

Field Trip Report

by Scott Singleton

HGMS Show Chairman

The HGMS Show Committee sponsored a spring field trip for the club on Saturday, April 3. The location was just south and east of the Sam Rayburn Reservoir dam. The main collecting target was petrified wood from the Oligocene Catahoula Fm. We were hosted by the Jasper club which allowed us legally to get onto Temple Inland property for the hunt. We are quite thankful for their generosity.

Eighteen people attended the field trip. I think it's fair to say that all came away with as much as they wanted to carry. This locality is known for its large quantities and sizes of material. Several logs or stumps could be seen sticking out of the stream bank (see accompanying pictures). And I don't think there was any shortage in the stream.

The field trip lasted about four hours, and afterwards everyone gathered to eat lunch and to tell stories about what they saw and were able to carry out. The weather was absolutely beautiful with pleasant temperatures making for a very enjoyable experience. The hunt consisted of driving as close to the stream as was possible (within a few hundred yards down a fair slope) and walking the stream. The Temple Inland property continued down stream for about a mile before it became someone else's property. But that mile was loaded with many meanders and gravel bars that had large pieces of petrified wood scattered about them. There were even remnant bars and meanders several feet above the level of the stream that had wood accumulations.

These pieces are all weathering out of the formation immediately underlying the topsoil. In this area, the Catahoula represents a major Oligocene fluvial depocenter with logs scattered about in logjams. Unfortunately, when the logs weather out, they also break up so that whole rounds are not very common. Most if not all of the pieces we found were redeposited within the weathering zone, having been transported from their original location in the formation long before the present.

The primary species are temperate types that first show up in Texas during the Oligocene such as Live Oak, Hard Elm, Honey Locust, and Cypress as well as some semitropical holdovers from the Eocene when it was a tropical climate. Some of the tropical to semitropical families are a paleo-Juniper, a tropical member of the Walnut family, various members of the Legume family, palms, ferns, and several families that still exist today but are no longer present in the western hemisphere, such as Alangium and the Rhamnus family.

Of these, the most common in the stream bed we visited were Live Oak and Hard Elm. The Live Oaks are preferred because their thick rays give pattern to the interior of the piece (called a *figure*), and their gnarled exterior usually has good *character* (see pictures). They make good pieces for cutting and polishing.

We hope everyone had a great time and will continue to keep the last weekend in September marked on your calendar. We will need a lot of help setting up and running the regional SCFMS show for 2004.



Photos taken by
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