

Nittany Mineralogical Society Bulletin

Nittany Mineralogical Society, Inc., meeting in State College, Pennsylvania
Contact information on back page

March, 2025

Visit our web site: www.nittanymineral.org

Editor (see back page):

David C. Glick

March 19th meeting, SPECIAL TIME 6:00 p.m.
IN PERSON at BOAL HALL:

GEODE NIGHT!

With a NEW program on
The Las Choyas
Geode Deposit,
Chihuahua, Mexico:
A summary of my 20
field collecting trips to
the world famous
geode mine from 2001 to 2024
by Jeff Smith

**We're back at Boal Hall for this month only -
plenty of parking!**

Wednesday March 19th in Boal Hall (Boalsburg Fire Hall),
113 East Pine St., Boalsburg, PA 16827; Maps on web site.

- 6:00 to 7:10 p.m.: Purchasing & opening geodes
- about 7:15 p.m.: featured **program on Mexican geodes**

*The event has free admission and free parking (lot just east of
Fire Hall along East Pine St.), and is open to all;
parents/guardians must provide supervision of minors.
**Bring your friends and their kids and share an
interesting evening.***

NMS is very happy to welcome back Jeff Smith, "the
Geode Guy," to present Geode Night to our club.
Starting at 6:00 p.m., various sizes of geodes will be
available for purchase at \$5 and up. After you buy, Jeff
will crack them open for you and you'll be the first
person ever to see the crystals inside. If yours turns out
to be solid, you can pick another at no charge.

Starting at about 7:00-7:15 p.m., after the geode
cracking has been completed, Jeff Smith will present a
program on these geodes. He has now visited the Las
Choyas geode mine in Mexico twenty times, sometimes
with his family, and this year he has a new program
looking back on that history! He has slides, good stories
and video of the long trip out to the mine and then going
underground to mine a few geodes themselves.

The event is family friendly and very interesting;
no purchase is necessary, you can come just for the
program.

-Editor

See the illustrated article on pages 4-5.



MARCH MEETING LOCATION BOAL HALL

This month only, we're back at our old spot at
Boal Hall, with plenty of parking for the Geode
Night crowd. Bring lots of friends!

NMS Spring Schedule

April 5, Saturday: Minerals Junior Ed Day at CPI

April 16: Filling in the Prehistoric Coloring Book,
by Dr. Jennifer Peteya, at Centre LifeLink

May 21: Dolomite, by Dr. Cole McCormick,
at Centre LifeLink

Minerals Junior Ed. Day April 5

Register kids NOW at

<http://www.nittanymineral.org/junioed.htm>
Volunteers Needed

Registration is underway for our big annual event for
kids and families. **SEE PAGE 3** for the details - we'll have
ten stations for the kids to visit, a booklet and specimens to
take home, and a sales table. Advance donations of
specimens for the sales table are also invited. We'll continue
to discuss the plans at the March 19th meeting, or contact
Frank Kowalczyk: 814-404-9854 or
frank.j.kowalczyk@gmail.com

Please tell your friends and relatives and their kids!

JUNIOR ROCKHOUNDS MEETINGS January - April

Junior Rockhounds meetings continue! They are
best for students in 3rd through 8th grades, **WITH** their
parents. They are held at Boal Hall, scheduled for 6:00
to 6:45 p.m. on Wednesdays, twice per month: Mar 19
(Geode Night, with presentation following at 7:00), Mar
26, Apr 2, and Apr 23. Watch this Bulletin and the web
site for news and any updates.

The meetings have a different topic each time, such
as minerals, fossils, gemstones, geology, and dinosaurs.
They include fun hands-on activities and discussions
with an expert. Parents stay with their children, and may
get a lot out of the meetings too! You don't have to be a
member to attend; please come out and see what it's all
about. See <http://www.nittanymineral.org/juniors.htm>

FEDERATION NEWS

Nittany Mineralogical Society, Inc., is a member of EFMLS, the Eastern Federation of Mineralogical and Lapidary Societies, and therefore an affiliate of AFMS, the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies. We encourage our readers to read their monthly newsletters, which are linked from the left sidebar of our web site, <<http://www.nittanymineral.org>>.

