President’s Message

By now, I hope that most of you have renewed your MGS membership for 2011. For those that have not yet paid their annual dues, I would like to highlight some of the benefits that you receive for your $15 annual membership fee. MGS holds six meetings a year that often include world class scientists along with an abundance of refreshments, including our annual pizza party. The award winning MGS newsletter *The Rostrum* is distributed to members six times a year. Your dues maintain the MGS website, also an award winning resource for members. A portion of your dues goes to the EFMLS and AFMS. These organizations in turn provide insurance coverage for our meetings and for qualifying field trips. This insurance is mandatory in order to gain access to some collecting sites. The EFMLS and AFMS also maintain an awards program for newsletters and websites. MGS members have received an abundance of these awards at both the regional and national levels of competition. MGS dues have been maintained at the same low level for many years, due in large part through the generous donations of several members. So please make renewing your membership one of your priorities for the new year.

Cheers,
Rick

Dates to Remember

**Sunday, January 16, 2011 – Next MGS Meeting**
Executive Board Meeting Prior to Business Portion of the General Meeting

**Meeting Time and Location**
11:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Bowie Community Center, 3209 Stonybrook Drive, Bowie, MD 20715

Mineral of the Meeting: Erythrite. Bring a few choice specimens to the meeting.

Rick Smith will speak on “Dinosaur Hunting in Maryland."

2011 Dues are Due

Reality is extracted out of sight of the public in back rooms full of half-exposed bones.

~ Paleontologist Richard Fortey, *Dry Store Room No. 1*
Meeting Dates & Programs for 2011

January 16:  General Meeting & “Maryland Dinosaurs”
March 20:  General Meeting & “Antarctic Meteorites”
May 15:  Joint MGS & AFF Meeting
July 17:  General Meeting
September 18:  Auction
November 20:  Elections & Pizza Party
The Maryland Geological Society (MGS) club was founded in 1991 and next year, 2011, marks the 20th anniversary for the club. In 2001, club members celebrated the 10th anniversary with a nice dinner get together with friends and family. How would you like to celebrate the MGS 20th Anniversary? We’re asking club members to give us their ideas on how they would like to see the club celebrate this occasion.

Right now there is no set date for the anniversary, so we are open to suggestions. Try to include as many details as you can with your ideas and suggestions: date/month, location, activity (e.g. dinner, picnic, meeting, etc.), should the club cover some of the costs, should the club make up anniversary shirts/decals, etc.

Mel Hurd, long time club member and former club President, has volunteered to help organize the anniversary celebration. Mel will collect all of the ideas and suggestions and together with other anniversary committee members (and/or club officers), will present the ideas at upcoming club meetings.

As a club, we’ll need to discuss the various ideas/suggestions at the club meetings coming up in Jan/Mar 2011 in order to have sufficient time to make plans and reservations if required.

You can contribute your ideas in one of several ways.
* Attend an MGS meeting and share your thoughts.
* Go to the MGS website and use the convenient form to submit your ideas. The web address is: http://www.ecphora.net/mgs/anniversary.html
* Send an e-mail directly to Mel at mhurd@bislink.com with the following information: your name, suggestions for the celebration activities in 2011, and whether you’d like to be on the Anniversary Committee.

**Speaker for the January Meeting: Rick Smith**

“Dinosaur Hunting in Maryland”

Many of the rocks, clay, and sand found along the I-95 corridor in Maryland date to approximately 110 million years ago. This period in time is the youngest of the three periods that make up the Mesozoic Era, or the "Age of Dinosaurs". Fossilized dinosaur remains have on rare occasion been uncovered along this corridor. In November of 1998, Rick discovered part of an *Astrodon johnstoni* leg bone (the Maryland state dinosaur) embedded within a large ironstone while searching in the Arbutus area. The specimen was placed on display at the Maryland Science Center in Baltimore as part of the "Dinosaurs of Maryland" exhibit. Rick will be talking about his Arbutus dinosaur discovery and about dinosaur hunting in other areas of Maryland. He will also be bringing dinosaur bone fragments recovered from Arbutus as well as fossils from other areas to examine.

