

November 22, 2008: Fossicking with a Friend

My good friend Ron Hunter was in the DFW area for the weekend where 4 inches of rain recently fell on area fossil exposures, so he and I got an early start Saturday morning at a well known construction site in the Grayson formation (98 MYA) near Denton exposing obscure marine fossils. We didn't spend much time in the more obvious or attractive parts of the exposure, but instead worked the more subtle and hopefully overlooked graded areas for various echinoids.

In short our 3 hour grid search turned up numerous examples of the echinoid *Pseudananchys completa*, with one large and nearly perfect specimen going to Ron, one big one and one cute little juvie to me as well as a host of squashed of the same species, a *Heteraster*, a *Hemiaster*, and a *Coenholectypus* in varying condition.



FIGS 27-28: Grayson fm echinoids *Pseudananachys completa* found by Ron Hunter above and the author below (Site 437)



FIGS 29-30: Grayson fm echinoids *Pseudananachys completa* above, *Coenholectypus* sp. lower left and *Hemiaster* sp. lower right (Site 437)

Complacent with our take, we moved on to an exposure of Duck Creek fm (103 MYA) where Ron flipped slabs of limestone finding *Mortoniceras* ammonites while I got down on my hands and knees and canvassed the base of the exposure for smaller fossils. I was rewarded with a few pyritized micromorphic ammonites, two *Goniophorus scotti* echinoids, and one small irregular echinoid yet to be identified.



FIGS 31-32: A juvenile specimen of Duck Creek fm echinoid *Holaster simplex* (Site 153)



