

The Ecphora

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE CALVERT MARINE MUSEUM FOSSIL CLUB

Volume 1, Number 1
Summer 1985

Editor: Sandy Roberts

Brief History of the Fossil Club

Local amateur fossil collectors and museum staff have been fossil collecting together or leading field trips for schools and other organizations since early in the CMM's history. But it was not until 1981 that Norm Riker, a local collector, suggested that a fossil club be formed.

An organizational meeting held April 16, 1981, established the club and we've functioned informally since then under the leadership of Dave Bohaska. Annual dues of \$10 per family, \$3 for students, were initiated in 1985 to cover expenses such as phone, postage, printing, refreshments, etc.; club members are also expected to join the Calvert Marine Society. This quarterly newsletter is being started to keep members informed about club doings, scheduled events and happenings of interest in the fossil world.

Monthly meetings are held at the museum. Lecturers from the Smithsonian, U.S. Geological Survey, University of Arizona, Howard University, University of Maryland and St. Mary's College have made presentations. Special events included a three-session osteology class taught by Ralph Eshelman and an unusual class led by Paula Bohaska which involved the cleaning and reconstruction of a modern fish skull. Popular social events are the meetings at Connie and Larry Smith's Matoaka Cottages and at Pete Ferguson's Calvert Beach home.

Field trips are vital to the success of any fossil club. The Miocene fossils of Calvert Cliffs have been the primary interest of our club, with trips along the entire 30-mile length of the cliffs. Similar aged deposits on the Potomac and St. Marys Rivers also have been explored. In the interest of a well-rounded knowledge of paleontology, areas with fossils of other geological ages are visited. States visited include Pennsylvania (Swatara Gap and St. Clair), New Jersey (Big Brook), Delaware (C&D Canal), Virginia (Westmoreland State Park) and North Carolina (Lee Creek) to see fossil deposits of Ordovician, Pennsylvanian, Cretaceous, Paleocene, Eocene, Miocene and Pliocene age.

Winter activities include visits to the Smithsonian Naturalist Center and Paleontology laboratories. Trips have been made to Baltimore to visit Malick's Fossils and the National Aquarium, and to Philadelphia for the Delaware River Paleontological Society Fossil Fair.

Participation in public service events is an important aspect of the club. Fossil fairs were held in 1982 and 1983; lectures, films and field trips were presented at no cost to interested museum visitors. The club sets up a fossil preparation and identification table, with free fossils, each year at Patuxent River Appreciation Days and has sent demonstration exhibits to fossil fairs and mineral shows.

Monthly Meetings

April. Dave Bohaska of CMM spoke on avian osteology on April 19. He provided an introduction to the skeleton of birds, with emphasis on recognizing fossil bird bones. A brief business meeting preceded Dave's talk.

May. Connie and Larry Smith hosted the club's Spring Wine and Cheese party at Matoaka Cottages on the evening of May 17. Some early comers braved the mists to fossil hunt on the beach, and seventeen enjoyed such gourmet treats as Scott's cheesecake and Paula's beef sandwiches around the huge fireplace. Calvin Taylor entertained us with slides of local scenes and beautiful animals, and his latest spectacular find, a 5-3/4" Carcharodon shark tooth from Lee Creek Mine, North Carolina. The Smiths then showed slides of their recent trip to the islands of Guadeloupe. A short business meeting followed.

Current Research Projects

This regular feature will include status reports of research projects currently under way, stressing localities of interest to the membership. We hope that this will encourage members to keep an eye out for specimens of interest to the projects and otherwise assist the researchers in the field.

Fossil Pine Cones from the Miocene of Maryland. Ms. Dixie S. Stark of the University of Montana has been studying pinaceous cones from Calvert Cliffs. Of particular interest have been cones of the organ genus Pityostrobus found by Ralph Eshelman in Unit 12 of the Calvert formation. (An "organ genus or species" is named for convenience of reference, recognizing that the biological genus or species may have a different name. In fossil plants, for example, the fruits, leaves and wood of one species may each have separate names, since only rarely is a specimen found with all the parts attached as in life.) The Calvert cones represent a new species and the youngest record of Pityostrobus, the previously youngest known record being Eocene in age.

Approximately 15 cones from the Calvert and St. Marys formations have been sent to Ms. Stark from CMM staff and fossil club members. Like most of the wood from Calvert Cliffs, the cones are soft, fragile and crack after drying. If you find one, keep it moist and please let the museum know about it as soon as possible.