The AFMS <<https://www.amfed.org/newsletter>> March newsletter has lots of interesting items, as usual. Photos of some items for the Endowment Fund Drawing at the AFMS/EFMLS Convention (March 27-31 in North Carolina) are included; tickets for the drawing are \$5 or 5 for \$20. Rockhounds of the Year and Junior Rockhounds of the Year from several clubs are presented. There's news on juniors programs, the website, www.juniors.amfed.org, continues to spread the word about the AFMS Future Rockhounds of America programs; see below right about the latest *Crack the News* issue. Helen Serras-Herman's article on Wildacres is reprinted on pages 6-7 of this Bulletin.

The Eastern Federation's <<https://efmls.org/>> March Newsletter includes president Andrew "Rockhound's" message, reprinted at right. The safety article is on "Safety in Numbers" - don't go out collecting alone, and if you do (but don't), make sure someone knows where you are & when, and check in with them.

- Editor

Geo-Sudoku

by David Glick

The puzzle below contains the letters ABGILNOST. One row or column spells someone whose pin collection was appraised. If you've read all of this issue, you've seen it. Each block of 9 squares, each row, and each column must contain each of the nine letters exactly once. The solution is on page 8.

	R		M		A		I	
							H	
T			L	H	G	A		R
		R						A
		B	R			H	G	
	L			I	H			
			I	L		T		H
					B			M
L	M		T			I	B	G



EFMLS President's Message

from
Andrew Rockhound

EFMLS News v. 72 no. 3
March 20025

March is here, and our AFMS/EFMLS Convention is happening this month! We are excited to get down to North Carolina and spend time with our national AFMS friends from across the country, as well as our host EFMLS club the Catawba Valley Gem & Mineral Club! I have personally donated an amazing flat of self-collected PA & NY specimens to the AFMS auction, plus a bunch for the EFMLS auction, in support of our great organizations. This should be a fun convention!

As we move into spring, and getting out on our first collecting trips of the year, you'll find there's always something you'll forget. Whether it be a tool or lunchbox, the one thing we should never forget is our safety rules and gear. My first trip out this year, of course I am making a video next to someone breaking a rock, and as soon as it posted I get a text message "Where's your safety glasses!"... Leave it up to Mom to remind you what you forgot on your Facebook video... OOPS! In fact, I actually had them with me, just didn't think to use them, after these long winter months. Before you go out, don't just check your gear, check your guidelines, because we all could use a refresher occasionally.

Club renewals are steadily rolling in, and we thank those who have already done so, but if your club hasn't renewed yet, now is the time! We announce the EFMLS "M" Awards (based on membership totals) at the convention, so make sure your club has renewed to be included for consideration. From Everyone here at the EFMLS - "Thank you"! ❄️

Crack the News:

The AFMS Newsletter for Kids & Teens

by Dennis Gertenbach, Editor, *Crack the News*
from AFMS Newsletter March 2025, vol. 78 no. 2

The latest edition of Crack the News, the AFMS newsletter written by kids and teens for kids and teens, is now available at <www.juniors.amfed.org/juniors-newsletter>. In this edition, juniors from around the country wrote about wire wrapping, Petoskey stones, field trips to collect zeolites, thunder eggs, and trilobites, uraninite, obsidian, *Sacabambaspis* (a jawless fish from the Ordovician seas), and Cambrian trace fossils. It's wonderful to see the variety of rockhounding interests of the juniors in our clubs.



Nittany Mineralogical Society presents...

KIDS in grades 1 – 8! Get cool **MINERALS, FOSSILS, & ROCKS**

and learn more about nature on
Saturday, April 5, 2025, at
Minerals Junior Education Day



Stations being planned include:

Gold Panning
Caves & Karst
Lapidary – Making Gemstones
Native Americans used Rocks
Fossil shells (invertebrates)
Fluorescence (glow in the dark)
Diamonds
Iron Ore & Iron Furnaces
...and more!

Go to the stations at your own pace; allow an hour and a half or more to see them all.

When: **Saturday April 5, 2025**

Where: Central PA Institute of Science and Technology
540 North Harrison Road
Pleasant Gap, PA 16823
(Just off I-99 North, Exit 80)

Cost: Only \$6 per child ; **Parents come along for free**

Admission includes specimens to take home. Plus we have a sales table at low prices – bring cash!



