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Large Fossil Shark Tooth Collection
Donated to CMM

Dr. Bretton Kent (Right) from the University of Maryland, College Park has begun donating his large and important fossil shark tooth collection to the Calvert Marine Museum! (A portion of which is figured above). We are thrilled that he is entrusting his research collection to us! ☯

Next Club Meeting.
Saturday, April 27th, 2019.
Dr. Ralph Eshelman will present a public lecture entitled: “Terrestrial Mammal Fossils from the Miocene Chesapeake Group.” See page 16…
A GAR-BITEN COPROLITE FROM THE EOCENE GREEN RIVER FORMATION NEAR KEMMERER, WYOMING, U.S.A.

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Abstract: Known vertebrate-bitten coprolites (fossilized feces) are exceedingly rare in the fossil record. Here we describe the first vertebrate-bitten coprolites preserved within the mouth of a vertebrate, a gar (Atractosteus simplex). Two of the gar’s lower teeth are imbedded in one of the coprolites. The Eocene epoch coprolite-biting gar derives from the mini-fish beds near the K-spar tuff bed near Kemmerer, Wyoming. These approximately 52 million-year-old fossil-rich sediments form part of the Fossil Butte Member of the Green River Formation. This remarkable specimen is the first-known fossil to show an animal with feces in its mouth at the time of death. Atractosteus simplex probably preyed on other fishes. Gars are not known to engage in coprophagy (the eating of feces), so the occurrence of coprolites in the mouth of this specimen is unexpected and many have been serendipitous/taphonomic.

INTRODUCTION

Of all the coprolites known from the fossil record, only three have been formally recognized as preserving vertebrate tooth impressions or bite traces (Godfrey and Smith, 2010; Godfrey and Palmer, 2015). However, other vertebrate-bitten coprolites are known to exist in private collections.

Figure 1. Nearly complete and articulated skeleton of Atractosteus simplex (catalog number W20) in a right lateral view. The red circle towards the top of the image outlines the area where the coprolites between the jaws of the gar are preserved.

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Here we describe one of these (Figs. 1-3), an articulated Eocene gar (*Atractosteus simplex*) in which two of the teeth in its lower jaw are imbedded in a coprolite. (This specimen, catalogued as W20, is presently in the private collection of the primary author (GF) and will be made available to qualified researchers upon request). It is estimated that only one in every 5000 fishes excavated from the Fossil Butte Member are gars, making this a rare find. Fish coprolites like the ones figured here are fairly common in the Fossil Butte Member (Edwards, 1976). However, to date, no coprolite has ever been found in the mouth of any fossilized vertebrate. Therefore, the presence of two coprolites in the mouth of W20 is, to our knowledge, unique in the fossil record. It is the first known fossil to show an animal with feces in its mouth at the time of death.

**GEOLOGIC SETTING**

The Eocene fossil gar was excavated from the mass mortality mini-fish beds near the K-spar tuff bed. This 52 million-year-old fossil-rich rock layer is part of the Fossil Butte Member of the Green River Formation. Most of the vertebrate fossils discovered in this area comprise well-preserved fish from an Eocene complex of intermontane lakes that once occupied the landscape 53-49 million years ago (Smith and Carroll, 2015). A variety of fossilized plants, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, and trace fossils including coprolites have also been found in the area (Grande, 2013). Much has been written on the Eocene biota known from the Green River Formation (including Scudder, 1878; Piccini, 1997; Grande, 2013; Smith and Carroll, 2015 and the references therein).

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The *Atractosteus simplex* (W20) specimen figured here (Figs. 1-3) was discovered by Dean Sherman in 2017 in his private fossil quarry near Kemmerer, Wyoming (https://instonefossils.com/p/fossil-excursion). Sherman recovered this 914mm (36 inches)-long and 144mm (5.6 inches)-wide specimen in several pieces. He reassembled the pieces and removed the thin veneer of rock covering the fish. While preparing the head, he noticed the two coprolites between its jaws (Figs. 2-3).

**DESCRIPTION**

Gande (2010) has provided multiple photographs and given a detailed description of the anatomy of the simplex gar.

The coprolites (Fig. 3) in the gar’s mouth are similar in size, shape, texture, and color to other fish coprolites found in the Fossil Butte Member of the Green River Formation (Edwards, 1976). (However, no chemical or spectral analysis was conducted on these to confirm their identity as coprolites.) The largest coprolite was bitten through its width, leaving a 3.67mm (.14 inches) circular remnant embedded between two teeth. This indicates that the original fecal mass was durable, yet soft, when it entered the gar’s mouth. The smaller coprolite is 2.52mm (.09 inches) long with a diameter of 1.48mm (.05 inches) in length and is 2mm away from the larger piece (Fig. 3, the smaller coprolite is in the upper left-hand quadrant of the image).