**2011 Dues Now Due**

Dues for 2011 are due by the first of the year. Please pay your dues to Membership Chair Mike Folmer at the January meeting or mail a check for $15 made out to the Maryland Geological Society to his home address at 417 West Maple Road, Linthicum, MD 21090. Dues are not prorated, so anyone who joined during 2010 is still expected to renew his or her membership at this point.

**Spring Hunt Cancelled at the Lee Creek Mine**

The PCS public affairs office at Lee Creek issued a notice stating, "Because the safety concerns with the heavy equipment still remain, we will not be hosting a Spring 2011 collecting season. As we approach the Fall season, we will re-evaluate." The latest information can be found at http://www.elasmo.com/ (check the left hand column under News).
In the Field with a 19th Century Fossil Hunter, and
The Mystery of a Fossil Eel
Jim Stedman

In the middle of 19th Century, men and women in the United States avidly explored nature. People collected everything that could be brought in from the field – plants, animals, rocks, fossils. With the sciences still evolving into professions, relatively little separated amateur from professional, and science advanced from the contributions of these many engaged amateurs. What happened when men with a deep interest in natural history were swept up into the Civil War? Did they put their scientific pursuits on hold? At least one man did not.

On a cold Friday, November 21, 1862, Private Robert T. McMahan of Stockton's Artillery, part of the Union Army of the Frontier, hunted for fossils in northwest Arkansas. He was on active duty with his unit, stationed at a camp near the Arkansas border with the Indian Territory. In recent days, he and his fellow soldiers had been anticipating an attack from Confederate forces to the south. Whatever else he was supposed to be doing this day, McMahan spent time searching for fossils. For this 30-year old college graduate who had interrupted his graduate studies in theology more than a year earlier to join up, it would be a memorable fossil hunt. He came upon a small valley with a creek running along its base. Scrambling down a slope leading to the creek, he found what he described in his diary as "grayish blue semicrystalline" rocks exposed near the creek, rocks practically exploding with fossilized pieces of coral and crinoid stems. He worked his way down the creek and found a layer of what he identified as flint, lying just above the water line. Fossils abounded among the many flint shards that littered the creek bed; he collected "beautiful specimens" of shells, coral, and trilobites.

But, clearly, the most thrilling discovery of the day was the many fragments of what McMahan identified as a "siliceous eel . . . certainly the most beautiful fossil I have seen as yet in this rock." Striations ran longitudinally along the exterior while the interior was composed of many "chambers . . . separated by thin partitions." The creature was some three-quarters of an inch in diameter; McMahan made no mention of the length of the pieces he had found. Studying the pieces of eel "skeleton," he concluded that the elongated creature had "taper[ed] to a point – like a sweet potato." Returning to camp, McMahan pondered his find, speculating in his diary about its musculature, skin, life, and the process of its fossilizing.

Over the next few days, McMahan resumed his hunt for fossils, a practice he called "geologizing." Perhaps it was as much about geology as it was about fossils. He found more of what he now described as his "Silurian eel." Later, he would describe it as "old friend the Silurian eel."

Then, on Thursday, November 27th, Private McMahan went back to war. He and the other 5,000 men of the First Division moved southeast toward the college town of Cane Hill, Arkansas, for an encounter on the 28th with a Confederate cavalry division. In a fierce fight, the Confederates were driven from the field (see picture), but the Battle of Cane Hill served as a prelude to the much bloodier Battle of Prairie Grove on December 7th.

McMahan's diary entry for December 9th described the aftermath of the fierce fighting around Prairie Grove in graphic detail: on the battlefield lay many unburied dead and, among them, some of the yet living were dying slowly and horribly. Nevertheless, McMahan's love of natural history proved irrepressible. Just three days later, he turned a foraging expedition into a fossil hunt, finding a piece of sandstone with several specimens of shells and some crinoid stems. His "old friend" the eel also showed up.
Hunting for fossils followed by waging war followed by hunting fossils once again - this was the ebb and flow of McMahan's army life. Clearly, he did not set aside his scientific pursuits in the midst of war, strong testimony to how deeply engrained the connection to natural history could be. Perhaps it made the horrors of war more bearable.

