoids.

Echinoderms are conducive to forming fossils because their body consists of a series of interlocking calcareous (CaCo₃) plates usually with five-point symmetry. This is readily seen in the interlocking discs that make up the stem of crinoids. These discs frequently get separated after the animal dies and they fossilize as individual circles.

While dinosaurs draw attention when naming a state fossil, Missouri has tapped an echinoderm for the top fossil spot picking the sea lily, *Delocrinus missouriensis*.

Although Iowa does not have a top fossil, the crinoid was nominated in the past because these creatures make up a significant portion of the state's limestone deposits.

A 2018 resolution says there are significant crinoid deposits in the Iowa cities of Burlington, Le Grand and Gilmore City and states that Burlington has been called the "crinoid capital of the world" by paleontologists.

There have also been proposals to name the sea biscuit as the state fossil of Florida.

Read the entire article at RocknGem.com





At the Withlacoochee Rockhounds meeting on May 8, 2024, former club Vice President Mark Moore will present an interactive Fossil Hunting program.

Members will get a sample bag of Hellcreek matrix dirt collected in Montana and they will be able to search for small, 66 million-year-old fossils like vertebrae, fish scales and dino teeth.

**Come be a real paleontologist for a night!
Everything will be provided - even magnifying glasses.
Put on your pith helmet and come and enjoy the dig!**



RIP Peg Burns

The Withlacoochee Rockhounds lost another member this month. Peg Burns, wife of Mike Stone, passed away on April 2nd. Peg and Mike have both been longtime members of the club. They were frequently at our monthly meetings, and you always saw Mike taking pictures at our meetings, and at the Gem Show.

The club sends our deepest condolences to Mike and their immediate family. Mike has advised that services for Peg will be held sometime in the future near their home in Kentucky.



William Holland School of Lapidary Arts Scholarships 2024

Our club will be awarding two scholarships to worthy members in 2024. The winners will have their tuition paid for the 1-week class of their choice. This will include lodging and meals. It will not include transportation to and from the location in Young Harris, Ga., nor will it include Lab fees and expenses for participating in the class. But you will receive a week-long, immersive experience in the craft of your choice and make wonderful memories to cherish forever! The school opens April 1st and continues until the end of October. If you're interested, and have been an active club member for at least 2 years, fill out an application at the April meeting and turn it in right away to any Board member. The Board will be making a decision as soon as possible to give everyone plenty of time to choose their class. The applications, along with the list of requirements and parameters, will be available at the front table by the door.

Fire Agate From Joy Valley, Arizona

Fire agate is a rare variety of agate and a relatively new gemstone. It was first identified and formally recognized as a gemstone in the 1930s.

So far, fire agate has only been found in volcanic rocks of the desert regions of the southwestern United States and central Mexico.

The southwestern United States and Mexico had intense volcanism during the middle and later parts of the Tertiary Period, and the crust underwent extension and uplift.

Fire agates formed when hydrothermal fluids, subjected to tremendous temperatures and pressures, became saturated with iron oxides and dissolved minerals leached from the volcanic host rocks.

Cracks and voids in the volcanic rocks filled with these hydrothermal fluids, and the fluids were often saturated with dissolved silica.

As the rocks cooled, the iron oxides, minerals and silica came out of solution and formed deposits of agate, some of which had the right proportion and conditions of formation to result in fire agates. The formation of fire agate is complex, and the right conditions to form fire agate were rare.

The hydrothermal fluids sometimes did not carry dissolved minerals but were still saturated with silica. These fluids filled the cracks and voids in the host volcanic rock and when the rocks cooled the material was often a white, semi-translucent form of agate known as chalcedony. Much of the chalcedony in volcanic rocks is often white and has a bubbly appearance.

As the crust extended and the mountain ranges uplifted, erosion began to wear away at the rocks. The softer volcanic rocks with fire agate and chalcedony eroded away, leaving the fire agate and chalcedony on the surface. Many of the harder volcanic rocks did not erode and the agates and chalcedony remained in place. Many sources that have fire agate and chalcedony in place have been developed as small surface quarries mined specifically for fire agate. The white chalcedony, while still attractive, is not as valued as the fire agate.