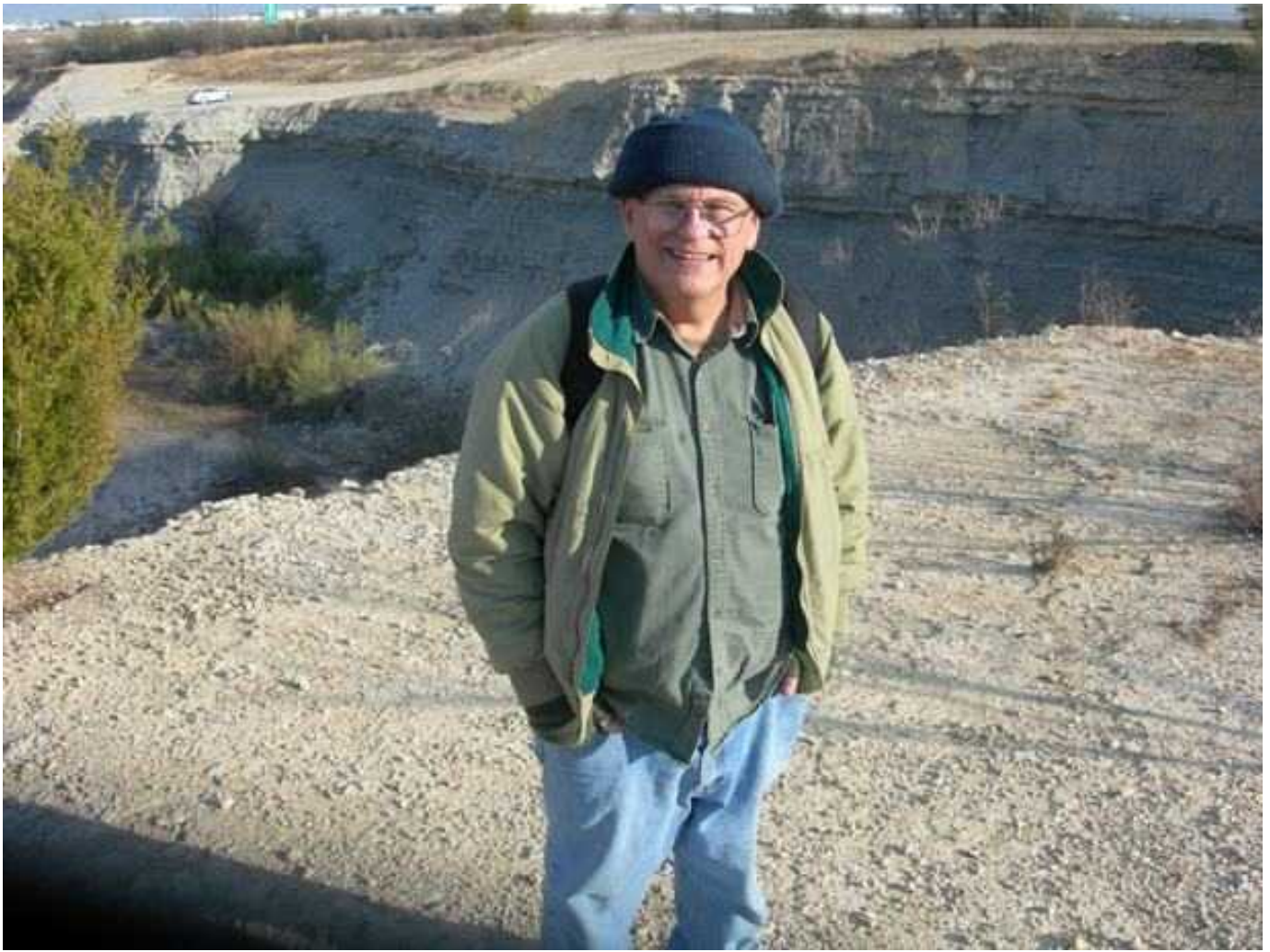


FIG 33: Duck Creek fm echinoids *Holaster simplex* and *Goniophorus scotti* (Site 153)



FIG 34: Duck Creek fm *Mortoniceras* and pyritized *Eopachydiscus*(?) ammonites and gastropod (Site 153)

We cut our time there short and headed on to a well known abandoned quarry, also in the Duck Creek fm. Here our slow walk across the shifting talus of at the base of the exposure revealed many treasures. We each took 2-3 nice *Mortoniceras* ammonites, but I was really focused on the echinoids. Soon I had plucked perhaps 10 *Macraster elegans* from the exposure, so when I saw 3 more poking out together I let Ron dig them out. His continued digging produced several more, so I jumped in and dug out still more. Together we took 17 *Macrasters* from that single pod and for the day we each walked out with 6-7 perfect ones plus as many give aways. This was my best take ever from this site.



FIGS 35-36: Duck Creek Site 138 this and next page with Ron Hunter and car for scale





FIGS 37-40: Duck Creek Site 138 with Ron Hunter depicted preparing to extract a *Mortoniceras* ammonite, then a view of 3 *Macraster elegans* echinoids jutting out of a hidden pod of 17 specimens, 6 of which are shown on the following page followed by 2 *Mortoniceras* ammonites from the same site





Our final site for the day revealed some poorly exposed Goodland limestone (105 MYA) at another construction site. There was only a small amount of bedrock exposed, but I managed to beat out one *Oxytropidoceras* ammonite before we called it a night. What do fossil nerds do in a motel room on a Saturday night in Dallas? Clean fossils in the sink, of course...



FIG 41: *Oxytropidoceras* ammonite from Site 486

November 23, 2008: Can't Go Back to Yesterday

Another early start on Sunday put Ron and me on another Grayson site that was heavily picked over by other collectors, so we quickly packed it up and headed for an exposure of Goodland limestone. Here we only spent an hour or so and in that time each picked up several *Hemiaster whitei* echinoids and perhaps a couple *Engonoceras* ammonites each.



FIGS 42-43: *Engonoceras* ammonite followed by *Hemiaster whitei* echinoids from Goodland fm Site 160



Loaded down with a 5 gallon bucket full of cumulative finds from the weekend, I decided to shove off and head south early in the day to spend a little extra time with the boy back on the home front. All in all it was a great weekend with great finds and good times with my good friend Ron. Our next trip may be scuba diving for giant shark teeth (Megs) off the coast of Venice, FL...

