The Sierra Pelonagram

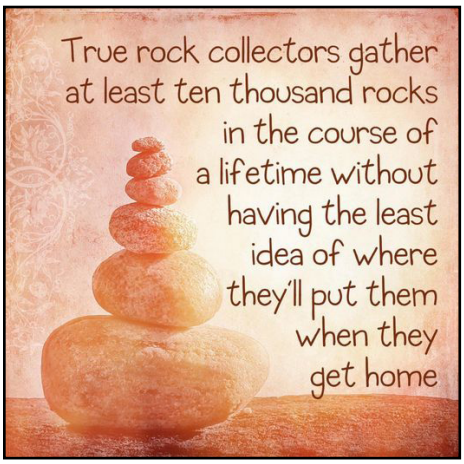
February 2022

... Member of the California Federation of Mineralogical Society Inc. ...

The Sierra Pelona Rock Club is a non-profit organization founded in 1959 with the objective to sponsor activities and promote interest and education in: mineralogy, lapidary, geology, paleontology and related subjects.

February
Brigitte Mazourek
Alan Pollack
John Wheeler
Tina White

March
Richard Carlson
Ruth Hidalgo
Linda Jenkins
Ed Learn
Bill Webber



President's Message

February is here and it can be a busy, romantic, silly month, especially considering it is the shortest month of the year. Super Bowl, the Winter Olympics, Valentine's Day, President's Day, Groundhog Day, and on and on. And that's just non-club events. Julie is plotting a nice field trip for this month. She'll send out an email as we get closer to the date.

We are still deciding on a good date for the Workshop. Right now, we are tentatively set for Saturday, March 12. It should be warmer than it has been for us tender Southern California souls for starters.

We have a new member—Welcome Jenn Jenkins. She is Linda Jenkins' daughter and the mother of Jack. You may have met her as she has attended several meetings and field trips already.

Dues still haven't been paid by several members. Please get your check in the mail ASAP, or you can use Venmo or Zelle to Heidi or Venmo to Shana. The drop-dead deadline is February 28.

On a sad note, Lynne Alexander's husband passed in January. Lynne, we were so sorry to hear this. Our thoughts are with you.

So, enjoy the month known as February, stay warm and safe and we'll hopefully see you on the 15th at the next Zoom meeting.

Bill Webber
SPRC President

Officers:
President – Bill Webber
Vice-President – Julie Tinoco
Secretary: Tina White
Treasurer –Shana Brunes-Ruiz
Federation Director (CFMS/AFMS) --Don Cogan

Chairpersons:
Claim--Linda Jenkins
Donation Rock Table--Dianne Wholleben
Equipment--Bill Webber
Field Trips – Julie Tinoco
Historian -Open
Hospitality – Ron Rackliffe
Membership – Heidi Webber
Website-- Larry Holt
Pelonagram Publisher, Editor – Heidi Webber
Programs –Tina White
Publicity –Open
Sunshine--Linda Jenkins

The Sierra Pelona Rock Club, is a member of the California and American Federation of Mineralogical Societies, Inc. (CFMS/AFMS). The general club meetings (Open to the public) are at 7:30 PM, on the 3rd Tuesday of each month at: Currently via Zoom

Contact the Club or the Sierra Pelonagram Editor at:
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Newhall, Ca. 91322
Or e-mail: hwebber50@gmail.com
Visit the SPRC website www.sierrapelona.com

SPRC Board Meeting
February 1, 2022

Zoom meeting opened at 7:03 p.m.

Virtual Attendees:
- Heidi Webber
- Bill Webber
- Julie Tinoco
- Tina White
- Don Cogan
- Cheryl Cogan
- Shana Ruiz

Minutes of Previous Board Meeting:
- Approved unanimously

Treasurer's Report (Heidi for Shana)
- Julie asked about Blue; that is our website host
- Bill reported we double-paid for our mailbox; now we're covered for 2023. (Bill & Heidi found two late notices in the box and paid, but Shana had already paid.

Non-Sequitur
Julie brought up a book (Gem Trails, I saw it in her hands) she got in Quartzsite and that she talked to Danny; Trina & Diane were talking about opal out past Hauser Geode Beds, now she found something in the book: Superior Gypsum Mine. But they went to the Arlington Mine and collected psilomelane (barium manganese hydroxide). They want to go back.

February Field Trip (Julie)
- February 26th, as Evelyn V. now won't be in town until then
- Julie wants to return to near where the group went for bloodstone (with the Pasadena group)

o Out on the way to Castle Butte; Shana has collected there and likes it.
o A later start possible as not complicated to find (off Hwy. 40?)

Report on January Trip (Julie)
- Only 5 went, but they had fun and bought lots of stuff!

Membership
- Jenn Jenkins voted in as a new member; her dues were paid by her mother (Linda) at the holiday party
- We have 51 members now; some of us still owe our 2022 dues

Workshop (Bill & Heidi)
- Concern over February date given COVID surge, so March 12th
- Outdoors, Bill may be able to move some equipment
- Heidi will still cook for us!
- Masks required

Topic for February Meeting
- Birthstones

Placerita Nature Center
- Will be having Open House in late April/early May; SPRC table if invited.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

Tina White

General Meeting
January 18, 2022
Zoom

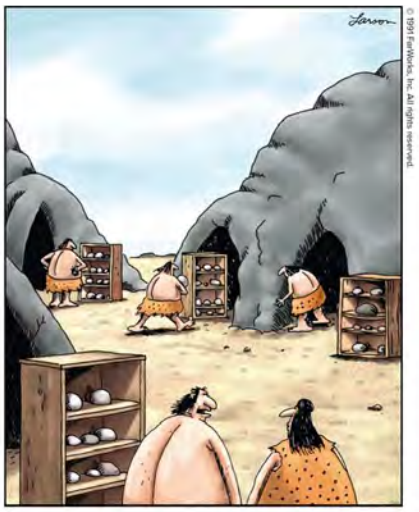
The meeting was called to order at 7:02pm. There were 12 members and one guest in attendance.

