

Fossil and Artifact Collecting Report
November 2008
Daniel A. Woehr and Friends and Family

November 1, 2008: Boy Bangs Boulders with the Old Man

Weston and I took a couple hours to stretch our legs and bang on some rocks on this particular sunny Saturday morning. I've driven by this huge field of dumped yellow rock piles for quite some time and finally made a point of giving it a look. Close inspection revealed that we were actually looking at a mix of material from two formations, the dirty cream colored hard limestone being Austin Chalk (84 MYA) and the yellow to beige, fine grained, conchoidally fracturing chalk being Pecan Gap formation (73 MYA).

While both can have nice ammonites and other fossils, my money was on the Pecan Gap, and it was easier to work since it weathers fast with cracks forming all through the boulders, causing the boulders to split into long sheets and slivers with minimal hammer work, well preserved ammonites sometimes being revealed in the process.

Young Weston was a quick study and was soon distinguishing between formations and targeting the Pecan Gap. On his second boulder he broke loose a big sliver of chalk to reveal part of a very well preserved ammonite, his biggest yet. I whittled the rock down to about 50-70 pounds and loaded it in the car for future prep work. Our finds were few that day, but if only one good find was to be made, I'm glad it went to my boy and not to me.

With a hammer, chisel, and air scribe I carefully prepped Weston's find in the garage. A very nice 8 inch *Menabites* ammonite took shape over time, sort of a rare find around here and better than any I have found in the Pecan Gap to date. See for yourself...it's a beauty.



FIGS 1-2: Weston Woehr and his spectacular *Menabites* sp. ammonite from the Pecan Gap formation (Site 485)



November 2, 2008: Mammoth Scavenger Hunt

After finding a nice section of mammoth tusk poking out of a bank a month prior, I couldn't really settle my mind without going out for a second look for the rest of the skull. For this task I took my good friend John Jackson along with two boats and lots of hand tools to assist in extrication if the skull were indeed encountered. It was a difficult time moving miles upstream due to low water, but we eventually made it to our destination, and to our collective chagrin we never located the skull despite targeted exploration and excavation. John did land a nicely preserved bison tibia though. Good thing we figured out that the mammoth had outwitted us by 9 a.m. with plenty of daylight left for plan B.

Moving back downstream we reworked a gravel bar I had canvassed on my prior trip. It was humbling to see what I had missed – a nice section of jaw bone, several other bones, a horse tooth or two, and many 100 year old bottles including one advertising “Dr. E.L. Thatcher’s Worm Syrup” – now isn’t that a quaint throwback to the days of the traveling snake oil salesman!



FIGS 3-5: Unidentified Pleistocene jaw fragment from Site 381



FIGS 6-9: Various mammalian vertebrae and a hip fragment, horse molars, a distal tibia turtle shell fragments this page, old bottles next page, all from Sites 379-381







On yet another bar I had told John what poor luck I had had there in the past. Undaunted, he urged us to look it over since it had such good looking gravel. And soon his gut feeling translated to tangible rewards in the form of a nearly perfect mammoth patella (knee cap). Soon after I heard a tone in John's voice I had never heard before, "Dan, can you lift your foot? You are standing on a big piece of bone!" Indeed I was, almost big enough to roll an ankle...it was big enough that it had to be mammoth. So I bent down and handed it humbly to John. I'm just glad to have sites good enough to stand on mammoth bones and not even know it!



FIGS 10-11: The author and his mammoth vertebra (Site 380)

Pressing on a few more feet while walking side by side, we saw it at nearly the same time..."Whoa!" I uttered as I dived on this nice mammoth centrum (vertebra missing processes) like Pete Rose stealing a base. Youthful reflexes have their advantages, I suppose.

