

# THE ROCKHOUNDER



# January 2011

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the Gem, Lapidary, and Mineral Society of Montgomery County MD., Inc. is "To increase knowledge and popular interest in earth sciences, geology, mineralogy, paleontology, lapidary arts, and related subjects".

**REGULAR MEETING:** Meetings are held the 2nd Monday of the month from September to June. The Society will meet on **Monday January 10th** in the dining room of the Rockville Senior Center, 1150 Carnation Drive, Rockville. The short business meeting will begin at 7:45 pm but the room is available to us at 7:30 pm so come early and chat with old friends. The presentation "**Minerals from the Thomas Range, Juab County, Utah**", will be by our member, **Patrick Haynes**. He earned a BS in geology from the NM Institute of Mining and Technology then worked briefly as a field geologist, followed by work as a geologist for a Colorado construction company. Recreationally he has collected on the Colorado Plateau, a uranium-rich area, and is honored to have discovered 8 new mineral species: 4 vanadium minerals, 3 uranium minerals and a sodium iron arsenate. Patrick continues to field collect and concentrate on finding rare species. His personal collection contains nearly 2,500 species, many of which are microscopic and self-collected. He does a bit of photomicrography. Patrick has been a part-time mineral dealer selling/trading at the Denver show for 20 years. There is a wonderful article in the Sep/Oct 2010 issue of Rocks and Minerals Magazine about Patrick.



Photo by W. Mohr

**THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS** will meet **Monday January 24th** at the Home of Andy Muir. All Board members are expected to be there. Any member is welcome to attend but please let Andy know if you plan to attend at: <amuir21@comcast.net> or phone 301 990 1370.

**SHOW EXHIBITS** Our once-a-year Big Show will be here before you know it. Pat Repik-Byrne asked that, due to her work schedule, exhibit applications be received by February 14th. A form is on page 9.

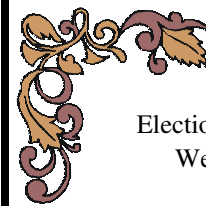
**ROSTER UPDATE** An updated roster is being sent out in January. It is for the convenience of members and will be mailed or E mailed to members only. It is not to be used to solicit business, nor will it be distributed outside of the Society. If any data in your listing has changed, (Address, phone number, E Mail, children added or deleted) and you have not told Wendell Mohr about it, please do it NOW.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS** Congrats to those elected at the December 2010 meeting, officers who agreed to serve an additional term :

President - Eric Kindahl  
Vice President - Owen Powers  
Secretary - Jeff Cessna  
Treasurer - Andy Muir.



**DEADLINE** for Feb. 2011 Rockhounder: Jan. 25th



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**WEATHER ALERT**

**SNOW CONTINGENCY** Reminder: If schools in Montgomery County MD are to be cancelled, or let out early, because of weather on the day of a scheduled Society meeting, we will have no meeting. Call the Society President or a Board Member (Numbers on the back of the ROCKHOUNDER) if in doubt.



**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

**A WARM WELCOME IN A GOLD AND WINDY MONTH!**

WAUGH, Jim and Becky, 208 Ridgemont Avenue, Rockville MD 20850-6005, jbwaugh1211@comcast.net, 240 499 8395.

**SAFETY MATTERS**  
**Juniors!**

by Ellery Borow, EFMLS Safety Chair



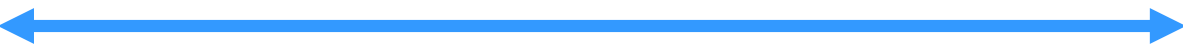
Many clubs are fortunate to have a number of junior members. Even clubs that do not have an active junior contingent are frequently involved with children as family members of guests, as attendees at our shows, or while visiting the same sites of our digs and field trips. Kids are all around us.

Children are predisposed to learning and we, as adults, are the teachers. Like it or not and, aware of it or not, young adults watch us and learn from us. Children are truly amazing in their capacity to take in information from their surroundings and that begs the question – What examples are we setting when children are observing us (and even when they aren't)? Are we always following good safety practices? Are we always wearing safety glasses when appropriate? We, as adults, know the right things to do with regard to safety matters, but do we always make sure we follow those important safety rules and guidelines – especially when children are present?

