



The Rockblast

The Kitchener-Waterloo Gem and Mineral Club Newsletter

June 2010

President's Message

At the May meeting, Dr. Alan Morgan gave a presentation on global warming. Along with much convincing data, he walked us through a series of photos showing the natural beauty of our planet and all its inhabitants. Global warming is real and each of us must do our part in respecting Mother Nature.

Club member **Bo Renneckendorf** gave a mini-talk on Death Valley. He presented a slide show from a recent trip with intriguing pictures demonstrating the harshness of this vast landscape.

At the meeting, Nick Wagner shared with us a mystery object. After much speculation it proved to be a cement core from the ice pad of Maple Leaf Gardens, now being demolished. The core showed the tubing for the coolant, as well as reinforcing rods. I was mistaken in thinking Nick was giving it to the club. It was just for demonstration. Alas, those who want a similar core will need to try eBay.

Many will recall Walter Zimochod's talk on jewellery in January. He recently donated to the club a large copper float from the Keweenaw Peninsula, Michigan. It is available for demonstrations and future displays.

Thanks go to member **Stanley Lui** who kindly consented to handle technical problems that may arise from computer projector hookup and operation. He is given permission to purchase any needed cables to solve compatibility problems.

Thanks to **Ray Lehoux** for organizing the recent field trip to the Marmora quarry. By all accounts it was a very successful day. At least 15 members were at the gate and ready to go by 9 AM. It was a beautiful sunny day. The temperature was perfect with a cool breeze. We were not disappointed, as many good specimens were found. I am busy decalcifying some beautiful garnet crystals. Maybe this year I will have a specimen that will merit consideration for the 'Best self-collected' specimen at the December meeting.

This month we are having a potluck picnic at the Waterloo Community Arts Centre at 6:00 PM on June 4. Following the meal, everyone is invited to the Stonebridge Warehouse, at 351 Lancaster St. W. in Kitchener, near the intersection with Union Street. The building is just beside the Forwell Variety Store, and parking is at the rear.

If you are not able to attend the picnic, then just come to the warehouse at 7:30 PM. Parking is a premium, but I am told it is well worth the effort to see the wide variety of minerals on display.

Unfortunately I will miss the June meeting as we are traveling once again in Australia. This trip is another combination of sightseeing and visiting our daughter Mandi.

Enjoy the many rock shows and good luck hunting that special prize this summer. See you in September.

--- Gary Partlow



**Pictures from the May Club Show
- Photos by André Mongeon**



Upcoming Club Meetings

All meetings start at 7:00 PM for trading specimens at the Waterloo Community Arts Centre, 25 Regina St. South, Waterloo. Typical schedule:

7:00 - 7:30 PM: trading and socializing

7:30 - 7:45 PM: a “mini-talk” about some aspect of the hobby

7:45 - 8:00 PM: announcements

8:00 - 8:15 PM: monthly raffle

8:15 - 9:00 PM: featured talk

Friday, June 4 2010: The club’s annual potluck picnic, plus a visit to Stonebridge Imports’ warehouse of mineral treasures. Meet at the Waterloo Community Arts Centre at 6:00 PM, and then visit the Stonebridge Warehouse at 7:30 PM. It is located at 351 Lancaster St. W. in Kitchener, near the intersection with Union Street. The building is just beside the Forwell Variety Store, and parking is at the rear.

Friday, September 3 2010: The annual Show-and-Tell event. Bring your specimens from your summer collecting trips.

Friday, October 1 2010: TBA.

Friday, November 5 2010: Our own **Rob Maric** will speak on "All you ever need to know about ground water: do we have enough?".

Friday, December 3 2010: The annual holiday auction of minerals, gems, fossils, and other items.

Upcoming Events

This listing is provided as a service to club members. Events subject to cancellation. As always, double-check dates and times with the sponsors before leaving home!

June 19 2010: Niagara Peninsula Geological Society presents Geo-Venture 2010, 10 AM - 5 PM, Beamsville Fairgrounds, Beamsville, ON. Held with the Strawberry Festival. For more information, call (905) 994-0477 or (905) 935-6791.