Please **register by**
Monday March 31.

Pick your starting time:

9:00 a.m., 9:15, 9:30, 10:00, 10:30,
11:00, 11:30, Noon, 12:30 p.m., or
1:00 p.m.

To **reserve** your starting time, using the website to **register and pay by PayPal is the best way:**

www.nittanymineral.org

Otherwise, see the website and reserve your time by sending email to nittanymineral.org@gmail.com

After receiving confirmation of your time slot, you can pay \$6 per student at the event.

No checks or cash through the mail.

Get more details, updates, video, and info on our Society at

www.nittanymineral.org

Minerals Junior Education Day Saturday, April 5

Minerals Junior Education Day is coming up fast - Saturday, April 5, 2025! At this event, students in grades 1-8, accompanied by their parents, visit a series of stations to learn about various aspect of minerals, earth sciences or lapidary, and get specimens to take home. Volunteer station leaders and Coordinator Frank Kowalczyk have made great progress, with ten stations planned (some topics still to be nailed down) - see the list at left. Please volunteer to help at a station!

It's time to register kids to attend! See the flyer at left, and tell your friends. Download flyers, and register attendees, at <http://www.nittanymineral.org/junioled.htm>

Please **volunteer to help** at this rewarding event. Donations of minerals, books, etc., for the sales table are also welcomed - make arrangements **in advance** (with Dave Glick; see page 8), so that we can get them organized and priced. To volunteer, contact Frank Kowalczyk:

frank.j.kowalczyk@gmail.com
or 814-404-9854.

The Las Choyas Geode Deposit, Chihuahua, Mexico:

A summary of my 20 field collecting
trips to the world famous
geode mine from 2001 to 2024

by Jeff Smith

My first trip to Las Choyas was in November 2001. I never imagined that 24 years later I would have completed 20 collecting trips and counting. I have observed many innovative changes and improvements at the ranch and mine in those two plus decades. The biggest change has been the transition from underground hand tool mining to major machine excavating. Another has been from the laborious hand-hefting process of geode-sorting to using x-ray technology to determine hollowness. The hub of the Carrillo's ranch has morphed from not just cattle processing, but self-sufficient auto shop/tire repair facility, welding shop, machine shop, as well as the geode processing. In 2022 there was the discovery of an erosional remnant of the geode-bearing layer on an adjacent ranch. To date the full extent of the deposit is still unknown. Surface mining is continuing to discover more of the outcrop each year. The total known length is 1.25 miles long!

One of the things I want to convey is the complexity of the geode formation at Las Choyas. The deposit contains so much more than amethyst geodes! See the variety in the photos.



A pair of Las Choyas quartz agate geode/nodules 7 cm wide.
Jeff Smith photo.

The Las Choyas geode deposit was described in Jeff's extensive, illustrated article in the March-April 2010 issue of *Rocks & Minerals* magazine. This NMS Bulletin (available on our web site, www.nittanymineral.org/bulletin.htm) carried articles about geodes in the December 2011 and January 2012 issues, and *Rock & Gem* magazine's February 2012 issue included "The Hector Carrillo Family: the human story behind Mexican lapidary treasures," by Brad Cross.

Here's Jeff's report on a 2013 visit:

In 2008, Gem Center suspended underground mining activities due to moderate earthquake activity centered in Chihuahua. At that time, they had been mining between 90 and 125 feet beneath the desert floor. In order to maintain production, Gem Center purchased excavation equipment to begin strip mining along a portion of the deposit outcrop. This decision has been successful and productive. To date, an area approximately 300 feet long has been mined along strike of the deposit, and the resulting high wall measures about 20 feet. The excavation has also exposed the classic room and pillar mining technique that has been employed underground since the 1960's. In the summer of 2013, since seismic activity had subsided, two new shafts were sunk down dip to probe the depths of the deposit. The geode-bearing zone was encountered at 150 feet and 210 feet below the surface. The two shafts have been connected with a tunnel and they have been mining along strike. Potentially, the geode zone could be mined down to 600 feet below the desert floor, where the



Jeff with a load of collected Las Choyas geodes staged at the ranch awaiting shipment.
Hector Carrillo photo.

regional water table would be encountered. Like my last few trips, I was lowered down the 150-foot shaft like a bucket into a well, as I carried my hammer and camera equipment. I was able to shoot videotape and still photos of mining activity, and oh yes, I mined my own geode, which contained amethyst!

