



THE NARG MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of NARG is to provide a forum for individuals who possess a passionate interest in fossils. In the Pacific NW, we are responsible for a wealth in fossil record.

We document our findings and strive to improve communication for scientific contribution and public benefit.

Our goal is to develop an affiliation of fossil enthusiasts working together, to continue research, perform site investigation, have fun, and contribute to the growth and development of an active, premier group of avocational paleontologists.

Our belief: The total can be greater than the sum of its parts: By working together, we can create an informative, educational experience for a dynamic group of people. Our individual pursuits and interests will contribute and enhance scientific knowledge and the public record.

If your interests are research and exploration, collection or preparation, we welcome your participation and invite your enthusiasm!

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NARG Newsletter

North America Research Group

www.narg-online.com

Pacific Northwest Paleontology, Paleobotany, and Geology

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A Story From NARG's Northern Chapter...[continued from last issue]

Into the Valley - An Alaskan Fossil Adventure

By Don Brizzolara & Greg Keith

Finally, we were on to our final goal: a drainage some 4 miles further to the northeast. An earlier fossil pioneer to the region had amassed an enormous collection from this site. In our trusty ARGO we once more endured the bumpy, cobble pavement of the Grizzly braid plain. We arrived finally at a location we thought to be close to where our drainage entered the Grizzly braid plain, but with our archaic maps we couldn't be sure. We stopped the ARGO, found some high ground, ascended it and attempted to better establish our bearings. It looked good, but at ground zero things always

looked different than on the map. We identified a fairly narrow opening to a draw, and noted a prominent black outcrop rising along its southern flank which we presumed to be either an igneous intrusion or flow. Beyond the igneous massif the southern wall of the draw was dominated by what appeared to be our productive friend, the grey slopes of the fossil rich Chinitna Formation. We decided that this draw fit the description of the earlier

collector, so we proceeded to maneuver the ARGO across the gnarly topography and into the drainage. We drove the ARGO as far in as was feasible, then once again took off on foot. Greg picked up a few fragmental ammonite pieces almost immediately, encouraging us ahead. We reached the igneous body, finding that it indeed had all the classic

formed, crushed and of a very dark color. I was on a roll, finding one after the other: large, robust Cadoceras, Stenocadoceras, Pseudocadoceras ammonites and even a few nice Trigonid pelecypods. Belemnites were omnipresent. I looked over at Greg, beholding his less-than-ecstatic countenance. The poor guy was drawing a blank on the

big ammonites. Greg is definitely the best amateur paleontologist I have ever worked with, but he was having a rough go of it on this outcrop. Tension seemed to be building; I could see it etched on his face. His thoughts must have been. "Don is having all the fun and



The intrusive igneous mass at the mouth of the Sleepy Hollow drainage. The Jurassic Chinitna and Naknek formations make up the cliff in the background.

appearance of a basaltic intrusive body. Passing the intrusion we finally encountered Chinitna Formation. The formation next to the intrusion was highly deformed and blackened due to the intense pressures and heat caused by the younger intrusive body. I don't know who said it first but a cry went out, "Ammonites, this looks good!" Good indeed!! Still the quality of the ammonites wasn't quite what we expected. They were de-

not me, what am I doing wrong?" Nothing really it was just pure dumb luck on my part! It's like when we go salmon fishing. Greg limits out in 10 minutes and there I stand with my unbowed rod and limp line in the water. "What's wrong with my lure? I'm doing exactly what he did. Where the heck are my fish!!!" We are best buddies, but still hopelessly competitive. For a moment visions of the classic Bogie film "Treasure of the Si-

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“Don, another one!” and, unbelievably, “Don another one, again right at your feet!”

erra Madre” entered my mind. Four friends go on a quest for gold in the wilds of Mexico’s Sierra Madre. They find it. Greed sets in and pretty soon they are at each others throats! Could this happen to Greg and me? Nah, Never, (Gulp! at least I don’t think so!!). Finally Greg vented his frustration by accusing me of rushing forward to investigate whatever terrain he had just decided to travel towards. After assuring him that this wasn’t the case and that it was simple coincidence that kept me ahead of him in all of the unexplored terrain, we decided to move on with Greg in the lead. We moved up the draw where the Chinitna appeared to be less deformed and, possibly, the fossils more pristine. Little did I know that the tide was about to change once more. Greg took the lead as I hung behind not wanting to be a glory hog but still feeling pretty cocky about my fossil hunting prowess.