July 16-18 2010: 28th Annual Sudbury Gem and Mineral Show, “Northern Ontario’s Largest Gem, Mineral, Fossil, Bead & Rock Craft Show and Sale”. Fri. 5 PM – 9 PM, Sat. 10 AM – 6 PM; Sun. 10 AM – 5 PM. Carmichael Arena on Bancroft Dr., across from Minnow Lake, 1 km. south of the Kingsway (Hwy. 17E), Sudbury, ON. Features: Dealers; displays; demonstrations; kids activities; and hourly door prizes. Swapping, Sat. 11 AM-4 PM; field trip Sun. at Noon; barbecue. Sat & Sun. Dealers offer mineral, crystal and fossil specimens; meteorites; precious and semi-precious gems; finished jewellery including pearls and amber; and items for crafters including beads, tools, and findings; free parking. Admission: Adults \$4, Seniors \$2, Children 6 – 12 \$1, and Children 5 and under free. Contact: Ed and Ruth Debicki, tel./fax. (705) 522-5140; E-mail: ed.debicki@sympatico.ca.

July 23-25 2010: The Toronto Gem and Mineral Show. Friday, 4 PM - 9 PM; Saturday, 10 AM - 7 PM; Sunday 10 AM - 5 PM. Leaside Gardens, 1073 Millwood Road, East York, Ontario. Adults \$8, Seniors \$7, Children 12-18 \$6, Under 12 free admission with adult. For more info, contact Ohannes Bedrossian, (514) 989-9800 or e-mail torontogemshow@canada.com .

July 25 2010: The Bancroft Mineral Club presents their 15th Annual Gem & Mineral Show, Sunday 10 AM - 4 PM, Bancroft Legion Hall, Station Street, Bancroft, ON. Admission \$2, under 18 free. For more info, e-mail alrocks16@yahoo.ca .

July 29 - August 1 2010: The 47th Annual Rockhound Gemboree, Canada's largest gem and mineral show. Thu-Sat, 10 AM - 7 PM; Sun, 10 AM - 5 PM. Over 110 dealers. For more info, call (877) 410-1513 or (613) 332-1513.

September 11 2010: Open House and Rock Swap at Robert Hall Originals, Saturday, 10 AM - 5 PM. 138 Sugar Maple Road, St. George, Ontario. Fri-Sun, 10 AM - 5 PM. Free. For more info, phone (519) 448-1236 or (800) 360-2813, or e-mail inquiry@roberthalloriginals.com , or visit <http://www.roberthalloriginals.com> .

September 18-19 2010: 42nd Annual Scarborough Gem and Mineral Show, Saturday 10 AM - 6 PM; Sunday 11 AM - 5 PM. Don Montgomery Community Centre, 2467 Eglinton Avenue E., Scarborough, ON. Adults \$5, Children \$1. For more info: e-mail scarbgemclub@lycos.com or visit <http://www.scarbgemclub.ca> .

October 1-3 2010: Ancaster Gem, Mineral, Bead & Jewellery Show. Try on the latest in fashionable jewellery. See crystals, fossils & magnificent rocks from all over the world! Shop at over 30 dealers. Take a free seminar on rocks, fossils or crystals. Hours: Friday: 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM; Saturday: 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM; Sunday: 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Admission: \$6.00 per person, under 12 free. Location: Ancaster Fairgrounds, 630 Trinity Road, Ancaster, Ontario (corner of Hwy. 52 & Hwy. 53). For more info, phone: 519-448-1236 or 1-800-360-2813 or visit www.roberthalloriginals.com or e-mail rockshow@roberthalloriginals.com .

Pictures from the May Club Meeting

Left: Speaker Alan Morgan with Gary Partlow.

Right: Jean Scott and Gary Winkler.

Photo credit: André Mongeon.



Organics

by André Mongeon

"Organic" seems to be one of those dreadfully over-used (perhaps misused) words these days. When in the context of gems, organic means the material was either alive or made by a living organism, not that it's "certified pesticide-free hydroponic alfalfa sprouts without genetic modifications". The term also implies carbon content. Charcoal and five-dollar lettuce are both organic —one just tastes a little better.

Some organics can be very old, as in the case of amber or

jet. Others, such as pearls or shell, can be very recent. Most organics have been used as some of the earliest gemstones by our ancestors, especially bone and shell. Amber, pearls and coral also have a long history in trade and culture.