Our March 2024 Bulletin contained an article by Jeff on a different Mexican geode locality, Trancas Station. A video of his program about it is on our web site: <https://www.nittanymineral.org/programs.htm>



A pair of Classic Las Choyas amethyst geodes approximately 8 cm in diameter.

Jeff Smith photo.



A silicified Las Choyas sediment nodule "mudball" 17 cm high.

Jeff Smith photo



A faulted Las Choyas geode 15 cm wide.

Jeff Smith photo.



A just plain "odd" Las Choyas geode/nodule 21 cm wide.

Jeff Smith photo.

The Fabulous EFMLS Wildacres Workshop Experience, Spring 2025

by Helen Serras-Herman, Wildacres Committee Chair, from AFMS Newsletter March 2025, vol 78, no.2

The Spring 2025 Eastern Federation of Mineralogical & Lapidary Societies (EFMLS) Wildacres Workshop will be held **May 12-18, 2025**. The week starts Monday afternoon with dinner and finishes Sunday morning after breakfast. The first EFMLS Wildacres workshop was held in 1973, and has provided almost 50 years of continuous excellent education.

The EFMLS Wildacres Workshop takes place annually at a wonderful and very unique gathering place called Wildacres Retreat in North Carolina, near Spruce Pine and Little Switzerland, about an hour north of Asheville. It sits hidden away amongst tall trees on top of Pompey's Knob in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains at 3,300 feet elevation. Over 80 different groups of artists, musicians, and writers hold workshops at Wildacres every year.

The name "Wildacres" reflects the natural environment — the mountain laurels, rhododendrons, wild flowers, birds, chipmunks, large colorful moths, and all other wildlife that call the 1,600 acres home. It is a sanctuary for wildlife and artistic endeavors. The buildings usually buzz with students and teachers, but there are many walking paths and sitting areas that offer serene and quiet moments of solitude and reflection.

A favorite place for a zen moment and camaraderie is to sit in the rocking chairs at the beautiful, large flagstone porch and gaze at the layers of blue ridges, and far away, the observatory on top of Mount Mitchell. Rain and thick fog often add an eerie atmosphere, and deepen the mystery of the place.

Accommodations

The retreat includes two lodges for sleeping accommodations, a library, an outdoor amphitheater and an indoor auditorium for lectures and musical performances. Room



Three fabulous meals are served daily at the dining hall. One of the two lodges, Photos © Helen Serras-Herman



accommodations are rustic and simple, but very clean and efficient. All rooms have private baths. All buildings are heated, but without air-conditioning, only ceiling fans. There are no TVs or radios anywhere. Three fabulous meals are served daily at the huge dining hall. Workshop participants and instructors gather around large round tables and share stories of the day, their creations, or background.

Many gather daily in the spacious lobby, also the best spot for the Hughes satellite-provided internet access. You know that you are in a remote area when your cell phone is not working, except for a couple spots around the property, also depending on your cell phone carrier. As stated in their flyer, "all facilities at Wildacres are designed in an attempt to blend the graces of modern life with the beauty of the wilderness."

At the dining room's entrance lobby, a wonderful collection of minerals and gem sculptures, many of them made of North



A favorite place for a zen moment and camaraderie is to sit in the rocking chairs and gaze at the layers of blue ridges, often covered by thick fog. Photo © Helen Serras-Herman



The Wildacres Retreat is located at the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, Photo © Helen Serras-Herman; The Wildacres lodges blend into the natural background; walking paths offer serene moments. Photo © Andrew Herman

Carolina minerals, offer a glimpse of the local mineral wealth.

The Workshops

During the week, various workshops are offered. In 2025, classes include cabbing, faceting, chainmaille, silversmithing, photography, metal clay silver, and wirewrapping. Classes are broken into two semesters, some lasting two days, others all four. Classes start on a Tuesday and end on a Saturday, with Thursday being a day off, when field trips and nearby museum visits take place, or students simply rest. The week includes a tailgate with a chance to buy or sell lapidary and jewelry related items, a live auction evening when everyone has fun, and a show-and-tell of the week's creations, all forging lasting friendships and memories.