With this new year ahead of us, please give some consideration to how we set good safety examples to the children around us. Like it or not and, know it or not, they are watching what we do and on some level, taking in these important lessons.

Let's resolve, in the year to come, to set the best example we can. Our children deserve nothing less.

For this months' review of an important safety matter, please check out Jim Doran's great article on winter field trip planning in the March 2009 issue of the EFMLS News. May you all have a happy and safe new year.



Safety book for collectors: "Never Fall In A Quarry".....by I. Bruce Easily

If you drive your brand new Sportage, which you got for the new year, on icy quarry roads and careen over the edge and down into the pit it's enough to Kia.

Ernest wasn't wearing safety glasses. He stuck a rock which splintered, one piece entering his eye. The ophthalmologist operated to remove the sliver of rock. He was really searching in earnest.

**REGULAR MEETINGS MINUTES**

The December 13, 2010 meeting was called to order by President Eric Kindahl at 8:00 pm, with approximately 50 people attending. It was M/S/P to approve the minutes of the November 8, 2010 regular meeting and the November 15, 2010 Board of Directors meeting.

President: Eric Kindahl announced there will be no board meeting in December. Andy had the special ordered name badges. Eric announced a silent auction of books remaining from the Ballards and of a rock tumbler, refurbished by Elmer Lantz.

Show Upstairs: Mark Dahlman reminded us that the show was coming up. Dealers are sending in the checks. He announced that, due to some Fairgrounds building work, the Saturday Gaithersburg flea market will be in the same building as our show. We will need volunteers to watch the adjoining doors on Saturday morning.

Show Downstairs: Pat Repik-Byrne announced there was a sign-up sheet circulating to volunteer to help at the show. She announced the deadline to sign up for the available 45 exhibit cases. (You may supply your own case. This year it will be at the February 14<sup>th</sup> regular meeting. Start your plans now.

Elections: The slate, consisting of the current officers, for re-election was read. Nominations were requested from the floor. Hearing none, it was M/S/P to re-elect the current officers.

Andy Muir requested that the January Board of Directors meeting be moved to January 24<sup>th</sup> at his residence.

It was M/S/P to accept membership of visitors Jim and Becky Waugh.

Rod Towers administered the door prize drawing for juniors. Joel Rosen administered the drawings for the door prizes.

The holiday party continued. Thanks to all who brought the many desserts and to those who brought the supplies.

Party and meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM.

Jeff Cessna, Secretary

**BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

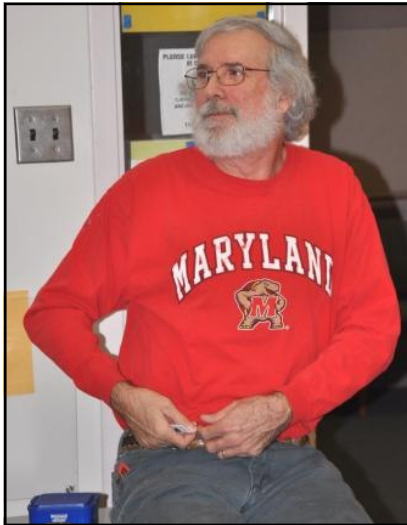
No Board meeting was held in Dec.



Photos  
by  
W. Mohr



 HOLIDAY PARTY



Photos by W. Mohr



**FIELD TRIPS January 15th, 1-4 pm.** Indoor Field Trip to the Smithsonian's Naturalist Center, <[www.mnh.si.edu/education/planned\\_programs/naturalist\\_center.html](http://www.mnh.si.edu/education/planned_programs/naturalist_center.html)>. Location: 741 Miller Dr., SE, Suite G2, Leesburg, VA.