**DISCUSSION**

Godfrey and Palmer (2015) described a gar-bitten coprolite from South Carolina. Because gars are not known to engage in coprophagy, Godfrey and Palmer (2015) attributed the bite marks to an accidental or serendipitous strike, rather than to a deliberate attempt by the gar to eat the feces.
Figure 3. Detailed view of the two coprolites in the mouth of the simplex gar, W20. Two of the gar teeth are imbedded in the larger coprolite seen on the right side of the photo.

In reference to W20, we do not know that the gar was deliberately trying to consume the feces at the time of death. If gars were not so heavily scaled, it would be easier to analyze the stomach contents of fossilized individuals (Grande, 2010). So the occurrence of the coprolites in the mouth of this specimen many have been serendipitous/taphonomic (i.e., they entered the gar’s mouth unintentionally at or near the time of death). Although much less likely because the coprolites are so well formed, the reader should know that we could not rule out the possibility that these bromalites (Hunt and Lucas, 2012; i.e., material from the digestive system of an organism) actually represent regurgitalites: that is, vomit that made its way into the gar’s mouth just before, during, or immediately after it died and then fossilized.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank Dean Sherman for discovering, preparing, and allowing the primary author to purchase this gar for their collection. (This specimen will be made available to qualified researches upon request.) This article was made possible in part by funding from the citizens of Calvert County and the County Board of Calvert County Commissioners.

REFERENCES


Newsletter website: http://calvertmarinemuseum.com/204/The-Ecphora-Newsletter
President's Column

Greetings CMM Fossil Club members! Stephen has informed me that he has included numerous images and fossil updates in this newsletter so I will be brief.

By the time we have our next meeting in April we will have held a few trips. I would like to get more scheduled. We are very lucky to have so many members of our club who own property along the Cliffs. You are the eyes and ears of the CMM Paleo Team. If you are willing to go one step further and host a trip for the club please let me know.

I would like to hear from the members who attended the Easter hunt at Stratford Hall with their thoughts on the trip. It is my intent to continue to have our club work with other fossil clubs to arrange joint trips. We have been very successful over the years to join up with the DVPS and others to expand our areas of interest so I hope this trend continues. For example: would there be an interest in a trip to North Carolina?

We are also fortunate that the CMM has a very active paleontology team that attracts top scientists from around the world to examine, review, and describe our finds. Stephen is also constantly looking to get them to provide the club a lecture on their current research while in town. The draw of the Smithsonian helps of course as well.

In closing, Stephen’s first volume for the Cliffs is out with reprints of at least the shark chapter under discussion. I hope most, if not all members, were able to acquire a copy.

Words like Capstone, Legacy, Life's Work are fair words to describe volume #1 but they seem to come up short to truly express the effort. This volume will serve as a go-to reference by experts and hobbyists for decades to come - Congratulations Stephen!!!

Paul R Murdoch Jr. ☉

Other Collections Donated

We also received major specimen donations from Dr. Robert and Margee Hazen, Pam Platt and Sandy Roberts. More on these donations will appear in the June issue of The Ephora.

Editor’s Comment: Dr. Jeff Siewerdsen (I-Star Lab at Johns Hopkins University) suggested that I include biographies of individuals in The Ephora. Many thanks Jeff for a great idea! Therefore, from time-to-time short bios on how and when individuals became interested in paleontology will be featured in The Ephora. We begin this informal series with the paleo bio of Lori Lindholm (CMMFC Secretary).

CMMFC Paleo Profile
Lori Lindholm
CMMFC Secretary

The attached photo is from our trip to Wyoming in the summer of 2017 where we spent a day at an active dig site at the Wyoming Dinosaur Center in Thermopolis. I am happy to be able to support the CMM Fossil Club as your secretary. And I look forward to the Club’s future outings.

My now 18-year-old son, Adam, is responsible for my interest in paleontology. At the age of three, he declared that he was going to be a paleontologist and in the 15 years since then, he has not wavered in that determination. His exuberance for the field has led us to the Field Museum in Chicago, the AMNH in New York, the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh, the Royal Tyrrell and Royal Ontario museums in Canada, completing Montana’s Dinosaur

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Trail in one extended go, as well as trips to fossil beds and national parks in Montana, South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah and Idaho. Each of these excursions opened my eyes wider to the amazing prehistory of our world and the remarkable creatures that roamed, swam and flew for hundreds of millions of years.

