

Brownwood Fossiling

by Lexy Bieniek

Member of the Houston Gem and Mineral Society

Photos by Neal Immega

Ummm! The smells of coffee, bacon and pancakes roamed through the house as fossil hunters began to stir on Saturday, March 4. Sleepy heads began wandering into the kitchen for their favorite breakfast drink as Brian Honsiger cooked pancakes and bacon for the group. We feasted, cleaned up, and headed for the spillway at Lake Brownwood.

George Wolfe and his boys were there to explain how to find the *Archeocidaris* fossils that are the paleontological prize of the spillway. Some of us began to mine for the prize, others walked off down Pecan Bayou, while still others just chose to sit and glean fossils from the surrounding rock. It didn't matter what method we followed—we were successful. The mining group found at least a couple of the *Archeocidaris* each. The walking group brought back a couple of *Petalodotus* teeth that were pretty impressive.

Those of us sitting down found some coal, pieces of brachs, and other pieces. We lunched in the parking lot then headed for the mammoth dig in Bangs.

Since Neal was coming to the Brownwood area, it rained—the first measurable rain since October—and it made the mammoth pit too muddy for more than one person to



If you can see more than two adults here, hold up your hand.



Lexy in the mammoth pit.

dig. Thank goodness that one person was Scott Clark who is the person in charge of the mammoth. Scott talked at length about the mammoth bones that had been uncovered and what bones a previous rain had carried into oblivion. Scott will give a more detailed account of the mammoth and some other diggings he has going to the club in June. We said goodbye to Scott and headed for Park Road 15. We decided to change the itinerary a bit due to the abundance of fossils at Wilson's versus the new road improvements on Park Road 15. The improvements were good for travelers but almost totally buried the fossils.



Diane collecting at the spine outcrop

Park Road 15 had a large amount of horn coral for the gathering. We brought buckets of horn coral back. Along with the horn coral we found a few brachs and some crinoid stems but not much else. In their professional effort of trying to make PkRd 15 safe, the



Spines

DOT has ruined a great fossil collecting site. One person recalled a spot down FM 2559 where he had once collected other fossils. So we took the short jaunt back down PkRd 15 and around the corner to the new location. There we found some different bivalves and lots of bristly vicious sea urchin spines. As a group we filled several bags and at



Spillway

least one footlocker with the spines. Neal sent a sample off to be identified. The sun was setting, so we headed back to Brownwood.

Waiting on the kitchen cabinet was a crock pot of beans and a tray of cornbread. We cooked some rice and sat around the table sharing paleo tales.

Sunday morning, we set off for Wilson's Clay pit. Fossil hunting at Wilson's is very much like Halloween—there are lots and lots of treats, but you have to knock on lots of doors—or in this case walk around doing lots of looking. We filled bags with conglomerate and crinoid stems. The real treats this trip were a fern leaf impression and a beautiful crusher tooth. There were a couple of crinoid calyxes found, one of them even having the vestiges of arms.



Spillway urchins



Wilson's Clay Pit

After a magnificent morning of fossil hunting, the group returned to the house, packed their bags, and left leaving behind the wonderful breakfast smells and the sounds of happy people—something the old house hadn't experienced in many years. I can't wait to have ya'll come back.

(See a picture of all of us on the next page.)



Strange Permian/Penn age crusher tooth