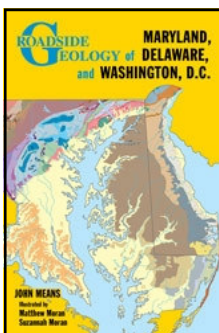
Children 10 and older are welcome if accompanied by a parent. The Naturalist Center features specimens of minerals that you can actually pick up and examine as well as dissecting microscopes and a UV light. You can bring in your own unknowns to compare with the center's specimens. The collection includes a sizable number of specimens of local rocks, minerals, and fossils. This is a good trip for new rockhounds to get acquainted with specimens you are apt to find on fieldtrips. To those planning on attending, please e-mail me at <[jgharris7@gmail.com](mailto:jgharris7@gmail.com)> by January 8th. It is possible that we could exceed the limits of what they can handle--in which case I will schedule a second trip.

Directions: From the Beltway, in Virginia, take exit 45A onto the Dulles Toll Rd (VA-267), continue all the way to exit 1A onto US-15 Byp/SR-7 (almost to Leesburg). Go 0.7 mi, turn RIGHT (South) onto Sycolin Rd SE for 1.3 mi. Turn RIGHT (West) onto Miller Dr SE and go 0.2 miles to the office park. The trip is about 42 minutes from Rockville. Jonathan G. Harris, Field Trip Chairman



Jonathan has taken us to a variety of places in 2010 and previous years. Take the time to say a great big thanks to him. It is time consuming job deserving of much credit. [Ed.]

**NEW BOOK OUT:** **Roadside Geology of Maryland, Delaware, and Washington, D.C.** Published October 15, 2010 by Author John Mans, with Illustrators, Matthew Moran and Suzannah Moran. Paperback, 6 X 9 inches, 368 pages, list price \$24.00. [You can buy it cheaper-- I saw it for as low as \$16.32 by web surfing - Ed.]



From the sandstone ridges and shale valleys of western Maryland to the sand dunes and tidal estuaries on Delaware's coast, the geologic features of the Mid-Atlantic region include a diverse array of rocks and landforms assembled during more than 1 billion years of geologic history.

The book's introduction presents an overview of the geologic history of Maryland, Delaware, and Washington, D.C. It has 35 road guides which discuss the landforms and rocks visible from a car window, along bike paths, and at nearby waysides and parks, including Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historic Park, Assateague Island National Seashore, Rock Creek Park, and Cape Henlopen State Park. Learn why sea level is rising faster in the Chesapeake Bay than in other coastal areas of the world, find out how the sixth largest impact crater on Earth helped shape Chesapeake Bay, and discover what moved the rocks at Devils Racecourse in Catoclin Mountain Park.

## **2011 EFMLS WILDACRES WORKSHOP SESSIONS**

Information about the Workshop is now in the current (January) EFMLS Newsletter and on the EFMLS website, <[www.AMFED.org/EFMLS/Wildacres.htm](http://www.AMFED.org/EFMLS/Wildacres.htm)>. Information about the classes being offered each session, dates, speakers etc. is all there. You can also download an application form that you can print off or fill in directly on your computer before you print the form out for yourself. If you've never been to an EFMLS Wildacres Workshop, you're missing a treat.



Our Board of Directors offers one scholarship annually to a Society member who has never been to Wildacres, has been a member for at least a year, and has been active in club affairs, especially at our annual show. Nominations are to be submitted to the Board via Eric Kindahl. Any member may make a nomination, including for themselves. The scholarship pays for room and board of \$350 per person.

(Wendell Mohr has applications and class schedules for those without e-mail).

## JUNIOR PROGRAMS

### NEW, SPECIFICALLY FOR AGES 6-9 ONLY:

**Meeting Date:** January 10, 2011      **Meeting time:** 7:00-8:00 pm **Note earlier hour.**

**Meeting Location:** The Card room at the Rockville Senior Center

Linda Smith will be leading this new program for younger kids with an interest in rocks & minerals.

The schedule for the beginning of 2011 is as follows:

- January: Sedimentary Rocks, • February: Igneous Rocks, • March: Metamorphic Rocks,
- April: Crystals, • May: Fossils

### AGES 10-15:

#### **Future Rockhounds of America (The MOCKS)**

**Meeting Date:** January 10, 2011 **Meeting time:** 7:45-9:00 pm

**Meeting Location:** Sunroom Cafeteria at the Rockville Senior Center

December: We enjoyed our annual holiday party and shared lots of good food! We completed our 2010 mineral of the month program by discussing the December birthstone, Turquoise, and many MOCKS took the birthstone test (results below) to complete that requirement for the Gemstone Lore & Legend badge. We talked about and voted on the upcoming programs for 2011 and everyone went home with a new specimen from our Yankee swap.