Bill reminded those who haven't paid their dues for 2022 that they are now due and to please pay asap. Julie was having trouble with her computer/camera/microphone and so couldn't give much information on the upcoming trip to Quartzite. The meeting was then adjourned for the program.

Heidi presented the PowerPoint program as Tina was in Granada. It was nowhere near as good as when Tina presents, so thankfully she will be here for the February meeting! The program was about Quartzite and the PowWow. After the presentation, a question-and-answer discussion was held for those who have been and those who haven't been.

The meeting was adjourned at 8pm.

Respectfully Submitted by Heidi Webber for Tina White, Secretary



"You know, I used to like this hobby. ... But shoot! Seems like *everybody's* got a rock collection."

Hundreds of Strange, Tiny Fossils Found Inside Fish Cranium From 9 Million Years Ago

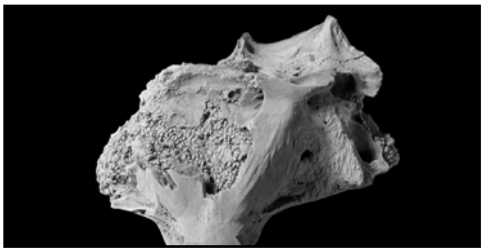
Mindy Weisberger, Live Science
1 February, 2022

In a first for paleontology, scientists have found hundreds of tiny, fossilized fecal pellets crammed inside a fish braincase dating to about 9 million years ago.

The wee fossil poops, also known as coprolites, were deposited by scavengers – probably worms – that devoured the fish's decaying head, including its brain.

As they munched the flesh from the skull, the worms pooped out chains and clusters of oval coprolite beads, each measuring about 0.1 inches (2.5 millimeters) long. Small as they were, those pellets added up over time.

When the hungry scavengers were done, they had left behind hundreds of pellets – enough poop to fill the fish's braincase entirely.



Miocene fossil stargazer filled with hundreds of tiny fossilized fecal pellets.
Calvert Marine Museum

Researchers found the coprolite-filled fossil at Calvert Cliffs, a site in southern Maryland that contains fossils dating from about 18 million to 8 million years ago, during the Miocene epoch.

The skull belonged to the fish Astroscopus countermani, a type of bottom-dwelling ambush predator commonly known as a stargazer, and small, oblong coprolite pellets such as these are known collectively as Coprulus oblongus.

Fossilized crocodile poop, broken open showing the burrows made by one or more kinds of poop-eating organism. Notice the feeding gouge marks on the sides of the cylindrical burrows.
Calvert Marine Museum

In addition to the fecal-stuffed skull, the scientists also examined other coprolite pellet deposits that were clustered in sandy sediments, stuck to fossilized snail and bivalve shells, and grouped around preserved barnacles at the site.

Another notable fossil in the group was a much larger coprolite measuring 7 inches (18 centimeters) long, that had been pooped by a vertebrate, possibly an ancient crocodilian.

Threading through the preserved poop were deep tunnels that had been dug out by unknown animals eating the poop or digging a home – or both, researchers reported in the March 2022 issue of the journal Rivista Italiana di Paleontologia e Stratigrafia (Research in Paleontology and Stratigraphy).

Many Miocene marine creatures have previously been described from Calvert Cliffs fossils, including sharks and other fish, turtles, crocodiles, seabirds, and seals, according to the study.

A variety of coprolites have also been collected near the cliffs, though microcoprolites that are produced by invertebrates – such as the coprolites in the fish skull – haven't been as well-studied as poop from animals with backbones, according to the study.

Scientists determined that the tiny beads inside the skull were fecal pellets "on the basis of their very characteristic size, shape and chemical composition," said lead study author Stephen Godfrey, a curator of paleontology at the Calvert Marine Museum in Solomons, Maryland.

Nondestructive X-ray spectroscopy revealed that these microcoprolites had relatively high concentrations of calcium and phosphate, which are commonly found in fossilized feces, Godfrey told Live Science in an email.

(While there's no way to tell for sure if the scavengers munched on fish brains, the poop-filled braincase suggests that brains were probably on the dinner menu.)

But whose poop was it?

A dead animal's corpse attracts numerous scavengers, many of which "will be perfectly happy to eat your brains and fill your skull with feces," Godfrey said.

Micropellets such as these are produced by insects, worms, sea squirts, snails and clams; but since the coprolites came from a marine environment, "we can safely rule out terrestrial insects as the producers," Godfrey said.

Sea squirts could also be ruled out, because they spend most of their adult lives attached to rocks, and acorn worms were also crossed off the list due to their habit of defecating outside their burrows.

Fossilized Miocene micro-coprolites (probably worm fecal pellets), southern Maryland.
Calvert Marine Museum

Because the fecal pellets were found in the innermost parts of a fish skull that measured no more than 2 inches (5 cm) wide, they were probably pooped out by an invertebrate that could squeeze its soft body into tight spaces.

"This would probably then rule out snails and clams, leaving polychaete worms and other kinds of worms as the most likely candidates," Godfrey said in the email.

The researchers also noticed that all the wee pellets were similar in their size and shape, Godfrey said. In fact, he was "most surprised and actually impressed" by the coprolites' uniformity, compared to the inconsistently shaped fecal output of most vertebrates.

"How and why is it that some worm could produce such uniform and wonderfully-shaped feces is remarkable to me," he said.

Reference: Science Alert