November 28, 2008: Thanksgiving Fossil Cornucopia

Weston and I were fat and happy from Thanksgiving and I really needed to get off the couch and do something, so we once again headed to the Corsicana formation (68 MYA) to poke around the parched ground. I didn't have high expectations due to lack of rain lately, but the boy and I stumbled upon a strip of ground we've never collected before and quickly snagged 3 or 4 crabs *Dakoticancer australis* and 20-30 echinoids *Hemister bexari*. Not bad for an hour's work...



FIGS 44-46: Two views of a *Dakoticaner australis* crab carapace from the Corsicana formation followed by a nodule bearing two damaged *D. australis* specimens and one *Turritella* gastropod (Site 349)





FIG 47: *Hemiaster bexari* echinoids (Site 349)



FIG 48: Five bivalves *Trigonia castrovillensis*, two bivalves *Plicatula mullicaensis*, one nautiloid *Eutrephoceras* sp., one gastropod *Striatocostatum bexarense*, two unidentified gastropods (Site 349)

November 29, 2008: Weston's First River Adventure

Even at the tender age of 6, Weston is a good sport about getting up at 4 a.m. when adventure is on the menu. With the kayak loaded on top of the car I snuggled the boy into the back seat with a blanket and let him snooze while I clipped off 3 ½ hours of driving toward a certain river stretch we aimed to explore. When he woke up he demanded to hear Johnny Cash and Beau Jocque and the Zydeco High Rollers, then sang along with me as we finished up our drive with a little Grand Funk Railroad.

We met my good friends John and Bonnie Jackson at a certain bridge and Weston became fast friends with their dog Lucky. We put my kayak and their canoe in the water and dug our paddles into the current, heading upstream into a biting north wind that caught us by surprise. Overcast skies never let the sun warm the fossilscape, and getting my feet wet didn't help either. But most importantly I kept the boy dry and comfortable, and as we jumped off to inspect the gravel bars, the boy and the dog chased each other around and became inseparable.



FIGS 49-52: The author with son Weston Woehr on Weston's first river kayaking adventure (Sites 487-489)







Bonnie was the first to score, picking up a nice Pleistocene horse upper molar. Leap frogging bars we couldn't help but notice the slim pickings. We saw mineralized bone scraps here and there but nothing substantial, that is until I picked up a big *Bison* proximal humerus. John followed suit with a nice plate of mammoth tooth enamel.

We were about to turn back due to inclement conditions, then decided to ferry across the river to the next bar. Good move! As we fanned out to inspect the gravel patches I saw it....."WHOA! Get the camera!" I called everyone over and let them spot it themselves, even Weston....in sharp contrast to the brownish gravel was a bright yellow, perfect 2.695 inch Pedernales spear point, my personal find of the day.



FIG 53: Unidentified proximal humerus (Site 487)



FIG 54: Spectacularly colored Pedernales point (Site 488)

The river was low, exposing a mid stream gravel island...buoyed by our success I threw Weston on my shoulders and forded the river with John and Lucky by my side. Again the boy and the dog stayed on the move while John and I methodically grid searched the bar. I saw John pull a nice mineralized scapula, probably horse, while I

grabbed a section of mammoth tooth enamel, a horse tooth with sandstone matrix covering one end, and some sort of heavily mineralized thoracic vertebra with a huge spinous process intact.



FIG 55: Unidentified vertebra, mammoth tooth enamel fragment, and matrix encrusted horse upper molar (Site 489)



FIG 56: John and Bonnie Jackson's cumulative take of bones, teeth, and petrified wood including rare palm wood (Sites 487-489)

After 5 or 6 hours of this under less than optimal conditions, we all agreed to pull the plug and head for the vehicles before getting any colder or wetter. It was yet another day with good friends and good finds – always the makings of a worthwhile trip.