January 10: We start preparing for our annual show. We will hold a workshop discussing what makes a good display and explore ways of putting our displays together – **Sooooo,**

**IF YOU CAN, PLEASE BRING IN WHAT YOU ARE  
PLANNING TO USE FOR YOUR DISPLAY!**

#### **Upcoming 2011 Programs for the Age 10 - 15 group only:**

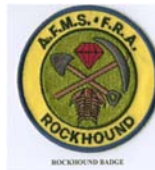
- Displays & Show Preparation – Jan. & Feb., • Mystical Powers of Gemstones - March ,
- Mineral Identification - April, • Crystal Shapes & Formation - TBD,
- Everyday Uses of Minerals - TBD, • Stone Tools & Art – TBD,
- Gold as a mineral/uses of gold – TBD, • Fluorescents - TBD,
- Micros & Microscope usage - TBD

#### Birthstone Test Results

Advanced Level: Trevor Babb, Cassie DeSalvo, Ryan Gunnison & Elena Olshin earned a score of 100% at this level. Special kudos to Trevor who was only one challenge question away from the Expert designation!

Beginner Level: Kevin McCright, Jennifer Weiss, & Claire DeSalvo all passed.

Great work all of you!



For more information on the Future Rockhounds of America program, please contact Holly McNeil at <fra\_advisor@glmsmc.com> or 301-605-7179.



**PARKER WEDDING:**

Late arriving photograph of Carol and Fred Parker's wedding cake topper! What could be more appropriate?



**DECEMBER DOOR PRIZE:**

The lucky winner of the Door prize, a Picture Rock from China, was Mary Cummins.



Photo by W. Mohr

**SHOWS and EVENTS**

**21<sup>st</sup> Annual Mineral, Jewelry & Fossil Show**  
 Saturday, Feb. 19, 2011 | 10am - 5pm  
 (Same Day as the Gun Show)

*Vendors & exhibits*

*rough, polished & faceted stones*

*fossils, minerals & geodes*

Join us this year at  
The Show Place Arena  
In Upper Marlboro, MD.

*Tools & supplies*

*beads and findings*

*original jewelry designs*

**The Show Place Arena**  
14900 Pennsylvania Ave  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

Admission: \$3/person  
Children 6 & under free

**Demonstrations include:**  
Cabochon making, bead stringing,  
wire wrapping, gold panning and more.

**Sponsored by:**  
SOUTHERN MARYLAND  
ROCK & MINERAL CLUB

**Clearwater Nature Center**  
11000 Thrift Rd.  
Clinton, MD 20735  
301-297-4575  
www.SMRMC.org

**For more information or to request a vendor application,**  
please contact Michael Patterson at 301-297-4574

**Parks & Recreation M-NCPPC**  
live more, play more  
pgparks.com

The Department of Parks and Recreation encourages and supports the participation of individuals with disabilities. Please contact the facility at least two weeks in advance of the program start date to request an accommodation (i.e. sign language interpreter, staff support, etc.). TTY: 301-699-2544

**ENVISION PRINCE GEORGES**

**CLASSES**

Phone 301 297 4545 or E-mail <ClearwaterNatureCenter@gmail.com> for information on these classes:

**Saturdays January 8, and February 5**  
Cabochon basics will be taught at the Clearwater Nature Center for ages 18 and up. 9:00 am - 3:00 pm. Fee \$30 for PG and Montgomery County residents, \$36 for others Bring safety glass and an apron to class.

**Saturday January 15** Introduction to the Lapidary Arts will be taught at the Clearwater Nature Center for ages 16 and up. 9:00 am - 3:00 pm. Free!