Pretty soon Greg spotted something in the outcrop, “Hey, Don, check this out.” It was a large beautiful Cadoceras ammonite in situ and easily retrievable. Good for Greg I said to myself. I once again started moving ahead of Greg while he wrapped up his new find. My eyes were focused on the talus at my feet. Greg, who was again right behind me then said, “Don,

you just stepped on one...a beauty”. I looked down and, dang, there was a big, heavy, robust, gorgeous Cadoceras. How the heck did I let that happen? No sooner had it happened than Greg once more announced, “Don, you stepped over another!” soon to be followed by, “Don, another one!” and, unbelievably, “Don another one, again right at your feet!” Boy! I was now getting depressed. How could I have stepped on or over at least six drop-dead gorgeous ammonites? I fabricated some comments about how my bifocals were ineffectual at such distances but that was pretty weak! Greg then decided to climb up the talus slope to get at some decent Chinitna outcrop and give me a shot at

got to be here, Greg found them everywhere, but why not me. I picked up a few broken or crushed pieces but certainly nothing stellar. I stumbled on in the oppressive heat. I thought I heard Greg mumble something from high up but he was now about 200 feet above me and in my depressed and obsessed mode I didn’t connect. Then the tide turned once more, this time with near tragic results.

Whoooooooooosh! Right by my head at what seemed like supersonic speeds careened a large stone Frisbee. If my head were situated about a foot to the right it probably would have been clipped off at the neck. Greg’s mumblings from high up were his screams to warn me that a large rock had spontaneously spalled off and that I was its target. Scaaaaaaaaaaary! All of sudden my dismal collecting skills seemed unimportant. It was at this time also that I remember the comments of the early fossil hunter...

“Watch out for

falling rocks...they are constantly spalling off like ice on the terminus of a glacier!” We later named this location “Sleepy Hollow” in honor of the Headless Horseman of Washington Irving’s classic, “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.” I was very lucky and quite stunned. From that point I renewed my commitment to safety and kept an eye of the slope above. We both



Don refueling at the ARGO before ascending the Sleepy Hollow drainage.

finding a Cadoceras in the scree. I looked up the slope and felt the task was a little too hot and dirty for me but, more than that, I was in a deep funk over missing all the fantastic ammonites at my feet. I mumbled something to Greg and then proceeded to walk over and over the ground I had just walked hoping to find more of the beautiful cephalopods...but to no avail. They’ve

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agreed it was time to start moving back to the ARGO. The sun was starting to go down and we needed to make some decisions on what to do next. After getting over the shock of almost being decapitated, I ambled on still somewhat saddened by my poor haul of specimens. Then the tide turned once more. At the base of a dwarfed alder I saw it. Huge, fully robust, fully inflated, highly ribbed, she was gorgeous. There rested MY magnificent Cadoceras. At last I was satiated. Greg said, "You couldn't have found a finer one". Ah yes, the ammonite gods were definitely good to us that day. Greg continued his fantastic luck by bagging even more fine pieces as we walked over previously trod upon ground. As a matter of fact Greg (much younger and larger than myself) called upon me for help carrying his over-flowing sample bag the last 100 yards as his success finally drained him of his strength. Upon arriving at the ARGO we conferred. "What

do you think, Greg, should we do an over-nighter?" Our thoughts both drifted to home, clean sheets, good food, and our families. The decision was a no-brainer. Let's make the long haul home! Ready to call it a day, we settled in for what we thought (hoped?) would be a long and uneventful ride out. We didn't know our long Alaska day had more in store for us yet!

