

THANKSGIVING FOSSIL FLING 2004

November 19, 2004

Rainfall for a fossil hunter presents a doubled edged sword. It floods you out of the low spots while freshening the high spots. And speaking of low spots, the last work week was pretty cruddy, so I put it all behind me after work on Friday when a break in the clouds in the last hour of daylight afforded a quick fossil hunt. I only wish every hour was this productive!



FIGS 1 and 2: Pecan Gap ammonites *Pachydiscus* (left) and *Trachyscaphites spiniger porchi* (right)

A quick sniff around a Pecan Gap exposure turned up not one, not two, but THREE cool *Echinocorys texanus* echinoids, crushed but pretty complete. In addition, I lucked into a *Pachydiscus* ammonite as well as one of my best and biggest *Trachyscaphites spiniger porchi* ammonites to date. Not a bad start to the weekend.



FIGS 3-7: *Echinocorys texanus* specimens “in the raw” top left, after “extreme makeover” remaining photos

November 20, 2004

I had an itch to scratch in central Texas, so daylight found me canvassing a Georgetown formation exposure in Williamson County. The going was slow at first, but soon nice *Macraster* echinoids began to show themselves in the gray marl seams, some partially covered with pyrite. A couple *Holaster simplex* specimens came to hand as well, but they showed varying degrees of damage. The yellow marl seams also gave up *Macrasters*, just not in quite as good of condition as the gray. I also found abundant *Ostrea* oysters and *Neithea* shells, both partially covered with pyrite. One very nice ammonite came to hand in a washout as well. Based on the fossils I was seeing, I'm guessing I was looking at the Duck Creek/Fort Worth equivalent in the Georgetown.



FIGS 8-11: Georgetown fm echinoids *Holaster simplex* bottom right, *Macraster* remaining photos



FIGS 12-13: Unidentified Georgetown fm ammonite left, “denture clams” *Ostrea carinata* right

The next exposure gave up a couple nautiloids from the Austin Chalk, nothing really special. I also located a new Eagle Ford exposure which warrants investigation at a later date.



FIG 14: *Cymatoceras* nautiloids

Moving on to one of my favorite Eagle Ford sites, I was quick to find a lens of shark teeth soon after sinking a pick into the exposure. A couple hours of work in the rain paid out nicely in terms of teeth, with 7 small but perfect *Ptychodus*, a couple *Cretoxyrhina* over an inch, 20 or so nice *Squalicorax*, and 30 or so miscellaneous shark and fish teeth.



FIGS 15-18: Eagle Ford shark teeth *Cretoxyrhina mantelli* and *Cretodus crassidens?* top left, *Squalicorax falcatus* top right, various species lower left, *Ptychodus anonymous* lower right. I have a little trouble differentiating genus of teeth at times as many look similar.



FIGS 19-20: Fish teeth left, possible carbonized tree limb in cross section right

On my way back to the truck I was walking pretty slowly in the rain, muddy with a loaded backpack, hugging a slab of rock, with various picks and chisels hanging from my person. A city bus driver must have taken me for an Austin bum as he drove by, hit a puddle, and doused me with 20 gallons of muddy water. Good thing I was wearing a rain jacket.

My remaining sites were strikeouts. With echinoids, ammonites, and shark teeth under my belt I was hoping to make it a grand slam with some crustacean material, but ran out of daylight. I was quite thankful for a very productive day.

November 28, 2004

Fossil hunting buddy Marc de Vries will soon be returning permanently to Holland, so we've made a point of scheduling a few fossil hunts during his remaining weeks here. Neither of us had hunted Pennsylvanian material for a while, so we met in Brownwood early and headed to the Wilson Clay Pit for shark teeth.

Surprise, surprise! Jim Ned Creek was flowing 2 feet over the bridge, so we had to sneak around the back way and finally made it to the pit. We poked around the rock piles for a while, Marc outpacing me in good finds about 5 to 1. He was quick to find a nice *Peripristis* as well as a *Petalodus* tooth while I had nothing to show but scraps.

I soon found a quarter sized crinoid cup and a 3/16 inch tall tooth with multiple cusps, possibly a *Symmorium*. Marc lucked into a nice *Orodus*, then I found a nice *Peripristis* in matrix, which I later broke in half while trying to reduce the size of the rock (DUMB!).



FIGS 21-23: *Symmorium?* Tooth top left, crinoid cup top right, partial *Petalodus ohioensis* shark teeth below

I had lost confidence in the area and was ready to leave, but Marc convinced me to stay. He found a nice whole *Petalodus* tooth where I had just walked by and he pronounced it impossible to remove. I chiseled it out for him in a portable sized chunk of matrix in a couple minutes. Can you believe he didn't give it to me?

I started to head back toward the truck and got a glimpse of a small piece of white enamel peeking out of a limestone slab. Thinking it was just a small piece, I attempted to chip it out. A 3 inch chunk of limestone gave way, and I felt sick to my stomach...I had just dead centered and shattered a 2 ½ inch *Petalodus* tooth! I took my time channeling around what was left and carefully carried all 10 pieces back to the truck where I wrapped them in foil, trying not to crumble the fragile edges. Back home I was able to get it all back in one beautiful piece with a healthy dose of Butvar.



FIG 24: My personal best find of the day – *Petalodus ohioensis* tooth

We moved on to the Brownwood Spillway, only to find the area closed as 3 feet of water was cascading over the top, crashing in a roaring mist reminiscent of Niagara Falls. Scrap that plan! I hit a Walnut site on the way home and lucked into a handful of *Heteraster* echinoids, a big *Phymosoma* echinoid, and a fist sized chunk of rock that had an *Engonoceras* ammonite and a *Phymosoma* an inch apart. A worthwhile stop.



FIGS 25-26: *Phymosoma texanum* and *Heteraster texanus* echinoids left, *Engonoceras* ammonite and *Phymosoma* echinoid right, all from the Walnut fm

I had a little light left as I neared San Antonio, so I stopped to peruse the Lower Glen Rose formation. A roadcut in the contact zone had been soaked for the first time in a while and the low sun gave me the perfect lighting for finding 6 *Salenia texana* echinoids hiding in the marl.



FIG 27: *Salenia texana* echinoids, Lower Glen Rose fm

I moved on to a construction site where I had obtained permission to hunt some weeks before. I had kept an eye on this place waiting for perfect conditions, and this was the day. I moved in and grabbed another 7 *Salenia*, a handful of *Porocystis* "algal fruiting bodies" and a few *Heteraster* echinoids and even scored a *Paleopagurus* crab claw.



FIGS 28-29: Lower Glen Rose finds including *Salenia texana* echinoids and *Paleopagurus banderensis* crab claw left, *Heteraster obliquatus* echinoids and *Porocystis globularis* “algal fruiting bodies” right

I had a few setbacks that day, but things turned out in my favor in the end. Topping things off was a stash of cool fossil vertebrae and bones which Marc picked up for me on a recent trip to Florida. I think I'll move Florida up a few notches on my hit list.