It was during our second foray to Montana that I went on my first fossil scavenging hike with Marge Baisch on her ranch in eastern Montana. I found a hadrosaur toe bone fossil that now sits on my desk at work. It was an amazing day and I wish I could have spent a week there.

Text and photo submitted by L. Lindholm.

**GILLS, Art from “Jerin”…**

The irrepressible artistic duo of Jeri Cuffley and Erin Baker (aka Jerin) continue to impress. This time creating a parody on the “JAWS” movie poster, replacing the huge great white with the filter-feeding whale shark (Rhincodon typus); brilliant! The background is a watercolor painting; the whale shark is three-dimensional and was created using the polymer clay Sculpey.

This wonderful tattoo occupies much of the right forearm of paleo graduate student Margo Nelson. The text surrounding Moby Dick reads, “A very white and famous and most deadly immortal monster”. A quote from Herman Melville. Photo by S. Godfrey.

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Left: May I Take Your Hat Sir?

**Bill Prochownik** found this meg tooth and commissioned **Christian Hunt** (Port Royal, SC) to create the removable hat/crown. Amazingly skilled artistic work! The Hirschhorn Gallery should take note. Hands by M. Baughman. ☼

Meg-Bitten Meg Tooth

This handsome megalodon-bitten meg tooth is in **Kim Arrigo**’s collection. Notice the fine raking marks across the shoulder of the root of the tooth - marks made when another huge meg tooth cut down on this tooth shearing off part of the shoulder of the root of the tooth.

Detailed view of the crosscutting serration marks on the root of the meg tooth. Most likely a self-bitten tooth. Photos by S. Godfrey. ☼

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“Wrapped” *Carcharodon hastalis* and *Carcharocles megalodon* Teeth

Mike Ellwood found these teeth and then he commissioned Guy Tomassini to create the beautiful silver-wrap armatures to hold them. If you are so inclined, you can reach Guy Tomassini at: ampilgrm@gmail.com.

Right: Sculpted *T. rex* Tooth by Jerin. Jeri Cuffley sculpted the tooth (with Sculpey) and Erin Baker painted it with water-based acrylics and then applied a coat of water-based matte Varathane to protect it. Photo submitted by J. Cuffley. ☼

Meg Tooth, front and back. Hand by M. Baughman, photos by S. Godfrey. ☼

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Miocene Urchin Bonanza

Recently, CMMFC member Mike Ellwood (above) found and has now prepared well over 100 Miocene sea urchins (photo below showing some of them) from along Calvert Cliffs. They were all part of one massive cluster of these otherwise very rare echinoderms (Echinocardium marylandiense).

I know I’ve included comparable sea urchins in The Ecphora, but this one was so irresistibly impressive, I just couldn’t help myself. One of the prepared echinoderms showing the stunning preservation of the spines. The specimen is shown here in dorsal and ventral views respectively. Photos by S. Godfrey.

Opalized Dinosaur

Submitted by Jerin.

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CMMFC Member Received County Recognition

From left to right: Kelly D. McConkey (Vice President), Mike Hart, Adam Lindholm, Thomas “Tim” Hutchins (President), Earl “Buddy” Hance, and Steven R. Weems. Adam Lindholm is presently an intern with the Department of Paleontology at the Calvert Marine Museum. At a recent Calvert County Commissioners meeting, Adam was recognized for his recent achievement at the national level.

The Regeneron Science Talent Search, previously sponsored by Westinghouse and Intel, is the nation’s oldest and most prestigious science and mathematics competition for high school seniors. Almost 2,000 students entered this year’s competition. Adam entered and was named as one of the top 300 scholars in the 2019 national competition.

Furthermore, because of Adam’s academic excellence, he has been accepted into the Earth Sciences program at the University of Oxford. This is another major achievement!

It is a pleasure having Adam work with us as part of our team at the Calvert Marine Museum. We are thrilled for Adam and for the promise of his bright future in science. We are honored to be able to ‘pay it forward’ and help him in a small way achieve his academic goals. Photo courtesy of L. Lindholm.

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Whale Skull Preparation

CMM Paleo volunteer Christa Conant continues to prepare this Miocene baleen whale skull collected from along Calvert Cliffs. Photo by S. Godfrey.

Snowflake Obsidian

This curious mineral specimen came in with a fossil donation. Although it is not local, it was sufficiently unique for inclusion here. Snowflake obsidian occurs in Utah and New Mexico. https://www.mindat.org/min-8520.html

Many thanks to Mike Ellwood for identifying this mineral.