For the first three years of his service in the Union Army, McMahan searched for fossils whenever he could, making him, perhaps, a somewhat distracted soldier. For instance, on November 4, 1862, he wrote, "Day pleasant and we drilled twice. Shall like the artillery service well. Ground more or less covered with fragments of flint and limestone: contains fossils, shells, coral and trilobites." The drive to collect was so strong that, even when his artillery unit was on the move into battle, he was scanning the road and the hills. In his diary entry for the day the Union army raced to Cane Hill in 1862, he noted, "As we pass down into the Illinois River from the bluff we pass plenty of this broken flint rock and grayish white compost - encrinal limestone - also the same on the south side." He was more than passing time; this citizen-soldier and citizen-scientist was building a collection. On April 17, 1863, he wrote, "Must box up my specimens and send them home. Have quite a variety of Silurian fossils."

Robert McMahan survived the war (mustering out in 1864), completed his theological studies, and served for many years as a Presbyterian minister. He died in 1892 at the age of 59.

While his diary offers insight into how one 19th Century man reconciled war and a deep interest in natural history, it also leaves a paleontological mystery which begs to be solved. Did he really find Silurian fossils, and, specifically, specimens of a fossilized Silurian eel?

Based on the available clues, it appears that this citizen-scientist misidentified the geological period of many of his Arkansas fossils, and, undoubtedly, did not scoop up fragments of fossilized eels.

First, consider the dating of his fossils. The camp from which McMahan ventured in November, 1862, to hunt fossils in northwest Arkansas was Camp Babcock near the border with Indian Territory (now Oklahoma). He described it as some 20 to 30 miles to the northwest of the Cane Hill area (the town today is known as Canehill). One source places the camp on Flint Creek near the state line. That puts it a bit north of what is now Siloam Springs. On the section shown here from a 1993 geologic map prepared jointly by the U.S. Geological Survey and the Arkansas Geological Commission, the upper arrow points to the general area in which McMahan was probably hunting. The lower arrow near the bottom left of this map section points to Canehill.

Is Flint Creek the creek McMahan explored? Though the name is suggestive, that is not clear. The geologic map does make something else clear about this specific location, McMahan was not finding Silurian fossils. The fossils were coming from Mississippian rock, some 359 to 318 million years old (in contrast, the Silurian Period is about 444 to 416 million years ago). Every rock formation on the map that is labeled with a letter sequence beginning with an "M" is from the Mississippian subperiod. The two formations that crop out in the area McMahan explored (top arrow) are labeled as Mb (colored light rose and occupying much of the section of this section of the map) and Mpfb (light brown and centered around Siloam Springs). Mb is the Boone Formation and Mpfb is made up of Pitkin Limestone, Fayetteville Shale, and Batesville Sandstone. Each of these is from the Mississippian subperiod and each of these, according to the Arkansas Geological Survey, is fossiliferous, so he would have had no trouble discovering fossils in these formations. Much later in 1863 when he was in the Little Rock area, McMahan may have actually had access to outcroppings of Silurian formations, but his diary makes no mention of fossil hunting at that juncture.

What about the mysterious eel? Unfortunately, the Elopomorphs, the vertebrate group of which eels are a member, only first make an appearance in the Early Cretaceous (about 146 to 100 million years ago), long after the
Silurian Period. Correcting the identification of the formations producing the fossils to Mississippian does not help. That is still much too early. If not an eel, what was he finding? Among Mississippian fossils found in Arkansas, a suspect emerges. Perhaps McMahan was actually finding fossilized fragments of the shells of straight nautiloids, mollusk invertebrates that were members of the Cephalopoda class.

The picture here of a segment of a nautiloid found in Arkansas suggests why this is a possible candidate. There are longitudinal striations on the exterior, though there are also horizontal ones. The interior chambers that McMahan saw appear in nautiloid fossils. Is this “sweet potato shaped”? Well, that may depend upon the sweet potatoes one is used to.