Jet is essentially a type of coal that can take a high polish. The "dots" seen on the piece of jet in the picture are reflections of the pearls in front of it, showing how shiny this unlikely gem can be. It is quite soft and must be used carefully as a gem. It was used in Victorian times for "mourning jewellery", worn by widows as an overt symbol of their status. Jet tends to dry out and crack over time. Much of what is sold as jet is in fact a cheaper grade of coal, so buyers beware. Jet almost feels like wood. Its low thermal conductivity makes it "warm" to the touch and it is light in weight due to its low specific gravity of 1.19 to 1.35.



Coral for gem use is an accumulated "skeleton" of tiny sea creatures. The "living" portion of coral deposits microscopic calcium carbonate layers (containing some proteins) upon older layers, and over time large structures can result. Most species of coral are not suitable for gem use. The most prized for gem use is the red coral species *Corallium rubrum*, found in the Mediterranean sea. This type of coral can also be pink or white. *Corallium rubrum* is now difficult to obtain because of strict conservation measures. Some pieces sold today have been re-claimed from old jewellery. Dyed red bamboo coral (inexpensive) is often passed off as precious coral and is by far the most commonly encountered coral today. It is mainly obtained from deep areas of the Pacific Ocean. Black coral from the Pacific is another lower value variety which can be imitated by dyeing bamboo coral black. Ethical questions arise, as harvesting most types of coral can devastate delicate eco-systems. Corals of all types are also soft and susceptible to damage from skin oils. They should be cleaned very carefully to avoid damaging them.

Pearls and shell are also essentially made from the deposition of calcium carbonate by living creatures. Depending on the species, other materials (proteins) can be present. Cultured freshwater pearls and many shells are quite inexpensive. Natural pearls, especially naturally coloured ones, can be very expensive. As with corals, all pearls and shells are soft and easily damaged. Cleaning them is also something that needs to be done carefully as not to destroy them.

Amber is fossilized tree resin. Amber from the Baltic sea is greatly prized although it is generally somewhat less expensive than coral. Caution is required when buying amber. "Ambroid" is a material made from amber chips that are fused together. This material is not worth nearly as much as genuine amber, as it literally made from the scraps. Copal, a non-fossilized tree resin, is also often passed off as amber.

Except for genuine antiques, elephant ivory is virtually unavailable. The ivory trade has decimated the elephant population to the extent that an international ban had to be imposed on the harvesting of ivory. Ivory recovered from elephants that died natural deaths still occurs under strict government supervision, but this supply is very limited. The item in the picture is an ivory carving made from the tusk of a woolly mammoth found in Russia. This material is not covered by the embargo, as no elephants were killed to obtain it. Tusks of mammoths are found as ice melts in northern Russia. This material is the only ivory that many people can ever buy. Common animal bone (cow) is often passed off as antique ivory, as are certain plastics.

Organics can be used to make interesting jewellery. The next time that you are in the produce section of your grocery store, try to remember the other use of the term organic.

Kids' Club News

Last month, the kids' club had the opportunity to visit our very own Gem & Mineral show, which was held at the Waterloo Community Arts Centre (WCAC). There were plenty of vendors and things to see and do. I was able to acquire a couple of nice mineral specimens of sulphur and vivianite.

June's club meeting will be our last before the summer holiday break. It will be held on Saturday June 5, at 2 PM at the WCAC. We will be playing ROCKO! Come on out and win some great gem and mineral prizes.

I hope to see you all there! --- Rob Maric

Heavy Metal T-Shirt

Don Urry models this t-shirt with pictures of Stibnite, Gold, Silver, Galena, and Pyrite. You can buy one from <http://www.scienceteacher.com>



Return of “Fluorapatite”

Many collectors were dismayed in 2008 by a decision to rename Fluorapatite as Apatite-(CaF) and Hydroxylapatite as Apatite-(CaOH). Now this decision has been reversed.

An article in May/June 2010 issue of

Rocks and Minerals relates that a subcommittee of the International Mineralogical Association Commission on New Minerals, Nomenclature, and Classification (IMA-CNMNC) has reevaluated the change and has decided to revert to the old names. It goes on to say that “these changes return the names that have been used in thousands of scientific papers, treatises, and museum catalogues over the last one hundred and fifty years”.

Falling Minerals Injure Dozens in Oklahoma City

A hailstorm with hail the size of baseballs hit Oklahoma City on May 17, injuring dozens of people. So much hail fell that after the storm, the city appeared to have been hit by a snowstorm. For a really impressive video, go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFv2W7Duqiw> .

Kitchener-Waterloo Gem and Mineral Club

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