

## PECAN GAP PLETHORA 011904

With persistent observation and willingness to deal with some inclement weather, I was able to spin last week into a time of very productive fossil collecting in the Pecan Gap formation in San Antonio. This all began a couple Fridays ago when through a stroke of serendipity I spotted a field full of truckloads of dumped rock as I ran errands after work. Hmm...note to self. Visit this site.

Monday after work I checked the site out with 45 minutes of daylight remaining after work. It was not posted land; as a matter of fact, I saw people riding mountain bikes and dirt bikes through the area. So I felt comfortable canvassing the 2 acres of rock piles, neatly grouped by formation for my collecting convenience! I concentrated on the buff colored Pecan Gap piles, and it was soon obvious that I had stumbled upon an untouched and very productive site. Within 5 minutes I laid hands on a very nice little 3 inch *Pachydiscus* ammonite with crushed living chamber attached. Minutes later I found 2 more larger specimens of the same genus a few inches apart in the same rock. They were shattered, but all parts were in place. The Pecan Gap is very friable (fragile) chalk which splits with a conchoidal (curved) fracture. Not getting too caught up in the moment, I elected to return Tuesday with a bottle of Elmer's glue to stabilize my finds before extrication.

Such good sites are not common in San Antonio, so I seized the opportunity to invite one of my local fossil mentors, Farley Katz, to help repay him for all the time, info, and locality tips he has passed along in the short time I've known him. We met there Tuesday after work and grabbed a few smashed irregular echinoids and all the baculites (squid shells) we wanted while scouting the place further.

Wednesday at lunch I visited another smaller field of rock piles in the rain near my office. As I approached I saw rebar and figured I had found a field of broken concrete. But closer inspection revealed interspersed chunks of Pecan Gap chalk. I walked around for 20 minutes clawing the chunks open with my mason's hammer and as I was about to leave, one whack on a hunk of chalk revealed a perfect 3 inch *Pachydiscus* ammonite in matrix. These first 2 ammonites can be seen in Figure 1.



**FIGURE 1:** *Pachydiscus* sp.

With all this fertile fossil hunting ground to explore, I saw the need to take a personal day on Thursday. While I got my stuff together Wednesday night, a rattle in my plastic tote box got my attention. It was the bag of Copperas Cove ammonites and echinoids I thought I had fallen off my truck a month ago. Finding fossils is a blast, but finding them twice sure is twice the rush.

Anyway, I struck out deer hunting Thursday morning, then headed to the Pecan Gap piles after lunch. Miserable drizzle didn't even faze me as I extracted 50-70 LBS of fossils in matrix over the next 4 hours. In all, I collected 4 more big *Exogyra ponderosa* oysters, one very nice, large, ornately detailed gastropod, a couple small, compressed irregular echinoids, 15 more ammonites and nautiloids, and a couple mortality slabs of baculites.

Some of these cephalopods were pretty creepy looking. The *Trachyscapites* (?) couldn't look any funnier if viewed in a circus mirror. And one nautiloid in matrix appears to be a 3 whorled heteromorph. My favorite, however, is the 5 inch diameter heteromorph ammonite *Didymoceras* (?) which sort of resembles a long baculite curled into a helix, then collapsed and compressed. When I split the matrix, I got 2 complete whorls, one on each side of the fissure. There is undoubtedly more in the matrix, but I won't risk destroying what I'm lucky to have

in the first place. Peruse Figures 2 through 6 to “put a face with the name.” For reference, a heteromorph is an ammonite that departs from normal planispiral geometry (all coils in the same plane).



**FIGURE 2:** *Exogyra ponderosa* oyster and gastropod



**FIGURE 3:** *Pachydiscus ammonites* (?)



**FIGURE 4:** Nautiloids (genus unknown)



**FIGURE 5:** Nautiloid association



**FIGURE 6:** Heteromorph ammonite *Didymoceras* (?)

As soon as I get all these specimens prepped out, buy some more storage boxes and a big set of metal shelves for the garage to store my collection which could soon reach hundreds of pounds of this stuff, I'll be back out there for sure!