

## NOTHING GLUM ABOUT BLUM: DPS FIELD TRIP 012403

Farley Katz and I opted to clip off a few miles Friday and spend the night at the home of fellow DPS member Marc de Vries. We stayed up until 1 in the morning looking at Marc's entire collection, and I stayed up yet another hour perusing one of his fossil references. The 3 of us departed into the gloom and drizzle Saturday morning, unfortunately passing by 2 serious semi truck related accidents on IH-35, one a fatality with a body bag in the median.

We pressed on to Blum, roughly 50 miles northwest of Waco, where diminishing rain brought a total of 21 optimistic and cheerful DPS members to a parking lot in the middle of nowhere. We were joined by our keen-eyed partner in crime, Robert Bowen, who showed off a killer *Holectypus* echinoid in the parking lot while everyone chatted. I was glad to finally meet Irene Stemple, one of our field trip leaders, to personally thank her for all the good site leads she has given me since last summer. I also enjoyed seeing veteran member Roger Farish again, as I often depart with pearls of wisdom gleaned from our conversations.

We caravanned a few short miles to the Arnold Crushed Stone Quarry, where after a short lecture and signing of waivers we were led to our first collecting site, a series of cuts and pits exposing Edwards and possibly Duck Creek and Kiamichi limestone (I admit not being able to identify all formations by sight yet). Grayish layers below gave way to brown eroding hard limestone above, and we moved along the exposure looking for goodies while trying not to crowd each other.



**FIGURE 1:** Miscellaneous rudists, gastropods, bivalves, and ammonite partials from the Edwards and Kiamichi (?) limestone

A few low grade irregular echinoids surrendered first, then true to form, Robert quickly produced a dozen or so shark teeth including *Leptostyrax* from the shell hash cemented atop certain slabs of limestone. He even pulled a tooth or two from a slab I had already looked at closely. Not only does he find lots of teeth, he finds them fast! Young eyes...

I moved up the exposure to the brown layers and found them to be quite fossiliferous. A couple small, partial ammonites made it into my bag, and Farley, our resident ammonite enthusiast, reduced a few to possession as well. A keel jutting out of the brown dirt was a dead giveaway, and after 10 minutes of digging I was able to extract an 18 inch *Oxytropidoceras* ammonite, unfortunately in 3 or 4 pieces. I don't like throwing broken fossils into my bag since they tend to lose chunks at the breaks before I get home. Farley didn't mind though and was glad to take this specimen off my hands.

Circling back to Marc and Robert, I stumbled upon first one eroded echinoid, then another, then another, then a death slab of about 10 of the same. Marc the echinoid zealot was soon shoulder to shoulder with me searching frantically. I could see that he valued the death slab, so I donated it to his collection,

something I probably would not have done had the specimens been in better condition. Marc was quick to boomerang me an ammonite in return, which was much appreciated. Back at the trucks, we were all jealous of the lady who had laid hands on a partial *Cidaris* echinoid which looked silicified. Had it been whole, the specimen would have been baseball sized.

The next site was slow to produce, and the 4 of us were back at the trucks ahead of schedule due to slow collecting. Marc boldly honked the horn to get the group to return so we could relocate. We had written the site off when 2 members returned with 2 or 3 nice ammonites, then pointed to the top of a dirt hill and said they were lying everywhere. Marc, Robert, Farley, and I were up the hill in seconds. Farley headed back to the truck with one ammonite, and the horn blasted to summon us back. I pressed a little farther and produced two *Oxytropidoceras* ammonites, one in pristine condition, which explained my tardiness when I returned to the group.



**FIGURE 2:** *Oxytropidoceras* ammonite from the Edwards Limestone (?)

Then next pit was a dud, but a quick truck bed exposition of ammonites, starfish, and brittlestars got our interest piqued for our final location, a quarrying area for large blocks of brown Edwards limestone. We spent an hour there, and I collected 3 *Salenia mexicana* echinoids, but it seemed half the collectors laid

hands on *Ophuria* brittlestars. Robert was again leading the pack with 3 or 4 *Ophuria* to his credit. Marc got one and Farley got the impression of one, leaving me the only person in our little group without one. Bad form for the rest of you guys to out-hunt me when I drove!

I had a blast on this trip, as we all did. The best part of it all was cementing friendships with like-minded individuals. When you hold a fossil up high and shriek like an Indian hoisting a fresh scalp, it sure is nice to have an audience of folks who value your take. Friends who value your finds increase the value of your specimens in your own mind. Maybe I won't be hunting alone as much this year after all.