**SHOW YOUR STUFF!** Competitive AFMS “Uniform Rules” are complex and highly structured for competition at Federation shows. Here in the Eastern US there are few competitive exhibits. The Northwest Federation of Mineralogical Societies’ general guidelines were developed as a more relaxed and user-friendly standard for having fun and showing at the local level while making best displays even better.

Some of the NFMS non-competitive guidelines and a few suggestions from Kitsap M&G Society members who are experienced at showing quality cases are listed here:

Decide what you want to display and what will really make your display special, choose your best “stuff”, not all your “stuff”!, present your display as if you are speaking to a new friend who knows nothing about your hobby, make it attractive, informative, and educational, include your name tag inside the case - brag a little! (If you don’t have one see Andy Muir otherwise include a label with your name), Keep it simple. Case liner color should be coordinated with the colors of what you’re displaying to highlight the specimens. Use pedestals and risers as appropriate.

Be sure your case liners are clean and wrinkle-free. You want your liner color and texture to complement your material, not detract from it. Props in excess steal attention and may distract from the specimens - use with care! Specimens should not clutter up the case so it doesn’t look “busy” or overfilled. If you have a lot of material, only showcase the best of the best. Quality shows! Large specimens show better in back with medium and smaller ones brought towards the front. Aim for a pleasing arrangement.



Always wash/clean/dust/polish your material. Clean the case front too.

Labels need to be double-checked for accurate names and information, and correct spelling and punctuation (See the December Rockhounder article by Jack Busch.) Labels last longer if printed on heavier card stock or laminated and don’t curl under the hot lights. Use uniform-sized lettering large enough to be read from about two feet

away. Use a printer and an easy-to-read font.

You are free to exhibit minerals, gems, jewelry, fossils, beads, scrimshaw, fluorescents, carvings etc. but keep to earth science related items. Items may be personally collected, bought, traded or gifted to you.



All Photos by W. Mohr

**SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT . . . .**Some great quotes on display cases from KMGS members:

- “Be proud of your display! The extra time you take pays off.
- “Don’t overcrowd! Overcrowding is distracting.”
- “Make your case as educational as possible. I’ve heard many times from passers-by, ‘Gosh, that’s beautiful . . . . I wonder what it is?’”
- “Make it the best you can!” The nearer to professional it appears, the better.

Based largely on an article by Lorene Leider from

The Hard Rock News, Kitsap Mineral & Gem Society, Nov. 2009

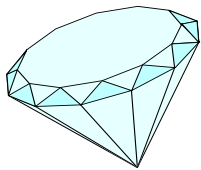
Share a case with one or more GLMSMC members if you don’t think you have enough material yourself.

Use the application on page 9. Copy it if you don’t want to destroy your Rockhounder. Make as many copies as the number of exhibits you plan to show.



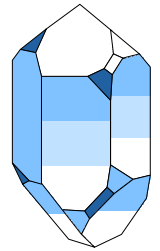
**NOTE THE EARLY DEADLINE THIS YEAR OF FEBRUARY 14TH.**





**EXHIBIT APPLICATION FORM**

The Gem, Lapidary and Mineral Society  
of Montgomery County, Maryland, Inc.  
P.O. Box 444, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20884-0444



Request for Exhibit Space in the 47th Annual Gem and Mineral Show to be held at  
The Montgomery County Fairgrounds, 16 Chestnut Street, Gaithersburg, Maryland.

Saturday, March 19th, 2011 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM

Sunday, March 20th, 2011 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please Print or Type)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

My Exhibit will be: (Please enter the display title and type of display on the following lines)

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of display: \_\_\_\_\_

If a fluorescent display is desired, enter: Fluorescent display and the UV wave length(s) desired such as SW, MW, LW, or SW/LW. Example for a fluorescent display might be:

Title: "Worldwide Fluorites," Type: fluorescent minerals LW.

( ) I will furnish my own case. Type and size: \_\_\_\_\_

( ) I would like a case furnished. Upright cases only. Cases are 2' deep X 2' high X 4' wide, exterior dimensions. Bottom liners should be no more than 23" X 47" and allowance should also be made for reduced side liners.

