

FOSSIL COLLECTING REPORT
October, 2008
Daniel A. Woehr and Friends and Family

October 4, 2008: Old Man and the Kid Pound Rocks Yet Again

My boy and I stood to benefit from another father-son outing, so off to the Corsicana formation (68 MYA) we went, even though there had been no appreciable rain to wash out more treasures since our last visit. It would be more of a “dry scrape” of the surface this time. We kicked things off with another pellet gun shooting session, and after I set up an old crate as a shooting rest, young Weston was soon knocking over cans and bottles all on his own.

Moving on the primary collecting location I threw on my gloves and knee pads and gave chase to those elusive marine fossils. We gave it an hour or two and came home with a pile of *Trigonia castrovillensis* bivalves, a handful of *Hemiaster bexari* and *Plesiaster americanus* echinoids, and 3 and a half crab carapaces *Dakoticancer australis*, not a bad haul for the less than optimum conditions.



FIGS 1-2: Corsicana fm echinoids *Plesiaster americanus* (1) and *Hemiaster bexari* (4) from Site 348



FIGS 3-4: Corsicana fm bivalves *Trigonia castrovillensis* above, crab carapaces *Dakoticancer australis* below (Site 348)

“Dad, I’m really glad we did this today.” With that and a couple ice cream cones we ended our excursion, one more fun day in the field with the boy.

October 5, 2008: Plying through the Pleistocene

I still had a hankering for raw adventure this particular weekend and opted for a two pronged solo river expedition. After deploying my trusty pirogue I motored several miles to an expansive stretch of exposed gravel with some rarely seen adjacent bars, all ripe for the picking. With memories of wonderful past finds from this location I kept my eyes trained on the ground and soon made a few decent finds including horse teeth, a complete horse metapodial (lower leg bone), turtle shell fragments, camel toe bone and one extremely water worn centrum of a mastodon vertebra.



FIG 5: A boy and his dad spent the morning running trot lines...nice catfish!



FIGS 6-7: Pleistocene vertebrate fossils left to right: unidentified rib, *Bison* sp. calcaneum, camel phalanx, horse molar (Site 373)



FIGS 8-9: Partial mammoth vertebra (Site 373)



FIG 10: Worn mammoth or mastodon vertebral centrum (Site 373)



FIGS 11-12: Sloth vertebra as found above, same plus turtle shell fragment and unidentified bone below (Site 373)



FIGS 13-14: Unidentified vertebra (Site 373)



FIGS 15-16: Mammoth or mastodon scapula fragment above, two vertebrae and one turtle shell fragment below (Site 372)

Things petered out and I was still thirsty for adventure so I drove for a while and dropped into a completely different drainage. Motoring was tough in low water and I actually ended up dragging the boat half the time. I wandered up a tributary creek and stumbled into wild hog central as evidenced by the number of freshly vacated wallows in the mud. Doubling back I heard a rustling in the brush 10 yards away only to see 3 pigs from 20 to 50 LBS break cover and run for their lives. One was red and the others black and white spotted, all streaks of color as they made their collective exodus. Back near the boat I caught a whitetail buck and doe flat footed at the base of the high bank at close range, leaving us no option but to eyeball each other until I drifted by.



FIG 17: One of the hazards of running the rivers...

Landing on a large gravel bar I commenced my search and was happy to see no cow or human tracks. The area presented a target rich environment, and I zeroed in on a few interesting things. My best find was a tooth from the 20 foot tall ground sloth *Eremotherium*, the first example of this genus in my personal collection. Several horse teeth, turtle shell fragments, and miscellaneous vertebrae rounded out my fossil finds but the old bottles were of interest as well. I picked up a 1920s-1930s cork top castor oil bottle, one of the original 1930s 7-UP bottles with the neck knocked off, and part of an 1800s stoneware spring water bottle from Germany.