When this mystery was broached to a geologist of the Arkansas Geological Survey (admittedly, it had already been suggested to her that McMahan’s eel might have been a straight cephalopod), she responded:

*It does indeed sound like he was finding straight nautiloid cephalopods. They are conical in nature and have chambers and are preserved mostly in the Fayetteville Shale but they also occur in the Pitkin Limestone, Fernvale Limestone, Plattin Limestone and possibly in the Boone.*

I have found them totally silicified (replaced by chert) in gravels along streams and I have always wondered if they didn’t come from the Boone. I haven’t found any in place in the Boone Formation yet.

Perhaps that solves the mystery of his old friend, but only McMahan’s hard-won, wartime fossil collection, if it still exists, holds the definitive answer.

Annotated Reference List

1) Among the sources consulted regarding the attitudes of the U.S. population toward natural history during the 19th Century was Science and the Culture of American Communities: The Nineteenth Century, by Thomas Bender, History of Education Quarterly, Spring 1976, pp. 63-77.
2) McMahan’s diary is published in its entirety in *Reluctant Can noneer: The Diary of Robert T. McMahan of the Twenty-fifth Independent Ohio Light Artillery*. Edited by Michael E. Banasik and published in 2000, this is volume II of a series entitled *Unwritten Chapters of the Civil War West of the River*. Portions of the book are available at: [http://books.google.com/books?id=tdJi8w5-5y8C](http://books.google.com/books?id=tdJi8w5-5y8C)
3) The picture of the Cane Hill Battlefield is reproduced with permission of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. It appears on the Arkansas Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission’s website which can be found at: [http://www.arkansascivilwar150.com/civil-war-sites/detail.aspx?id=14](http://www.arkansascivilwar150.com/civil-war-sites/detail.aspx?id=14)
4) The geologic map, from which the excerpt presented above was taken, is a 1993 revision of a 1976 map, and can be found at: [http://www.geology.ar.gov/sms_maps/geologic_map_arkansas.htm](http://www.geology.ar.gov/sms_maps/geologic_map_arkansas.htm)
5) A description of the location of Camp Babcock appears on page 81 of the *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Kansas, 1861-’65*. This was prepared by the Kansas Adjutant General and published in 1896. It is available at: [http://books.google.com/books?id=buQ-AAAAAYAAJ](http://books.google.com/books?id=buQ-AAAAAYAAJ)
7) Nautiloids are described in *Fossil Invertebrates* by Paul D. Taylor and David N. Lewis, 2005, p. 86-87.
8) The picture of the straight nautiloid was taken from a fossil poster prepared by the Arkansas Geological Survey and is available on the web at: [http://www.geology.ar.gov/pdf/Fossil_Poster.pdf](http://www.geology.ar.gov/pdf/Fossil_Poster.pdf)
9) This article includes text from a personal communication with geologist Angela Chandler of the Arkansas Geological Survey, October 25, 2010.

**Mineral of the Meeting: Erythrite**

Bob Farrar

Mineral of the Meeting of MGS for January will be erythrite, also sometimes known as erythrine. Erythrite is not common, and aside from being an indicator mineral for cobalt, is of little economic importance. However, when crystalized, it is a beautiful mineral and popular with collectors.

Erythrite consists of hydrous cobalt arsenate, $\text{Co}_3(\text{AsO}_4)_2\cdot8\text{H}_2\text{O}$. Its color is distinctive, ranging from pink to raspberry red. It crystalizes in the monoclinic system, and may form aggregates of blade-like crystals, radiating acicular
needles, or earthy crusts. Erythrite is soft, with a hardness of 1.5 to 2.5, and is usually rather fragile, so care must be taken in handling it. Other physical properties include a glassy luster, specific gravity of 2.9, and perfect micaceous cleavage. Crystal form and appearance are usually sufficient to distinguish erythrite; there is almost no other mineral that resembles it. Erythrite typically occurs in the oxidized zones of deposits of cobalt arsenides, such as skutterudite. It may form pink crusts known as “cobalt bloom” on rocks near the surface; this is an important guide in prospecting for cobalt ore.