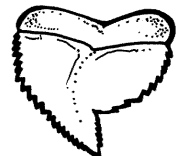
Set up of cases is Friday, March 18th, 2011 from 3:00 PM until 9:00 PM. Cases are to remain on display on Saturday, March 19th and Sunday March 20th. Cases may be taken down starting no sooner than 5:00 PM on Sunday, March 20th and should be removed as quickly as possible for timely take down.

In consideration of the opportunity to exhibit afforded me by the Gem, Lapidary and Mineral Society of Montgomery County, MD, Inc., I agree that the Society is neither responsible nor liable for any loss or damage sustained by me or by anyone else as a result of my exhibit. I further agree to save said Society harmless from any claims arising from my participation in the show to be held March 19th and 20th 2011. I understand that all risks are my own and that the Society has no insurance which applies to my exhibit or to me. The Gem, Lapidary and Mineral Society of Montgomery County, MD will provide security during the show.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Exhibitor)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

Please return this form ASAP, but **no later than February 14th** to: Pat Repik-Byrne, 9 Starlight Court, Potomac, MD, 20854, Phone (301) 279-5962, e-mail <prb.rocks@verizon.net>



Note: If you are Demonstrating, you must fill out a separate DEMONSTRATOR APPLICATION FORM

**WEB SITES**



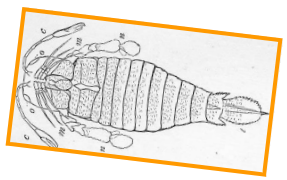
By Wendell Mohr

**Geologic Overview of the Trenton Group at West Canada Creek, NY.** The site is North of Utica NY. See <<http://www.mcz.harvard.edu/Departments/InvertPaleo/Trenton/Intro/trentonintro.htm>>.

If you are planning to attend the AFMS/EFMLS Convention and Show at Syracuse, July 7-10, this might be of interest to you fossil collectors. Divided into three main areas, "Social History of the Trenton Falls Area", "Paleontology of the Trenton Group", and "Geology of the Area", you may explore detail in each. I find that going to the Page index and stepping through it is quite useful to appreciate the depth of this work by the Department of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University and funded by the National Science Foundation. The world famous Herkimer Diamond locations are nearby.

**Fossils of New York** is an adjunct power point presentation on the Fossils of NY, by Lee Kowalsky at: <[www.whiteplainspublicschools.org/.../NEW\\_FOSSILS\\_OF\\_THE\\_DEVONIAN\\_PERIOD.ppt](http://www.whiteplainspublicschools.org/.../NEW_FOSSILS_OF_THE_DEVONIAN_PERIOD.ppt)>.

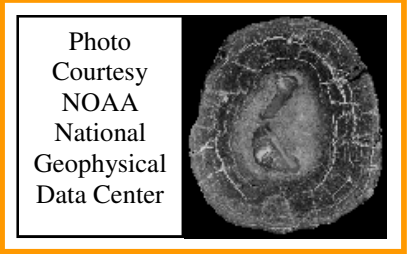
- Pterygotus was present from the Ordovician to the Devonian in North America but was devastated by extinction. Europe too rids! ●



The author is from the T.R. Proctor Senior High School in Utica and has done a creditable job with text and slides. This serves me as a worthwhile companion web site to the first one.

**Mining the Seafloor for Rare-Earth Minerals** Is a New York Times Science article of timely interest because of the current Chinese control of the bulk of production of these vital elements. Molycorp is re-opening the Mountain Pass CA mine to provide domestic production which is lacking. With a video to see,

<[http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/09/science/09seafloor.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/09/science/09seafloor.html?_r=2)>, provides an interesting read and explains the rare earths in manganese nodules. What do you think about deep sea mining possibilities?



- We is friends! Me and you is friends! You smile, I smile. You hurt, I hurt. You cry, I cry. You try collecting in the very deep sea. I Gonna Miss Your E-Mails! ●



**Hang Son Doong, World's Largest Cave.** The National Geographic Magazine tells of this stupendous find in Viet Nam at <<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2011/01/largest-cave/jenkins-text>>.