New Journal

Marine Mammal Science, a new Quarterly, has just been received. The first issue includes the article "Status of Studies of Fossil Marine Mammals." Two of the authors, Dr. Clayton Ray and Dr. Daryl Domning, and the illustrator, Mary Parrish, should be familiar to club members. The first issue is available for inspection at the CMM Library. The journal costs \$45 a year and can be ordered from the Society for Marine Mammalogy, P.O. Box 368, Lawrence, KS 66044.

Volunteer Working on Fossils at CMM

Sue-Ellen "Nicki" Byram is working two days a week this summer at the CMM, as an independent study course at St. Mary's College. So far she has prepared most of the backlog of shark, ray and other small vertebrate fossils in the collection. Nicki has also screened, washed and picked matrix from Calvert Cliffs. Some interesting finds in the screen-washed material include teeth of the pinfish (Lagodon), small ray teeth (Dasyatis) and numerous fish otoliths in the St. Marys formation (dozens in several pounds of matrix).

Nicki hopes to receive as wide exposure as possible to techniques in paleontology. She will be collecting in the field, and cataloguing and organizing parts of the collection. The top of one table long hidden from sight recently reappeared as a result of her efforts.

Membership List

The Fossil Club is compiling a membership list, with addresses and phone numbers when known. If you object to your name, address and/or phone number being distributed to our members and to other clubs or organizations please contact the Museum. Phone numbers would be appreciated for our files, at least; they are frequently needed when organizing field trips.

Museum members who do not wish to join the Fossil Club will continue to receive some fossil news through the Museum's newsletter, the Bugeye Times. Fossil Club events are listed in the Bugeye Times, and that newsletter will continue to carry the column "Fossil Facts" as well as occasional feature articles on fossils. The Museum also occasionally sponsors fossil collecting field trips for its members and for the general public.

Newsletter Policy

All news items related to paleontology in Maryland are welcome. The deadline for each issue is the first day of the last month of each quarter. The editor reserves the right not to publish submissions and to edit those which are published.

CALVERT MARINE MUSEUM FOSSIL CLUB SCHEDULE

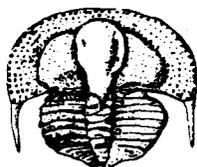
A field trip leader will answer questions about the trip and meet people at the departure point or the Museum.

July 20 - Field trip. To Michael and Susan Jarboe's home near La Plata, to view their fossil collection. The collection contains fossils from Calvert Cliffs and elsewhere, American Indian artifacts and other objects. Meet at CMM at 9:00 a.m. Leader: Calvin E. Taylor (535-4675).

September 6 - Meeting. Film: "Silent Sirens: Manatees in Peril" (Courtesy Florida Power and Light Co.). A modern manatee skeleton and fossil sea cow remains will be available for examination. Fossil dugongs, sea cows related to manatees, occur at Calvert Cliffs.

September 28 - Field trip. Swatara Gap, Pa., to collect Ordovician trilobites and other fossils. Also St. Clair, Pa., to collect fossil plants of Pennsylvania age.

Last year's trip yielded numerous specimens of the trilobite Cryptolithus, including several complete ones. Paula Bohaska found a nice fossil starfish, a rare but regular find at the locality. St. Clair is famous for fossil ferns and other plants, preserved as a white mineral imprint on a black background. We hope to drive directly to the quarry this year, avoiding a long carry of heavy fossils as was necessary last year.



Cryptolithus x1.6

Arrangements have not been fully confirmed at this date. It may be necessary to drop one locality or visit a different plant locality. Please indicate your preference in localities in case this is necessary. Contact Museum for details (301-326-2042). Leader: Larry Decina of the Delaware Valley Paleontological Society.

October 12, 13 - Fossil Club table at Patuxent River Appreciation Days. Fossil identification, preparation demonstration, display and free fossils. Be sure to visit or, better yet, volunteer to man the table. 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. both days, free.

Long-term, Tentative Schedule

October 25, 26, 27 - Lee Creek, North Carolina

November 23 - Jones Wharf, St. Marys Co., Md.

January 1986 - Smithsonian Institution

February - National Aquarium at Baltimore

March - Calvert Cliffs, several localities, visit all three formations.