From a collector’s standpoint, the most important locality is Bou Azzer, in central Morocco. There crystals up to 10 inches long have been found, as well as radiating sprays of acicular crystals. This is probably the most important source of specimens on the mineral market today. Excellent crystals, up to 4 inches, have also been found at several localities in Germany. Erythrite is common at Cobalt, Ontario. Masses of acicular crystals are found at Mt. Cobalt, Queensland, Australia. Several localities in Mexico produce erythrite, including Alamos, Sonora. The US is not known for good erythrite specimens, though it can be found in Nevada, Idaho, Arizona, New Mexico, and California. Small amounts have also been found in Berkes Co., Pennsylvania.

Erythrite is an uncommon mineral that may not be familiar to some collectors. However, when well crystalized, it makes a beautiful specimen that any mineral collector would love to own.

[Photo courtesy Jean Claude Dol.]

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**Shows and Events**

**January 7 - Free Friday at the Calvert Marine Museum.** The Museum is open and free to the public from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. More information on this and other events at the Museum in January and February is available at [http://www.calvertmarinemuseum.com/calendar.php](http://www.calvertmarinemuseum.com/calendar.php).

**February 19 - 21st Annual Mineral, Jewelry & Fossil Show** sponsored by the Southern Maryland Rock and Mineral Club, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at The Show Place Arena, Upper Marlboro, MD. For more information, go to [http://www.smrmc.org/rock-show.html](http://www.smrmc.org/rock-show.html).

**March 5-6 - 48th annual Earth Science Gem & Mineral Show** sponsored by the Delaware Mineralogical Society, at Delaware Technical & Community College, Newark, DE. For more information, including coupons for discount admission, go to [http://www.delminsociety.net/marchshow2011.htm](http://www.delminsociety.net/marchshow2011.htm).


**April 11-17 - Wildacres Spring Classes** sponsored by the Eastern Federation of Mineralogical and Lapidary Societies. List of classes and speakers during this week-long event can be found in the January issue of the EFMLS News at [http://www.amfed.org/efmls/efjan11.pdf](http://www.amfed.org/efmls/efjan11.pdf) and on the EFMLS website at [http://www.amfed.org/efmls/wildacres.htm](http://www.amfed.org/efmls/wildacres.htm).

**Continuing - The Grier fossil & mineral collections** are up for sale by Dick, Sr. and Jr. at 10% off. There are literally hundreds of mostly competition quality specimens available, and close to one thousand in all sizes. Specimens are both self-collected and purchased world wide. We have been collecting for over 45 years. Still remaining are thousands of worldwide shark teeth, some very rare, obtained by trading with European collectors over the Internet. There are large numbers of ammonites, echinoids, and brachiopods, as well as fern fossils, vertebrate fossils and others. The minerals remaining include gold, emeralds, silver minerals, topazes, beryls, tourmalines, aquamarines, amethyst and heliodor. Minerals range from micromount and thumbnail size to museum-size. All specimens are crystallized. So far the meteorites, dinosaur teeth and the larger shark teeth have been sold, as well as my collection of tourmalines from around the world. Please come and visit us by appointment. Arrange for an appointment by calling Dick Grier, Sr. at (410)285-5554. “We live in Dundalk, a south east suburb of Baltimore, at 8052 Kavanagh Road. Come by and see us,” says Dick!
Minutes of the November 21st Meeting
Rick Smith