Pulling the plug on this area and glancing at our watches, it was clear that we had time for another run, so we loaded up, floored it, and redeployed in John's canoe. A few miles of paddling landed us in a target rich environment where low, clear water ran over rarely exposed gravel, and clearly this area had not yet been worked by other collectors. Several things came to hand during that ankle deep wade – a half mammoth atlas vertebra, a truly stellar example of a camel cervical vertebra, probably *Camelops* or *Hemiauchenia*, and other goodies including vertebrae, horse teeth, etc. The adjoining gravel bar produced more verts and horse teeth, plus some nice bottles including a first generation 7-UP bottle from the 30s or 40s.



FIGS 12-16: The author and his best camel vertebra to date, either *Hemiauchenia* or *Camelops* (Site 414)











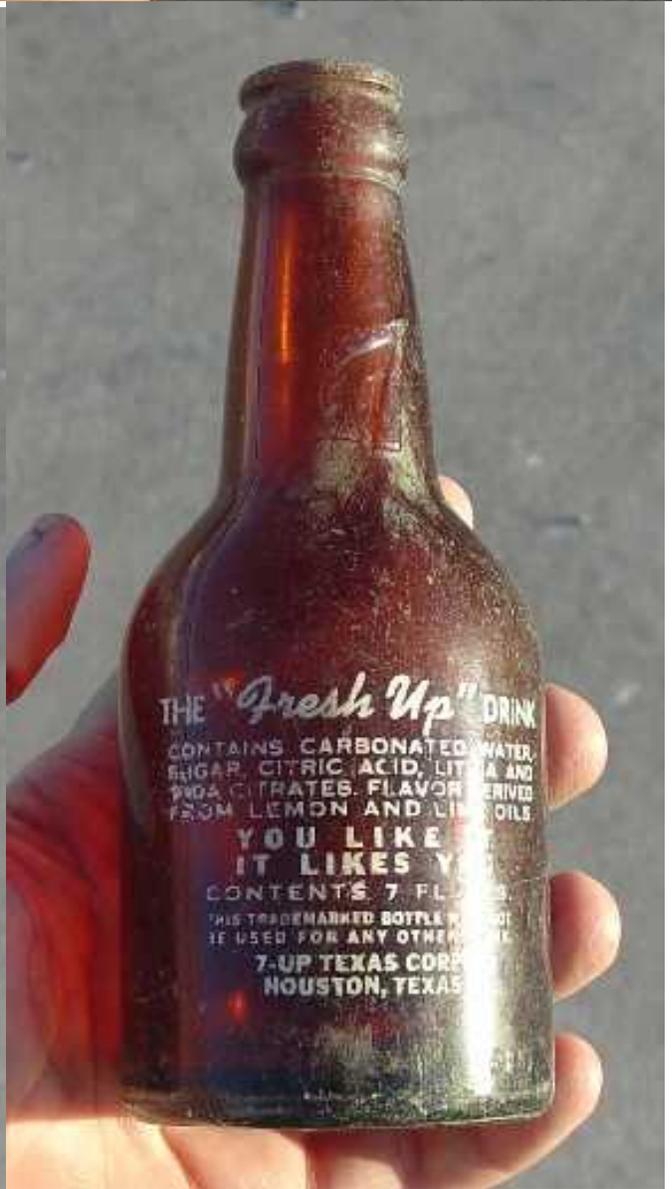
FIGS 17-18: Unidentified vertebrae (Site 414)



FIGS 19-20: Partial mammoth atlas (first cervical) vertebra (Site 414)



FIGS 21-26: Unidentified distal scapula and jaw ramus followed by 2 unidentified vertebrae above, followed by matrix encrusted unidentified radius and finally a first generation 7-Up bottle and various other bottles over next 2 pages (Site 414)





The final leg of the trip in waning light produced one good find for John – the acetabulum (hip socket) of a huge beast, presumably mammoth. While the sites John has shown me are heavy on artifacts and light on bones, my sites are somewhat the opposite, and he was awestruck by the quantity and quality of bones taken that day – as was I, as my 9 verts presented somewhat of a record of my own. Not many sites are good enough to make grown men giddy, but a couple of these actually accomplished that, and hauled out the spoils to prove it.