There are seven pages of text about the cave and if you click on "Photo Gallery" at the upper left you will find about 20 photographs. Thanks to Phil Krug for the lead to this web site.

- Churches built over big caves stand on hollowed ground. ●

I can be found on paper or sitting in a bar.  
 I can be found next to money that won't get you far.  
 I share something in common with wheat and rice,  
 Though you wouldn't want to eat me because I don't taste nice.  
 I can be kept in a box as well as keep time.  
 Can you come up with an answer to go along with this rhyme?  
 What am I?

From Sandy Claws in December                      LOL  
 A. Sand                                                              (Laughing Out Loud)





### JANUARY MEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Chris Barr, Jonathan Baum, Nelson Beyer, Boe Brosius, Trinish Chatterjee, Chris Crosswhite, Jimmy Cummins, Dave Hald, Benjamin Harris, Matthew Hyland, Sara LaVilla, Brennan Lyons, Robert Meny, Rob Robinson, Melissa Thompsen, Don Turner.

Your January Birthstone is **Garnet**.

### ANT HILL GARNETS

By Gayland Graves



Photo: Mt. Lily Gems,  
Robert Drummond

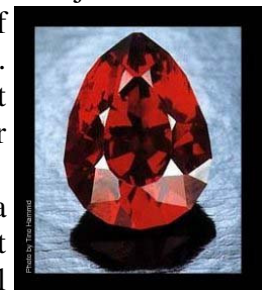
Arizona pyrope garnet is called ant hill garnet because ants bring up the smaller crystals from below ground and deposit them in the ant hill when building or remodeling.

Ant hill garnets are recognized as possessing the finest bright ruby-red color of the garnet family. During the 1800's Navajos in this locale used the water-worn and rounded ant Hill garnet crystals as bullets. This use had both a practical side (the stones were there, and free) and an emotional appeal...the Navajos believed the blood-red color helped produce fatal wounds.

Ant hill garnets occur in a remote section of the Navajo Nation in Arizona. The gems have never been mined commercially because there aren't enough of them. That means these gems are beautiful...and rare. Gems over a carat are even more rare! The world supply of these gems depends on those living nearby who collect a few stones after the occasional rainstorm and trade them at the local store.

The Four Corners area of northeastern Arizona derives its name from the fact that there the state borders of Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado meet. No-where else in the United States can a person simultaneously stand in four states at one time. Monument Valley, the site of awe-inspiring sandstone pinnacles, spans the Arizona-Utah border, not far from the four corners. Just south of Monument Valley is the town of Kayenta and Garnet Ridge. Gem quality garnets have weathered from the underlying intrusive rock and can be found scattered throughout the area. This location is on the Navajo reservation and is strictly off limits to non-tribal collectors. Most of the garnets are smaller than a pea, are smooth, and rounded. Often they are referred to as ant hill garnets because the tiniest garnets are thrown out on the surface of the ground as ants excavate their nests. The garnets are collected by the Navajo and sold in bulk for the gem trade. Ninety percent of the material is the deep ruby red color of pyrope garnet, but small quantities of rhodolite and spessartine garnets are also found. Although the hue of this pyrope is gorgeous, the saturation is so great as to make cut stones over a carat or two in size too dark. Nevertheless, if properly cut, Four Corner Pyrope garnets are stunning gems."

The ants carry up stones excavated from the soil they dig in, and can amass quite a collection over time. Such anthills are a place where the Lakota historically sought out sacred, perfectly round stones used in making ceremonial rattles or for personal tokens. Elsewhere in the Badlands and Black Hills, we found smaller, active anthills where tiny shells and even tinier garnets were being brought up by the ants. The treasures returned to the surface by the tireless work of ants collect very slowly. How many billions of ant hours went into making the massive fossil anthill, I wonder?"



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Via Bulletin of the Victor Valley Gem and Mineral Club, 12/10,  
via MOROCKS Newsletter, Monrovia Rockhounds, 01/11

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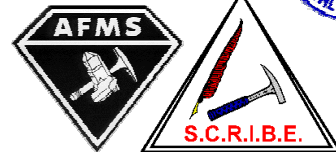
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