President's report: Rick Smith called the meeting to order at approximately 12:00 PM. Rick noted that elections would be held at the conclusion of the business portion of the meeting.
Vice President's report: Eric Seifter was acquiring the pizzas at the start of the meeting.
Secretary's report: Gary and Cindy Lohman were unable to attend the meeting. Rick Smith asked if anyone objected to suspension of the reading of the previous meeting's minutes and there were no objections.
Treasurer's report: Dave Andersen reported the MGS treasury has the following amounts: savings $3,094.15, checking $2,389.02, and cash $100.00 for a total of $5583.17.
Membership: Mike Folmer reported the following membership totals: adults (133), juniors (25), life (11), and 3 new members.
Website: Daryl Serafin stated that the website was up to date.
Newsletter: Associate Editor Jim Stedman was present and described preparing submissions for the EFMLS Editors' contest. He encouraged Junior Members to contribute articles to the newsletter.
Field trips: Gerald Elgert was not present, but had indicated previously that he would be stepping down as Field Trip Coordinator. Rick Smith asked if anyone present would be willing to take on this responsibility. Since no one came forward, Rick said he would try to take on the task for the immediate future, but indicated he would need some help from members to make the continuation of field trips a reality. More information can be found on the subject under the Field Trip portion of this newsletter.
Ways & Means: Dick Grier Sr. said that he would continue to organize the raffle and silent auction, but would like to have someone take on the projects in the near future.
Old Business: A continuation of a previous discussion regarding possible events to celebrate the 20th anniversary of MGS was held. Mel Hurd indicated that he would be willing to take on the task of organizing an event, but requested input from members about what their particular interest might be regarding the type of event. Daryl stated that he would place a link on the MGS website for members to provide input.
Elections: There were no changes from the 2010 Executive Officers and Board of Directors. A motion was made to retain the entire slate of Officers for 2011. The vote passed without dissent.
Mineral of the meeting: Bob Farrar gave an interesting discussion on Jade, which is actually two minerals (jadeite and nephrite) rather than one mineral.
Speaker: Since the annual Holiday Pizza Party is primarily a time for socialization among MGS members, no speaker was scheduled for the meeting.
Adjournment: Following the business portion of the meeting and the raffle, all of the pizza was consumed with great gusto. As usual the Silent Auction was a success.

Thank You for Recent Donations
Dick Grier, Sr.

Dick Grier Sr. & Jr.:

a. Squalodon calvertense incisor, Lee Creek
b. Anoxypristis mucrodens, sawfish tooth, Muddy Creek
c. Augite xls., Canada
d. Fluorapatite xls., Canada
e. Grossular Garnet xls., Mexico
f. Erythrite xls., Morocco
g. Cerussite xls., Arizona
h. Prehnite, New Jersey

Donations to the club are important to the financial well-being of the club. They are used in the annual and silent auctions and for door prizes.
Out of Sequence
A Paint Branch Dilemma
Gerald Elgert

Let me tell you of some interesting experiences I have had when collecting in the Paint Branch stream, just below the fall line, in Prince George’s County. There is an Early Cretaceous exposure that is exposed only briefly but follows the level of the stream bed for several miles. The stream is mostly sand and gravel and the colored clays of the Arundel Formation. In places it is a prolific producer of plant material, mainly in the form of carbonized wood. Researchers from the local Smithsonian Institution (SI) have described several types of ferns from here by their spore remains. Siliconized pieces of Araucaria, a cedar like tree, can be found as float. Even the fabled Patuxent River Stone, rumored to be fossilized dinosaur bone, is to be collected here. Dinosaur tracks, cast in hardened mud stone or siderite, are also found here.

Everything I’ve described so far is found in Cretaceous Age sediments. There are also Cambrian Age skolithos worm borrows, washed down from the remnants of the once mighty Appalachian Mountains, now the worn down stumps that we see in the westernmost parts of Maryland. I had also found what I originally took to believe was a knuckle joint of a marine reptile of some sort, possibly a mosasaur. Externally it was unlike anything else I’ve ever found or seen from this area. Having a lapidary saw, I sliced it open and polished the faces to see what the histological structure was about. My best identification of a crocodile like anatomy was confirmed when Dave Hacker and I paid a visit to Matt Carrano, who curates the dinosaur collection at the SI. His examination and appraisal was that it was actually part of a vertebrae, probably from a crocodile like critter. Although Matt didn’t make a positive identification, I was now thinking that it was actually phytosaur material. That would have placed it back into the Late Triassic era. While the fossil record of that geological time span is found in Maryland strata, it exists as tracks in sandstone. One published location is from a now disused quarry in Emmitsburg. Hard tissue fossil material in the form of teeth and even a skull have been found near Poolesville.