Joy Valley was once maintained by BLM as a rockhounding location, but the remoteness of the area resulted in BLM abandoning the location because of the cost of maintaining the road to the site and the lack of visitors.

The Joy Valley locality is in the Whitlock Valley and west of the Peloncillo Mountains. Agates that weathered out of the volcanic rocks there are likely Quaternary in age.

Read the entire article at RocknGem.com



Field Trips

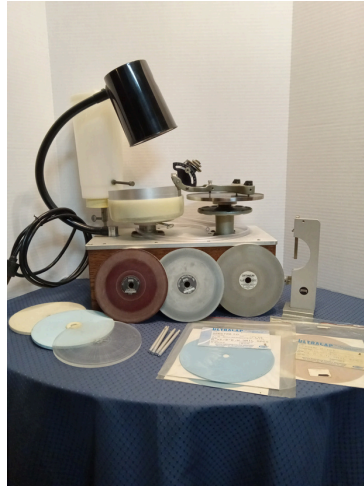
"Note: The Withlacoochee Rockhounds Club does not sponsor field trips other than trips that are sanctioned by the SFMS (The Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies).

Our club insurance is through SFMS and does not cover excursions not listed on their website as safe."

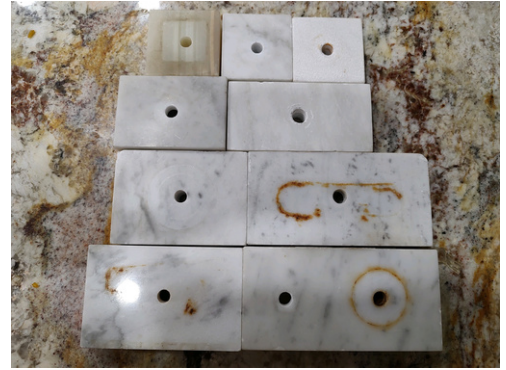
Some items for sale by club members.
All items are local pick up only. No shipping.



Melodye has a new, in-box
Hi-Tech 6" rock trim saw
for sale.
\$400
407.760.4472



Melodye has a lovingly
restored RayTech
faceting machine for
sale.
Works great.
\$900
(These normally sell for upwards
of \$3000)
407.760.4472



Michelle has some marble
for sale.
\$25 for all the pieces.

Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Our monthly club meeting is held at the
Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Club,
3357 Susan Dr., Spring Hill, FL 34606, on
the 2nd Wednesday of each month
from 7:00 to 9:00 PM



www.withlacoocheerockhounds.com

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The cost for non-club members
to advertise their businesses in
Rock Talk is \$10.00 per month.
Contact Michael Steverson to set up an
ad in both the newsletter and
the club website. It will benefit both
your business and our club.

Advertisers Needed

Please help us find advertisers for the
Rock Talk and our website. The club can
use the monthly income. Both the *Rock
Talk* and our website have more exposure
than only club members

Contact club treasurer, Janet Wheeler: ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
or send to:
Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634
Spring Hill, FL 34811-6634

Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Purpose
We are a non-profit organization whose purpose is to foster interest and promote knowledge of minerals, gems, fossils, lapidary arts, and earth sciences, through regular meetings, informative programs, and workshops. PLUS, our annual gem, mineral and jewelry show.
Membership is open to anyone sharing such interests.

Dues
Dues are \$35.00 annually for adults, and \$5.00 for children under 18 years of age.

Club Meeting Location and Time
Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Center, 3375 Susan Dr in Spring Hill. Meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month at 7:00PM

2024 Club Officers and Appointees

President	Anthony Maffatone	352.397.7694	anthonymaffatone@gmail.com
Vice President	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com
Secretary	Melodye Steverson	352.683.9496	melodye@designsbymelodye.com
Treasurer	Janet Wheeler	727.938.3644	ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
Rock Talk Editor	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com
Club Webmaster	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com
Mailing Reporter	Janet Wheeler	727.938.3644	ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
Audio/Visual Coordinator	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com

Anthony Maffatone (President) Michael Steverson (Vice President) Melodye Steverson (Secretary) Janet Wheeler (Treasurer)
 Hunter Mellring Leslie Newberry Roger Wheeler James Roush (Appointed) Ralph Barber (Past President)



Bench Tips from Brad Smith

Brad Smith's *Bench Tips* are a monthly feature of Rock Talk

PRE-MADE BEZEL CUPS

As a general rule of thumb I assume it's going to take me 15 - 20 minutes to make a bezel for an ordinary cabochon, so for some projects buying pre-made cups can save a lot of time. But if you go this route, keep in mind three things. First, try to get cups made from fine silver, not sterling. Fine silver is softer and burnishes over the stone more easily.