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When in Las Cruces, New Mexico

On a recent trip through New Mexico, Mike Ellwood visited “Prehistoric Trackways National Monument” near Las Cruces NM. Photos submitted by M. Ellwood.

Maryland Fossils - Known by 1820

From: Horace H. Hayden, Geological Essays; or An Inquiry into some of the Geologic Phenomena to be found in various parts of America, and elsewhere. 8vo. 412 pp. Baltimore, 1820, p. 115.

Submitted by R. Eshelman.

An Amazing Nature App
INaturalist

https://www.inaturalist.org/

Brought to the attention of the Editor by Rick Smith. Thank you!

Newsletter website: http://calvertmarinemuseum.com/204/The-Ecphora-Newsletter
Awesome Raptor Wreath

Jeri Cuffley sculpted this hatching raptor as a Birthday gift. The base is a twig wreath with sphagnum and various dried mosses that I got from JoAnn Fabrics. I made the egg from quick drying cement that I poured into a balloon, let sit to dry and then spray-painted. The balloon/cement egg part was a complete pain in the butt. There are many YouTube videos that show how to do it, but it definitely takes some practice and patience. The baby was made with the standard medium, the oven-drying polymer clay Sculpey, and painted with water based acrylic and Varathane. Text and photo submitted by J. Cuffley. ☼

Mike Ellwood and Friends

Mike Ellwood is looking remarkably relaxed for being only seconds away from having his head chewed off. Photo by K. Ellwood. ☼

Huge Miocene Barnacles

An impressive cluster from along Calvert Cliffs.

Treasure Scoop Fundraiser!

See description here:
36” Scoops are $40
42” Scoops are $45

Contact John Nance at John.Nance@calvertcountymd.gov to reserve your scoop. ☼

Newsletter website: http://calvertmarinemuseum.com/204/The-Ephora-Newsletter
Megalodon vs. Livyatan

Editor’s Comment: Megalodon enthusiast Teddy Badaut (France) compiled these images of the largest sperm whale skulls scaled appropriately so as to compare them to the jaws of megalodon. Teddy also wrote in part:

“I also wonder which one had the most devastating bite. Stephen Wroe wasn’t clear on that although he still described meg as the most powerful biter on record. I also remember one of the describers of Livyatan saying it wouldn’t have been able to prey on large modern day whales while I remember Compagno (1990) writing that megalodon would have been able to mortally wound even a fin whale or a blue whale. Regarding the size, I still have in mind that some teeth and parameters suggest sizes possibly up to and in excess of 20 m for megalodon. While I’m aware of other isolated teeth Livyatan teeth from Chile and Australia but none that would indicate definitely larger sizes than the type specimen. My opinion, but I’m maybe wrong or biased, is that megalodon biting apparatus, jaw volume, might be wider and more massive at 16-18 m than in Livyatan holotype.

Best wishes,
Teddy” ☼

Shark-Related Jewelry

Christy Witschie purchased this lovely megalodon ring from jeweler Jennifer Tull Westberg. See Jennifer’s inspiring assortment of shark-related jewelry at: https://www.etsy.com/shop/jennifertullwestberg?ref=pr2018_faveshops&section_id=21436617
Hand by C. Witschie, photo by S. Godfrey. ☼

Newsletter website: http://calvertmarinemuseum.com/204/The-Ecphora-Newsletter
Left: Mystery Tooth

This tooth, with an exceedingly long root, was found by Aaron Alford. Help, it’s a mystery. I’ve never seen anything quite like it. Send id’s to Stephen.Godfrey@calvertnCOUNTYMD.gov ☯

Croc-Bitten Bone

Aaron Alford also found this fossilized bone that appears to have been bitten/crushed into by a blunt tooth like that of a crocodile. Photos by S. Godfrey. ☯

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Although all extant cetaceans greatly shorten/compress and fuse their neck vertebrae, most Miocene cetaceans did not! However, at least one of the species of sperm whale found along Calvert Cliffs had “figured out” how to shorten and fuse their neck (cervical) vertebrae. Above is one of these fused cervical series that was found by Aaron Alford. This fused series consists of cervical vertebrae 2 (the Axis) – 6 seen in this photo in a left dorsolateral view (the axis is the left-hand-most vertebra. You are seeing the fused centra of the vertebrae. The neural arches were damaged and are not preserved.

Aaron Alford found this stunning quartz spear point while scuba diving for fossils. Photos by S. Godfrey.