So, what’s the bottom line here? If it is really a Triassic phytosaur, what is it doing in Early Cretaceous sediment? For one, the area behind the University of Maryland has been visited by generations of geology students and who knows what has been dropped and lost there. Recent cell phones and old glass bottles are regularly found following a storm. There’s even a native American campsite close by where knapping tools and pottery have been found. Cambrian Age skolithos worm tubes have washed down from the western parts of Maryland, so why not Triassic phytosaurs as well? Who knows? Anything is possible, I guess. Your ideas and comments are welcome.

[All photos by the author. Scale is tenths of an inch.]

Field Trips – An Update
Rick Smith

After serving for several years as the MGS Field Trip Coordinator, Gerald Elgert has decided to pass the torch. Gerald has done an outstanding job of organizing and leading a vast array of field trips to numerous collecting sites.

At the November meeting, a request was made to those in attendance for someone to take over this important function. After a moment of silence, I said that I would take on the role as Coordinator for the immediate future. In doing so though, I stressed that I would have to depend on other members to take on the primary responsibility of actually leading the field trips. Fortunately, I was approached by both Mel Hurd and Bob Asreen during the break and each generously offered to help lead a field trip in 2011.

If you would be interested and willing to lead a field trip in the coming year, this is what will be required:
a) Please coordinate all activities through me.
b) Determine collecting site, date, and time.
c) Determine the maximum number of people permitted to attend.
d) Items b and c above will have to be determined with enough advance time to advertise in the newsletter and website.
e) Field trips will be restricted to MGS members only.
f) Everyone will be required to sign a Release Form or have one on file with MGS (I have a created an electronic version of the Release Form or will provide hard copies if needed).
g) Determine a meeting location for those attending or provide directions to the collecting site.
h) Provide contact information for any last minute changes due to inclement weather or other emergencies.
i) Ideally, provide a follow-up report of the trip for the newsletter or encourage one of the attendees to prepare one.

I can help you with any of the items above so please consider leading a trip in 2011. Field trips are particularly important for our newer members and easily accessible sites such as Brownies Beach can be excellent collecting sites for those new to fossil hunting. Mineral collecting sites would be a welcome addition to the list of field trips as well. If interested in helping, please email me at rick.smith.mgs@gmail.com.

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**The Wildacres Workshops**

*From the Eastern Federation newsletter*

If you’ve never been to a Wildacres session, you are missing out on a fun filled week of good food, fellowship and classes in everything from polishing cabochons to faceting gemstones. The week-long classes are held at a special retreat center, on a private mountaintop near Little Switzerland, in North Carolina. The cost for the week is $350 and that includes room and board in modern, motel style rooms. There will be a speaker in residence who will talk each evening on their specialty and experiences. Gene LeBerge, a University of Wisconsin professor of geology and mineralogy, will be the spring speaker. There is always a special Comedy and Fun Night, an Auction and even a newspaper, published by those attending. The workshops are held twice each year, in the spring and in the fall.

Applications for the spring classes are being accepted beginning January 1st. The spring session classes are April 11 - April 17, 2011. Classes and speakers for the spring session are listed on the EFMLS website at http://www.amfed.org/efmls/wildacres.htm.

[Photo by Gerald Elgert]

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**Odds and Ends on the Internet**

*Rick Smith*

Below are some of the more interesting websites or new information from the internet that I have encountered over the past few months.