Second, you may have trouble matching the shape and size of the stone with the shape and size of the bezel cup. Purchased cups can only be found in a limited number of standard sizes. You may have to adjust your choice of gemstone to match the cup. The other consideration is that pre-made cups often have fairly low side walls. While these are fine for low-dome stones, they're not dependable for stones with steep side walls.

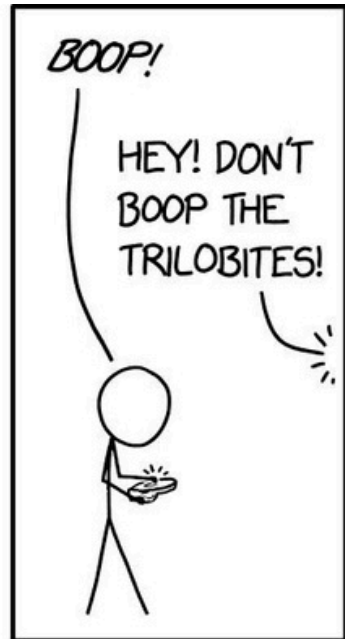
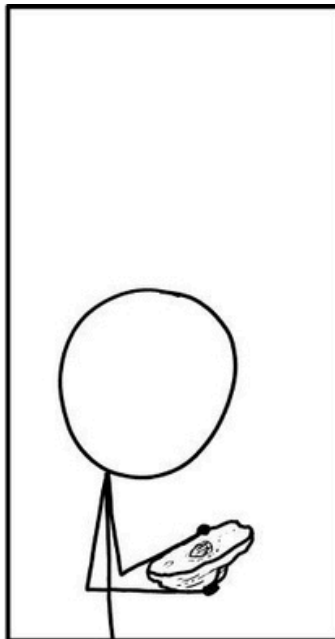
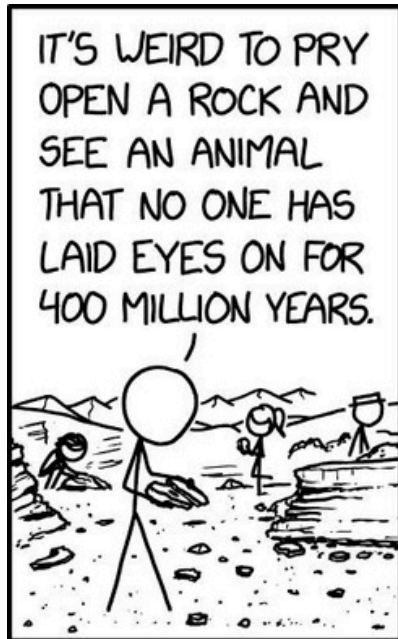
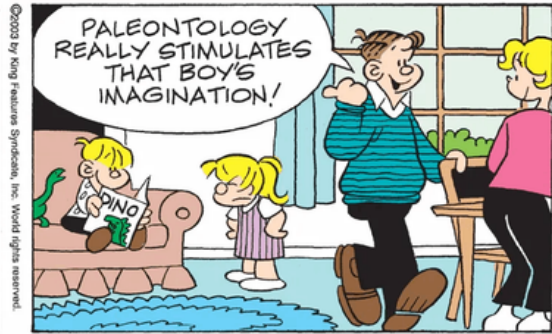
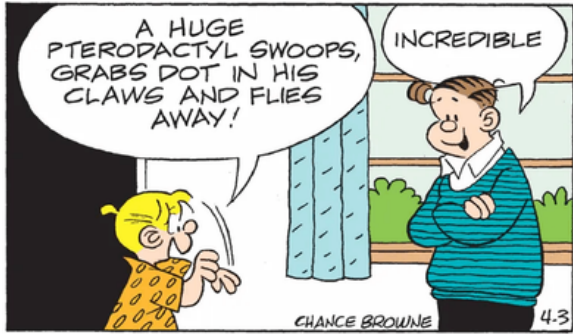
Lastly before setting, check the fit of your gemstone in the cup, particularly around the bottom. The bottom corners of a stamped cup are much more rounded than a bezel you would fabricate yourself. This causes a problem with stones that have a sharp edge around the bottom. Burnishing the bezel over one of these stones will place a lot of stress on the stone and may cause it to crack. To avoid this, I round off the bottom edge of the stone with a diamond file (or use sandpaper on soft stones).