"All aboard...let's go". Click. Click. Click. Oh great! The ARGO wouldn't start. Greg had it figured out though. Apparently the hot temperatures had kept the engine cooling fan operational even after our machine had come to a halt. In our absence it ran the battery down. Fortunately we still had a manual start option. Alaska demands back-up plans and Greg had purchased a machine with fail-safes, a pull cord. Greg pulled and pulled but to no avail. He finally realized

that the starter switch needed to be engaged first (duh). Then, one pull and our ARGO was purring like a kitten. Whew! I had visions of a 20 mile death march out. We were on our way. No more stops; just homeward bound with our new fossil captives. We made it to the main Grizzly Creek crossing and motored across easily. Next came the obstacle course on the far side and

stripped off some of the insulation from the throttle cord and bared the cable. Greg then said... "Don, you are going to be my throttle". I said... "I'm what?!" He pulled out his trusty Leatherman multi-purpose tool (the Alaskan equivalent of the Swiss Army knife--everyone up here packs one) and told me to get a grip on the throttle cable and pull it when we

needed power. It worked, but it was an exceedingly uncomfortable procedure to perform for several miles. It required that perfect coordination that only best buddies can provide. We roared by our uncertain new European fan base, and finally... dusty, tired, and worn out we made it back to Greg's truck. We packed up the ARGO and made tracks for home, stopping only at the local taco shack for our favorite post-adventure repast and once more for iced mochas for enough caffeine

to finish off our 19 hour day.

In the following weeks Greg and I would periodically meet at our favorite coffee shop that sits on the street between where we each work. We would bring some of our fossils to study and plan future prep work on. Maps would be laid out. Stories of our adventure would be embellished. Some of the coffee patrons would even come over and look at our finds only to say, "Oh, what's that???" Little did they know of our toils or of our adventures. Never greatly impressed, they would leave without the vaguest understanding of what rarity they had just observed.

At the end of our bull sessions we would leave the shop with the same question always in our minds: When will we go INTO THE VALLEY again?



that, too, we conquered readily. Miles went by over a very rough and dusty trail when upon approaching a group of eco-tourists on safari only a mile from the truck, and oops, our throttle cable broke. What to do, what to do? As our German observers pointed and commented on what their perceptions were of what we were up to, Greg pulled out the tool kit and went to work. More than one wary eye was cast upon us as we tended to our patient. Only later did we realize from their point of view a muddy, wet, tank looking contraption, wielding two grizzled, dusty road warriors, one of whom was packing iron no less, could have posed a real threat. Perhaps their encounter with a couple of real Alaska Sourdough added to their adventure. We were very tired and really weren't prepared for this complex repair job (or international hospitality, for that matter), so here is what we did: Greg

Trip Report for 6/05



Trip Route

"In all we found well over 400 specimens with the ammonites ranging in size from 1/2" up to 5"."



Andrew, Steven, Bill and Aaron near Livingston, MT

First I want to thank everyone who helped me put this trip together. Without your help we would have just been driving blindly around Western USA.

The two sites we decided on for this trip was Pierre Shale ammonites near Glendive, MT and White River mammals near Crawford, NE. We departed from Vancouver, WA on Friday, June 3rd at 11 PM. The first leg was the longest and after 1100 miles we rolled into Glendive, MT around 9pm Saturday.

We really didn't know much the Glendive area but before the trip I downloaded a few geologic maps and did a little studying. We headed out bright and early Sunday and the first place we stopped produced several very nacreous ammonites. We checked out another site that also produced before running into an oil field worker. He pointed us to a ridge in the distance that he heard was productive. Boy was he right. We spent the next day collecting this small locality and came away with some outstanding

ammonites, baculites, nautiloid, and various mollusks. Most were found in massive concretions that we pried up and cracked. In all we found well over 400 specimens with the ammonites ranging in size from 1/2" up to 5". The majority

of the larger ammonites are *Jeletzkytes* and so far all the nautiloids are *Eutrephoceras dekeyi*.

Next stop was Crawford, NE but first we visited the South Dakota School of Mines and Tech for a personalized tour the paleo facility by Dr. James Martin. It was a great "behind the scenes" tour.

We rolled into Crawford, NE late Tuesday and setup camp for the night. Wednesday we headed to the ranch and paid our fee to collect. They pointed us to an area on their 5000-acre ranch but it only produced a few bone fragments. After lunch we checked out another area where we found several "turtle kits". In addition to turtles (*Stylomys nebrascensis*) we found numerous bone fragments and the lower jaw to a titanotherium. Most of what we found in this area we believe is from the Chadron Formation of the White River Group but since a good portion of what we collected was float it was difficult to determine.

The next day we drove to another area of the ranch and

were surprised to see so many turtles ranging in size from 18" - 24" across the carapace.

