

November 2009



The Rockhound's Bark

News

ABOUT THE SOCIETY

Meetings are held the last Saturday of each month, September-November and January-May, 7:30 - 10:00 p.m. in the auditorium (Lower Level) of the N.S. Museum of Natural History, 1747 Summer St., Halifax.
Dues are \$20/year, payable in January of each year.

SOCIETY'S MAILING ADDRESS

The Nova Scotia Mineral and Gem Society
c/o NS Museum of Natural History
1747 Summer Street,
Halifax, N.S.,
B3H 3A6

MEMBERSHIP FEES

Membership fees were due in January. Please bring application form to a meeting or mail it to Terry along with \$20. We would like to be sure we have your most current information.

The November meeting will be held on November 28 at the Museum of Natural History. It will be the Annual Club Rock and Gem Sale. The nomination and election of officers for the coming year will also take place.

I will be out of the country for the month of January so there may not be a January newsletter, it will depend on whether I can access the internet.

I will be Arizona attending one of the world's largest Rock & Gem shows in Quartzsite. (see article inside).

If anyone in the club has a particular gem, rock, mineral or small piece of equipment that they have not been able to find locally, let me know and I can probably find it in Quartzsite.

While I am there, I will also be attending the annual meeting of S.C.R.I.B.E. which is the Special Congress Representing Involved Bulletin Editors.

S.C.R.I.B.E. is a group of Rock and Gem Club Newsletter Editors from all over North America who exchange newsletters and also meet once a year to exchange ideas, newsletters and discuss issues that arise with publishing a club bulletin or newsletter. A lot of the articles that I use in this newsletter come from S.C.R.I.B.E. as we share stories among members.

It is also an opportunity to spread the word about the beautiful province of Nova Scotia and our many treasures.

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

I really need story ideas, pictures, etc. for the newsletter as I do not know what you want to read about. Do you just want info on Nova Scotia rocks and minerals or do you want to see articles about areas further afield.

If you are looking for information on a subject, let me know and I will do some research and an article on the subject.

A Buy and Sell section in the newsletter will start in February so please let me know of any items you would like to dispose of.

Fossils in Amber

BY SHELBY HARTMAN OF THE MEMPHIS ARCHAEOLOGICAL & GEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



When tree sap hardens, it becomes resinous amber. Conifers were usually the source of the sap that produced amber, however angiosperms (a flowering plant) also produced sap that eventually became amber. Amber is not a mineral but due to its use in jewelry it is often classified with precious stones. In the past, amber was often melted down to produce very high quality lacquers and varnishes.

The majority of amber is younger than 70 million years but some has been found to be 100 million years old. As tree sap hardened into amber, often insects and other small animals could become entrapped. Most of the fossils found encased in amber are insects but some lizards and plants have been found. Fossils found in amber are very unique and very important to the fossil record. An insect or animal trapped inside amber is usually seen in near perfect detail. Even hairs on the insects are preserved without

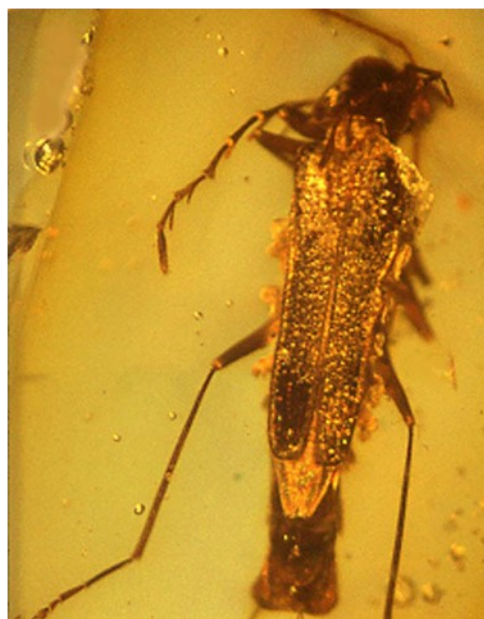
crushing or distortion. Without the preservation of insects and spiders inside of amber, virtually nothing would be known of the evolution of either of these groups. The process of preservation includes the decay and dehydration of the organism which leaves a carbonized mass inside a perfect mold of the original organism. Paleontologists have been able to dissect the amber-encased organisms and can often identify muscle groups and internal structures. In some cases even DNA from these amber insects have been identified which makes it possible to compare ancient DNA with that of contemporary insects. They have even been able to extract and reactivate bacterial spores from inside 40 million year old bees.

Amber encased fossils are found in many sites all over the world, including the Baltic Sea coast, the Isle of Wight and New Zealand. Amber found in the Baltic Sea coastal area of Poland is usually brought in by the tides as amber floats in salt water. Amber found in Northern Burma is referred to as Burmite. What is unique about amber from this region is that it is most likely the oldest amber specimens which contain insects — dating back to the Uppermost Lower Cretaceous Age. Plant matter and insects found in Burmite may date back 110-140 million years. However, amber without insects has been found dating back to the Upper Carboniferous period — 345 million years ago!

Amber is usually associated with deposits of shale and coal. Considering how much amber exists, relatively little amber actually contains insects. Museums shops and private dealers often offer amber encased insects for sale. However, as amber fossils can be faked very easily, the buyer should be wary of the potential to be “taken.”