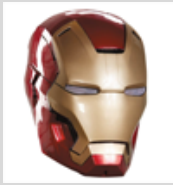


Learn New Skills with Brad's "How To Do It" Books

[Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith](https://www.amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith)

Rock Talk Funny Papers





From The Editor

Hello to all Withlacoochee Rockhounds

It is I, your friendly neighborhood editor again.

For our April meeting, we had our always-popular Rock Rummage Sale. It was a busy night for all club members in attendance. Lots of great deals were had, and we had a few members who brought in rocks and such to just donate. You missed a great meeting if you were not there.

For our May meeting, former club Vice President Mark Moore will be doing his presentation on Hellcreek Fossils. The last time Mark did this demo, we literally had to tell members "Hey, it's almost 10PM, we need to close up now". Mark will be bring dirt for everyone to dig through to look for fossils. He'll also have magnifying glasses and microscopes. Do NOT miss this one.

Membership for the new year is due. If you have not renewed your club membership, please do so. You can renew at the meeting (we take cash, checks, and credit cards), or mail your renewal application in. The revised application is at the end of this newsletter. If you have not renewed your membership by the end of the month, you will not be able to vote, attend club classes, etc., because you are not an active member anymore. So, please renew!

If you would like to place a business card ad in the newsletter, please feel free to contact me, and we'll get you added to the next available issue.

Additionally, if any of you have not received your newsletter or are not receiving my e-mail blasts (meetings, rock sales, etc.), *please* check your spam folder. If you are still not receiving them, please contact me, and let's make sure I have your correct e-mail address.

Our Board would like our members to come up with suggestions for programs to be presented at our monthly meetings. What would you like to see? What would you like to learn? What would you like to know? Is there something you'd like to teach or present? You can help our club expand its educational repertoire. We'd love to hear from you all.

Contact any Board member or bring your written suggestions to a meeting.

Rock On!!!

Club Phone Number - 352.587.2714

Warning to Withlacoochee Rockhound Members

During the last several months, illicit requests have been sent to members of various clubs in the US, including the Withlacoochee Rockhounds, asking members to purchase gift cards that would be used as donations to various organizations.

These are SCAMS.


Be advised that our club has never and will never ask members to buy gift cards or provide any form of monetary funds to anyone or any organization by phone call, email, or any other method of communication.

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The cost for non-club members to advertise their businesses in
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Contact Michael Stevenson to set up an ad in both the newsletter and
the club website. It will benefit both
your business and our club.

If your ad has a web address, or Etsy shop address, I have linked to it.

Advertisers Are Needed

Please help us find advertisers for the Rock Talk and our website.
The monthly income from these ads is beneficial to the club.
Both the Rock Talk and our website have more exposure than only club members.
Contact club treasurer Janet Wheeler: ceecgirl@tampabay.rr.com or
send to:
Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634 Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634



Membership Form – 2024

Withlacoochee Rockhounds
Hernando County FL

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Full Name

Partner's Full Name
* If both applying for membership

Child's Full Name
* If under 18, and applying with parent

Street Address

City

State / ZIP

Phone Number

Email

Annual Membership Dues:

*Choose your type of membership

- Individual Membership \$35.00/ea
- Individual Membership \$35.00/ea
- Under 18 Membership \$5.00/ea
- Under 18 Membership \$5.00/ea

Returning Member?

New Member?

If you are applying, for example, as husband, wife and child (under 18), then fill in full name, partner's name and child's name above. Then, choose two individual memberships to the left, along with an under 18 membership.

Give this completed form, along with your check (made payable to "Withlacoochee Rockhounds") or credit card for dues to Club Secretary Janet Wheeler at a club meeting. Or, you may mail the form to:

Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box
Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634