The EFMLS Wildacres Workshop's objective is to introduce participants to new and different lapidary and jewelry making art forms that they may not have encountered before or may have not



The Science & Craft workshop building. The lapidary class is a favorite workshop, Photos © Helen Serras-Herman



A wonderful collection of minerals and gem sculptures offer a glimpse of the local mineral wealth. Photo Helen Serras-Herman

ever thought to take on. Even if the class may not be something you want to further pursue, you can now at least appreciate the time, effort and skill that these art forms require.

Speaker-in-Residence

Besides the hands-on workshops, at every EFMLS session an invited Speaker-in-Residence gives six lecture presentations during the week. We are the only Federation that offers this extra level of knowledge experience to the class participants and the opportunity for them to meet and spend the week with world-celebrated people of the gem trade and scientific world. As the speaker coordinator, I am very happy to announce, the Spring 2025 Speaker-in-Residence will be Martin D. Fuller, a gemologist and renowned appraiser, who will share his passion of gems and jewelry.



Photo courtesy Martin Fuller; Helen with Marty & Kendra from Martin Fuller Appraisals LLC in Tucson 2024

Martin began his career in the jewelry business in 1970, working in retail for Melart Jewelers. Then he worked for Norwegian Master Goldsmith Trygve Nupen in his shop, designing, making and appraising jewelry for ten years. In 1983 he began his own company offering jewelry appraisals to the trade and private clients. Martin established his company, Martin Fuller Appraisals, LLC, in 1984.

Martin is a highly respected gemologist and Master Gemologist Appraiser® in the trade. He became a graduate gemologist, G.G. of the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) in 1986, and a Fellow of the Gemological Association of Great Britain (FGA) in 2018. He is a Lifetime member of the GIA Alumni, and a Senior Member and Master Gemologist Appraiser with the



Various jewelry-making techniques are offered. Photos © Helen Serras-Herman

American Society of Appraisers (ASA). He's been a member of National Association of Jewelry Appraisers (NAJA) since 1986, and a Certified Senior Member of NAJA since 2005. He has served on a number of trade boards sharing his expertise. He is also a past President of the DC-GIA Alumni.

Martin Fuller's world-class jewelry appraisal practice provides service to private clients, the jewelry trade and government agencies in Northern Virginia and the Washington, D.C. area from their offices and gemological laboratory in McLean, Virginia. He has appraised items for the Smithsonian, including the Hope Diamond. Martin has also spent a number of years helping appraise Madeleine Albright's extensive pin collection.

Martin has given presentations to gemological conferences and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Be assured that his presentations will reflect his enormous gem and jewelry knowledge and will be jam packed with great photos and stories of famous jewelry from clients and museums, including the Hope Diamond.

I met Marty in 1991 at the GIA International Symposium in Los Angeles, and we have been good friends ever since. Marty will be accompanied by his wife Colette. But aside all his accolades, Martin, or Marty to his friends, is a wonderful person, humble, with lots of humor, and I am sure you will love his presentations.

Plan on Attending

The Wildacres experience is a fabulous one. The cost for the week of classes, room and three full meals per day is unmatched. This year it's \$485.

The setting is incredible, the views are breathtaking, the serenity of the place is inspiring, classes and instructors are top notch, and the camaraderie is mind-blowing. As the new Wildacres Committee Chairman, I promise, you will leave the session fulfilled and inspired.

I hope that you will be able to join us for the Spring 2025 EFMLS Wildacres Workshop. The only requirement is that you have to be a member of either an EFMLS club or a member of any gem and mineral society across the country affiliated with the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies (AFMS). Some clubs may even offer a scholarship for your attendance.

For information and registration please visit www.efmls.org/wildacres/

UPCOMING EVENTS

Confirm details of events before attending.

<https://efmls.org/events/>

See other show calendar links on our web site.

Mar. 22-23, 2025: 45th Annual Gem, Mineral & Jewelry Show, by Franklin County Rock & Mineral Club. Eugene C. Clarke Jr Community Center (Rec Center), 235 S Third St, Chambersburg, PA 17201. Sat. 10-5, Sun. 10-4.