FIGS 18-21: *Eremotherium* sp. sloth tooth (Site 381)



FIGS 22-23: Two horse upper molars, horse medial phalanx, and bone frag above, turtle shell fragments and unidentified limb bone below (Site 381)



FIGS 24-25: Various unidentified vertebrae above, beginning of the day's find of old bottles below (Site 381)



FIGS 26-27: An old Seven Up bottle left, fragment of 1800s stoneware German spring water bottle right (Site 381)

I visited a couple more bars along the way but found little of interest. With the sun dropping on the horizon and casting long shadows all around me. I had found a nice mammoth cervical vertebra at this particular site the previous year and therefore had my mammoth radar on...and with good reason....as I headed back to the boat I looked down at my feet and saw it – a huge section of mammoth tusk jutting out of the bar! I grabbed a quick pic of the in-situ presentation then dug it out of the bank, all 30 inches and 55 pounds of it.



FIGS 28-33: Large section of mammoth tusk taken from Site 393 this and next 2 pages





Finally I had found the proper ballast for the bow of my boat. It was a slow and precarious ride back to the truck using only moonlight dancing off the ripples to guide me home. I didn't dare power into a submerged boulder or log, so I took my time and paddled, not wanting to dump any precious cargo overboard. It was 1:30 a.m. on a work night before I dropped into the sack, but once again I felt that I had sucked the marrow out of life.

October 8, 2008: Short Notice Florida Trip

We knew that my 90 year old Grandpa Woehr was headed downhill for quite some time, and he had beaten a broken hip and multiple bouts of pneumonia, but at the ripe old age of 90 he realized that he had lived a long and meaningful life and passed away peacefully the night of October 3. He espoused a love of life and the outdoors as evidenced by getting remarried at the tender age of 88! I enjoyed sending him a check back then and telling him that "You newlyweds need all the help you can get."

I flew to Florida for the funeral and showed up with some solid site information in hand that I hoped to explore if a break in the family schedule allowed it. The opportunity arose for me to visit a couple well known echinoid and sand dollar sites in the Inglis formation (Eocene, roughly 50 MYA), but tides at these coastal sites required me to collect at night, commencing at 3 a.m. I showed up prepared with tide charts, grubby clothes, and a rechargeable lantern. I picked up a case of chiggers on my ankles but lost myself in the collecting from that point forward.

While waiting for tides to drop I climbed around some algae covered limestone boulders at and above the water line. Again this site is heavily collected, but I still found small sand dollars by looking underneath the boulders. Perhaps the shifting beam of my lantern and resulting shadows revealed specimens not as easily seen in the daylight. At any rate happy chiseling rang out across the water. At one point while climbing through some tree roots at water's edge I felt a strange sensation on my bare legs, only to look down and find a couple crabs creeping up on me...backhand....splash.

Utilizing tips and techniques outlined by a couple buddies along suggested portions of the exposure I was able to secure about 50 large and detailed echinoids *Eutapagus antillarum* in addition to a couple hundred smaller echinoids *Fibularia vaughni*, *Agassizia cleivi*, *Rhyncholampas ericsoni*, and *Oligopygus phelani* in addition to small sand dollars *Durhamella floridanum*, *D. ocalanum*, and *Neolaganum durhami* – all new stuff to me. At dawn I snoozed a couple hours in the rental car then moved on to the next site for a quick look.



FIGS 34-37: Inglis formation echinoids *Eutapagus antillarum* this and next 2 pages (Site 482), first specimen with an adhered *Durhamella* or *Neolaganum* sand dollar adhered to it







FIGS 38-39: Inglis formation echinoids *Agassizia cleivi* (Site 482)



FIGS 40-42: Inglis formation echinoids *Oligopygus phelani* above and *Fibularia vaughni* below (Site 482)



FIGS 43-45: Inglis formation echinoderms *Rhyncolampas ericsoni* above and *Neolaganum durhami* below (Site 482)



FIGS 46-47: Inglis formation sand dollars *Durhamella floridanum* above and *Durhamella ocalanum* below (Site 482)

The second exposure of Inglis formation produced perhaps 35 nice *E. antillarum* echinoids but none of the smaller echinoderm varieties. Content with my take of 365 specimens, about 300 being perfect, I cut the collecting short and got back to family before my absence could be construed as disrespectful. Grandpa was quite the outdoorsman in his day, and frugal like those who had lived through the Depression era, so I'm sure he would have understood and endorsed the double use of my plane ticket in allowing me to experience nature's splendor yet again.



FIG 48: Inglis formation echinoids *Eutapagus antillarum* (Site 483)