Large Great White Shark


Submitted by C. Smith. ☼

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Ornithopod Dinosaur Print Found

With mentoring from Ray Stanford, Jon Wolz found this large iguanodontid print in the Cretaceous Patuxent Formation of Maryland. Jon explores eastern Montgomery County and Prince George County all the way to Cecil County. Text and photo submitted by J. Wolz. ☼

CALVERT MARINE MUSEUM FOSSIL CLUB EVENTS

Spring 2019 field trips. For all trips, details at call-in. E-mail (preferred) to RobertErtman@msn.com or call 410-533-4203, as soon as you like and no later than the Thursday before the trip.

Saturday, March 23, 2019. Odessa, Delaware. This is a John Wolf Memorial Trip. Signup by email to robertertman@msn.com.

Meetup 9:45-10:00 AM near Middletown, DE. We’ll move on to the farm in Odessa to walk the fields and collect petrified wood (cypress), probably originally deposited in the Cretaceous or Paleocene Rancocas Group and later redeposited in a Pleistocene bed. (Thanks to Dr. Earl Manning, DVPS member, for correcting our previous description of the petrified wood as being Pleistocene.) No special equipment is necessary; in fact, you should leave your tools at home so that we do not do anything to cause erosion on this no-till farm. Here is a link to a nice write up about one of our trips to a nearby site: http://viewsofthemahantango.blogspot.com/2011/08/petrified-wood-from-delaware.html

Saturday, April 27th, 2019. Club meeting and Public Lecture at the Calvert Marine Museum. Dr. Ralph Eshelman will present a public lecture entitled: “Terrestrial Mammal Fossils from the Miocene Chesapeake Group.”

Dr. Ralph Eshelman (above) held the position of Director, Calvert Marine Museum, Solomons, Maryland, from 1974 to 1990, and is a specialist in vertebrate paleontology and paleo-environmental studies. He is active in several professional organizations including the American Association for Quaternary Environment, vice-president for Science and Stewardship of the Maryland-Washington D.C. Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, Patuxent Riverkeeper, and Society of Vertebrate Paleontology. Honors include Outstanding Young Men in America (1981) and Emerging Young Leaders of America (1989). Image and biography submitted by R. E. Eshelman.

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Natural sand art at Driftwood Beach. Photo by S. Godfrey.

Saturday, April 27th, 2019. Following Dr. Eshelman’s talk, late afternoon field trip to Driftwood Beach, Calvert Cliffs. Miocene St. Marys Formation. This is primarily a fossil shell locality. Limit of 15. Please email Stephen.Godfrey@calvertcountymd.gov if you are interested in going.

Sunday, afternoon, May 5th, 2019. Purse State Park, Aquia formation, Late Paleocene. This site is on the Potomac River in Charles County, MD. Well known for abundant crocodile, ray, Otodus sp., and Striatolamia sp. teeth, and internal molds of the gastropod Turritella sp. (more than you can carry out). Access to the site requires a moderate hike through the woods, and sometimes rather strenuous hiking and climbing over trees along the water's edge. When we get to the Potomac we will all turn left and walk south along the river to the most productive areas (there will be small sand shark teeth all along the way). Low tide (Liverpool Point) at 2:33 PM. We’ll meet at the park at noon. Signup by email to robertertman@msn.com, detailed meetup info & directions later. Take a look at what you can find: http://www.fossilguy.com/sites/potomac/index.htm

Saturday, September 14th, 2019. Club meeting and Public Lecture at the Calvert Marine Museum. Dr. Lucy Edwards will present a public lecture entitled:

“Favorite Fossils and the Chesapeake Bay Impact Structure.”

Dr. Lucy E Edwards (above) focuses her research on the stratigraphy of the Atlantic and Gulf Coastal Plains. Her specialty is dinoflagellates (a type of algae), and she studies their fossil cysts for what they reveal about the time and environment of deposition and how they came to be preserved in the fossil record. She also specializes in stratigraphic nomenclature and methods of stratigraphic correlation. (Courtesy USGS).

Saturday, November 16th, 2019. Annual potluck Club meeting in the Harms Gallery (Calvert Marine Museum) and Public Lecture by Dr. Buck Ward: “Ecphora, Evolution from Oligocene to Pliocene.” ☼

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Raccoon on Driftwood Beach. Photo by S. Godfrey.
The Ecphora is published four times a year and is the official newsletter of the Calvert Marine Museum Fossil Club. The Editor welcomes contributions for possible inclusion in the newsletter from any source. Submit articles, news reports of interest to club members, field trip reports, and/or noteworthy discoveries. All opinions expressed in the newsletter are strictly those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the club or the museum as a whole. Copyright on items or articles published in The Ecphora is held by originating authors and may only be reproduced with the written permission of the editor or of the author(s) of any article contained within.

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