Amber comes in a variety of colors. The color most closely associated with amber is a yellow-orange. It is a color so closely associated with amber that it is actually referred to as “amber.” Amber can range from almost white to yellow to yellow orange, to brown to a color very close to black. There is also green amber and a very rare blue amber that is very expensive and highly prized.

Sources: [1] A Guide to Rocks & Fossils (Busby, Coenraads, Willis & Roots) [2] Wikipedia



Quartzsite, Arizona - A Rockhound's Dream

By Arlene Driscoll

Imagine driving on a straight multi-lane freeway through a barren landscape, brown sand with the occasional saguaro cactus and not much else. Suddenly you start to see the occasional RV sitting in the middle of the desert with nothing else in sight, then two or three together, then eight to ten, then a virtual endless array of motorhomes, trailers, vans, etc. as far as the eye can see - as many as 500,000 in its busiest year but lately with the economic downturn it is probably closer to 300,000.



You have arrived in Quartzsite, Arizona - a small town of approximately 3000 at the intersection of Interstate 10 and State Rd 95. A sleepy town with a few small businesses for most of the year but for the months of January and February the population swells to well over 500,000.

What is the attraction? It is actually a number of shows and flea markets that take place in numerous locations

around town. You have the Quartzsite Annual PowWow, an RV show, Antique Auto Show, Rock & Gem Show, Hobby & Craft Show, and on and on.

Any piece of equipment and virtually any rock or gem you can think of is for sale somewhere in Quartzsite. Vendors start to arrive in late December and early January. Containers from Brazil, Africa, Afghanistan and other countries are brought in by tractor trailer and the unpacking begins. 45 gallon drums are unloaded and opened and rocks and gems of every size, shape and color emerge. Vendors will have everything from 8 foot high Amethyst and Citrine geodes, faceted rubies, emeralds and diamonds, gold, silver, jewelry findings, lapidary equipment, beads, fossils, meteorites, opal, you name it and its probably here.



The RoadRunners Rock and Gem Club welcomes all visitors to their ranks and holds weekly meetings for the season. They also have a fully equipped building housing a lapidary shop with approximately 10 machines, a silver casting room, an opal room, a silver shop, a faceting shop and a knapping area. They offer members access to all of these areas for a \$2 a day fee. Classes in faceting, silver casting, lapidary, knapping, chain making, wire wrap, etc. are offered daily - some for free, others at a small charge.

If you are ever in the area during these two months, drop in to Quartzsite - its an experience you will never forget.

Events

**Agate & Jasper
Craft Show &
Sale
Victor Althem's
home
2 Healthland
Way
Dartmouth
434-8012
Friday Nov 27 &
Sat Nov 28
10AM to 2PM**

**Deadline for the
December Newsletter is
December 15**

**Send submissions to
driscoll@allstream.net**

2009 EXECUTIVE

President:

William Blinn

Vice President:

Fred Walsh

Secretary/Bark Editor:

Arlene Driscoll

Treasurer:

Terry Collett

Librarian:

Herb Malle

Director at Large

Doug Wilson

MINUTES OF OCTOBER MEETING

By Arlene Driscoll

Bill reported that Victor was doing well.

Membership voted to allow Bill to purchase club crests. They will be available to club members for under 10.00.

Doug Wilson volunteered to take over the website and will meet with Ken to get the information needed. Bill will send a note to Ken to let him know.

Membership fees are due in January and a new form needs to be filled out each year so that we can confirm that we have your most current information. If dues are not paid for three months, member will be deleted from club membership rolls and will not be covered by insurance.

We will pass on the information about the November Show and Sale to other groups such as the Metal Arts Guild and Prospectors Association in case anyone is interested.

Bill will attend a meeting in Parrsboro on November 14 regarding the extension to the museum to hold Eldon George's collection. He will report back to the club on what is happening

Members felt that the provincial collection should be part of the museum and the

curator should have some mineral knowledge. Emphasis is not on minerals at the museum. We need to point out that there is no mineralogist on the committee.

Deborah Skilliter has sent us a notice twice now regarding the sale of fossils. She would like to remind all members that fossils cannot be sold in the province. This raised some questions as to Eldon's collection - aren't the fossils being sold as part of the collection. Also, the Department of Tourism is selling fossils at Walton-Blue Beach. Are they exempt from the legislation or are the fossils from someplace else? Members would like a copy of the legislation which prohibits the sale of fossils. We will contact Deborah for clarification on these issues.

Doug Wilson was elected as a Director at large.

Tyson has Open House on November 14 & 15.

Fred Walsh had an inquiry for Dunbrack material wanted for paint pigment - referred to Terry for follow up.

Theme for November meeting - Mini Show January - National Geographic DVD.

WEBSITES OF INTEREST

If you have found any good sites, please let me know and I will add them to the list. A great site I recently found for kids is www.rockhoundkids.com.

<http://nsminerals.atSPACE.com>

<http://museum.gov.ns.ca/fossils/>

<http://www.mindat.org>

<http://vuprocks.com>

<http://gis3.natr.gov.ns.ca/MODB/>

<http://gis.wvdep.org/convert/>

<http://www.bayoffundytourism.com/tides/times/>

<http://www.rockngem.com/>

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/MEB/pdf/ic66.htm>

<http://www.rockhounds.com/rockshop/nssites.html>

<http://www.42explore.com/rocks2.htm>

<http://www.allaboutgemstones.com/>

<http://www.rockhoundkids.com>

<http://mineralcollecting.org/>

<http://www.galleries.com/>

<http://www.minerals.net/>