Mar. 22 - 23, 2025: 55th Annual Gem & Mineral Show, by Che-Hanna Rock & Mineral Club. Wysox Vol. Fire Co. Social Hall, 111 Lake Road, Wysox, PA. Sat. 9 AM to 5 PM, Sun. 10 AM to 4 PM.

<http://www.chehannarocks.com/show.html>

March 27-30, 2025: AFMS / EFMLS Convention, Hickory, NC. See page 3 of the February Bulletin.

Mar. 29 - 30, 2025: Annual Philadelphia Mineral Treasures & Fossil Fair, by the Philadelphia Mineralogical Society and the Delaware Valley Paleontological Society. LuLu Temple, 5140 Butler Pike, Plymouth Meeting, PA (PA Turnpike, exit 333; or I-476, exit 20). Free Parking. Sat. 10 AM - 5 PM, Sun. 10 AM to 4 PM. www.phillyrocks.org

Apr. 5 - 6, 2025: 35th Annual North Jersey Gem, Mineral & Fossil Show, by the North Jersey Mineralogical Society. Midland Park High School, 250 Prospect Street, Midland Park, NJ. Sat. 10 AM to 5 PM, Sun. 10 AM to 4 PM. <https://nojms.com/>

Apr. 26, 2025: Spring Swap-Sell, Mitchell Park / Franklin Boro Park, Cork Hill Rd, Franklin NJ

Apr. 26-27, 2025: Annual Sterling Hill Pavilion Mineral-Fossil Sale / Garage Sale, Ogdensburg NJ.

May 3-4, 2025: World of Gems-Minerals Gemstones, Jewelry, Rock Mineral-Fossil Show, by Berks Mineralogical Society. Leesport Farmers Market Banquet Hall 312 Gernant's Church Rd. Leesport, PA 19533. SAT. 10-5 SUN. 10 - 4

June 7, 2025: Spring Mineralfest, by Pennsylvania Earth Sciences Association (PESA). Macungie Memorial Park, 50 Poplar St., Macungie PA. Free; Sat. only, 8:30 -3:00. <https://www.mineralfest.com/>

Sept. 27-28, 2025: 59th Annual Gem, Mineral & Jewelry Show, By Central Pennsylvania Rock & Mineral Club. Zembo Shrine Auditorium, 2801 N. 3rd St., Harrisburg PA 17110. Sat. 10-6., Sun. 10-4. www.rockandmineral.org

Geo-Sudoku Solution

H	R	G	M	T	A	B	I	L
M	A	L	B	R	I	G	H	T
T	B	I	L	H	G	A	M	R
I	H	R	G	B	T	M	L	A
A	T	B	R	M	L	H	G	I
G	L	M	A	I	H	R	T	B
B	G	A	I	L	M	T	R	H
R	I	T	H	G	B	L	A	M
L	M	H	T	A	R	I	B	G

INVITE A FRIEND TO JOIN THE SOCIETY

The Nittany Mineralogical Society prides itself on having among the finest line-up of speakers of any earth sciences club in the nation. Everyone is welcome at our meetings. If you'd like to be part of our Society, dues are \$25 (regular member), \$10 (student rate), \$18 (seniors), \$35 (family of two or more members, names listed). Those joining in March or later may request pro-rated dues. Your dues are used for programs and speakers, refreshments, educational activities, Bulletins, and mailing expenses. Please fill out a membership form (available at www.nittanymineral.org), make checks payable to "Nittany Mineralogical Society, Inc." and send them in as directed, or bring your dues and form to the next meeting.

We want to welcome you!

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Publicity:

The **Bulletin Editor** will welcome your submissions of articles, photos, drawings, cartoons, etc., on minerals, fossils, collecting, lapidary, and club activity topics of interest to the members. Please contact:

David Glick E-mail: xidg@verizon.net
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Newsletter submissions are appreciated by the first Wednesday of the month. Photographs or graphics are encouraged, but please do not embed them in word processor files; send them as separate graphics files (good to highest quality JPEG files, about 1050 pixels wide, are preferred). Please provide captions and name of photographer or artist.

Visit us at www.nittanymineral.org