

Karnes County Fieldtrip Report--March 22-23, 2003

by Scott Singleton

Member of the Houston Gem & Mineral Society

The HGMS Show Committee held one in a series of fieldtrips on Saturday and Sunday, March 22 and 23. (This is a much-publicized side-benefit of participating in the Show Committee). It was actually a joint field trip involving the Houston and Austin clubs. A total of three sites in Karnes County were visited over the two days. All three sites were ranches where petrified wood was known to exist. The trip was very successful, with all parties gathering their fill of wood under clear skies and pleasant temperatures. It was a great opportunity for members of both clubs to get to know each other and to further develop our close ties. A summary of the localities is as follows:

Tessman Ranch (Saturday afternoon): This ranch was visited not by design but because I had met another avid rockhound at the San Antonio show (from that club) who knew the ranch well. He offered to lead us; I accepted and in turn invited him with us on Sunday. We met him in Falls City and caravanned about 5–10 miles to the ranch. We discovered to our pleasure, that the fields were being plowed that very day. As you can well imagine, this plowing churned up a good amount of material within the soil zone. We hunted the entire afternoon, discovering much of the fabled “yellow” petrified wood, albeit all in small pieces as is typical of that locality. Some nice pieces of palm were uncovered, several of which were of the “yellow” variety. We capped the trip off with some scrumptious steaks at “Shorties,” just south of Falls City.

Bordovsky Ranch (Sunday morning): We all met in Karnes City at 8 AM. The group had grown considerably with new arrivals from Houston and a significant contingent from Austin. I estimate 25 people. Paul Bordovsky of the Austin club then led us all out to his father’s ranch outside of Helena and guided us to four separate sites on the ranch. All except the first locality were very productive, and everybody got their fill of highly silicified wood ranging from pebbles to cobbles and larger. (See photo of Bordovsky Ranch on next page.) Mike Dunnell (AGMS) gets the Monster Award with a piece that must have weighed 50 lbs found at the last site. The wood was distinctive because it appeared light tan to brown on the outside (due to weathering and leaching) but was extremely silicified on the inside in a variety of colors, the most common being dark brown to black. Many pieces were colorfully agatized and made very nice slabs (I’ve seen several already).

Wheat Ranch (Sunday afternoon): This ranch was an “add-on” to the Bordovsky Ranch trip for all who where interested. About 15 in the group caravanned from the Bordovsky Ranch about 20 miles north on Hwy 80 toward Nixon to the Wheat Ranch. The purpose of this trip was to evaluate the owner’s property for the presence of petrified wood. The owner reported that parts of his property contained marine fossils and part contained wood. There was a reasonably large amount of float pieces on his property, most of which were small and rounded by erosion. This cast doubt on the origin of the wood and its age. None appeared to be colorful although virtually all



was very highly silicified. The marine fossils were located on the other side of the hill from the wood. This fossil-containing siltstone consisted of vugs formed by the casts of pectin and oyster shells, and was distinctly different from the area containing the petrified wood (thus, probably a different formation).