**Friends of the Aurora Fossil Museum website**: MGS member George Powell recently wrote an extensive story about his experience with the excavation of a block of Yorktown formation material containing a fossil whale. The website contains a number of photos along with the story which help to visualize the magnitude of the project that George became involved with for the Aurora Museum. The story is titled “A Whale of a Challenge” and can be viewed using the Educational tab: http://www.afmfriends.org/Education/WhaleofaChallenge/tabid/71/Default.aspx
UMBC Digital Stories: Recently I had the pleasure of working with a group of University of Maryland, Baltimore County students on a local history project. Scroll down the list of stories to find the link to my particular story titled "The Dinosaur Hunter". I will discuss the project briefly at the January MGS meeting. Go to: http://www.umbc.edu/oit/newmedia/studio/digitalstories/arbutus.html

Gregory Paul website: Gregory Paul is an author, paleoartist, and a scientist. To see some amazing illustrations that he has created, go to the Gallery section of his website at http://gspauldino.com/index.html. You can also view information on his latest book The Princeton Field Guide to Dinosaurs at the following web link: http://press.princeton.edu/titles/9287.html

Lee Creek website: While this website is well known to many MGS members, the closure of the mine to collecting over the past year might have made you forget to check some of the other items on the website. Certainly worth checking out are two new fauna lists that were created in 2010: Late Cretaceous Sharks & Rays of Mississippi by Jim Bourdon & George Phillips; The Kemp Clay - Late Maastrictian Sharks & Rays of Texas by Jim Bourdon & Ed Swiatowy. The web address is: http://www.elasmo.com/

Dinosaurs of Maryland website (and related Facebook site): Dr. Peter Kranz has maintained this website for a number of years and his paleontology publications can be found along with several from other authors. The related Facebook page (link is on the webpage) has a number of photographs of recent finds from the Dinosaur park at Muirkirk. http://terpconnect.umd.edu/~gdouglas/

Calling All Authors and Artists
Jim Stedman

At the end of last year, the editor and associate editor of this newsletter took a long look back at the issues published over the past 12 months. The impetus for this retrospective survey was the Bulletin Editor's Competition run by the Eastern Federation of Mineralogical and Lapidary Society (EFMLS). From a year's worth of articles, we had to pick a very small selection of articles in six different categories for submission to the EFMLS contest. For an article to win an award in this competition is no mean feat, given that the EFMLS has 150 member clubs (with over 100,000 individual members). The top award winning articles in the EFMLS contest are then submitted to the national level contest administered by the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies (AFMS) where the competition is even tougher. Over the years, writers for The Rostrum have done very well at both levels.

This process of reviewing a year's worth of newsletters is very educational. We were inspired by how much fine writing and interesting content has appeared in these pages. It made the process of selecting submissions wonderfully challenging. For all of you who contributed during the past year, thank you very much.

But, this look back also made us realize that we can do better in terms of recruiting new writers and even artists to the cause. We encourage any member to put pen to paper (okay, fingers to keyboard) and submit an original piece to the newsletter. The range of topics that you might write about is virtually endless. Consider preparing a description of a favorite or different kind of fossil, a particularly wonderful day spent in the field collecting, or, for that matter, a particularly bad day in the field. Turn that experience into a poem or a drawing (we can digitize it and print it). Cartoons? Sure. Write a "how-to" article about prepping a fossil. Received a good book on geology or paleontology over the holidays? Do a book review for your fellow members, pushing the book or warning us about it. In this 20th year of the club's existence, share some of your memories of the early days of the MGS.

Finally, there's one special category of writer we'd love to have, but that, of late, has been missing - Junior members, those members under the age of 18. We invite any Junior member reading this article to prepare a piece for the newsletter. (To parents of a Junior member, try to plant the idea). Here are a few ideas of what you might write about - tell us about your fossil or mineral collection, what you attracts you to fossils or minerals, what you like about collecting, or what you've learned about some extinct plant or animal whose fossils may be in your collection.
Dates to Remember

Sunday, January 16th - MGS Meeting
Executive Board Meeting also on the 16th

Meeting Time & Location
11:00 AM to 3:00 PM
Bowie Community Center
3209 Stonybrook Drive, Bowie, MD 20715
301-464-1737

Location/Directions: The Center is located off of Route 450 in Bowie. Detailed directions and a map can be found on the MGS website.

Mineral of the Meeting: Erythrite. Bring a few choice specimens to the meeting.

Rick Smith will speak on “Dinosaurs in Maryland.”

2011 Dues Are Due

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First Class Mail