They were broke up and needed more time than we had to recover so we continued on to another site where we found better preserved and smaller turtles. I think we each collected a couple plus 2 *Oreodont* skulls. Most of the fossils collected in this area are from the Brule Formation of the White River Group.

Next stop was Rock Springs, WY where we purchased numerous unprepared fish plates from a quarry owner's warehouse. We planned on collecting in their quarry but decided to head back to Oregon to another ammonite site.

We rolled into Burns, OR Saturday AM and collected an area we've visited before. I found a great 5" ammonite as well as a 3" vertebra from a marine reptile.

NARG Members: Andrew Bland, Steven Bland, Aaron Currier, Bill Sullivan



Cracking concretions in search of ammonites

What a trip (short neck plesiosaur)

What a trip by Andrew Bland -

The primary goal of this trip was to assist in the recovery of a short neck plesiosaur discovered last year by Mike Kelly in the cretaceous Hudspeth formation. John Zancanella from the Prineville BLM office setup recovery effort with Dr. James Martin from the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology as the onsite paleontologist. This could be a very long report to cover everything so I'll trim it down. It took 3 days to recover the lower jaw portions of the plesiosaur skull with Dr. Martin, Jennifer, and John Z. doing primarily most of the work and John Craig doing all the film work and subsequent story to be provided to the AP for distribution.

When we weren't standing around gawking and asking interrupting questions we were out collecting ammonites from various locations. Bill found a very nice specimen of Eurocrustes crab as well as a good portion to a heteromorph ammonite. I found the best specimen yet of a Lecontites ammonite as well as a

yet to be ID'd crab.

The plesiosaur was cast and loaded into John's truck to be taken back to South Dakota for preparation. We said our fair well and sent out best wishes then Mike, Bill and I headed to the southeast to collecting areas around Suplee, Izee, and Weberg for Jurassic (Bajocian) ammonites from the Snowshoe formation. Most of the land is private in this area so make sure you get permission before you do any collecting.

The first evenings collecting was great and Mike found a ridge that produced numerous large ammonite fragments. Not many complete ones are found but they are big. The next day we didn't fair as well but toward the evening we got onto another ridge that produced several ammonites at least 75% complete. The next morning Mike and I headed to a new site where he found the rostrum to an ichthyosaur. Some guys have all the luck and it looks like another trip is in order.

Paleontologists:

Dr. Jim Martin -
South Dakota
School of Mines
and Technology.

Jennifer Roberts
MBA - University
of Oklahoma

BLM:

John Zancanella - Archaeologist /
OR-WA Paleontologist

John Craig - Public Affairs Dept.

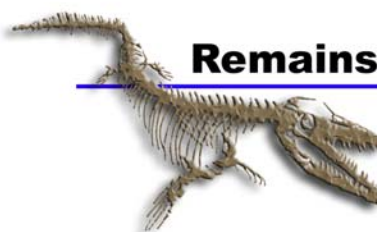
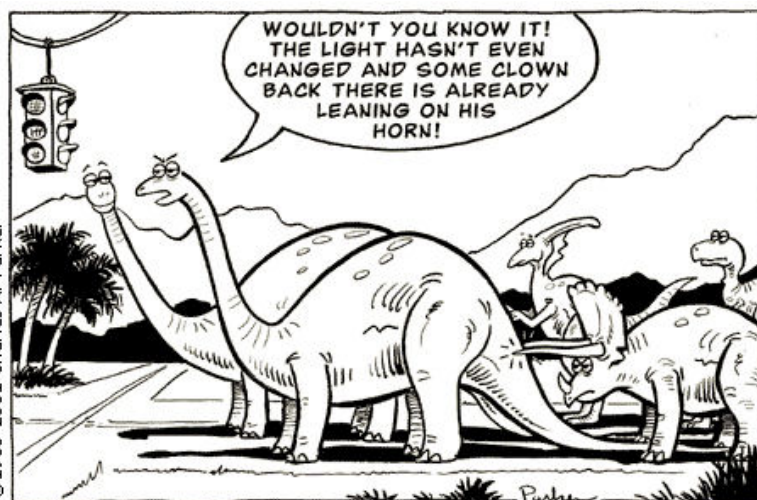
Mike Kelly: Plesiosaur discoverer

Greg Kovalchuck: Plesiosaur co-
discoverer

NARG Members: Andrew Bland,
Steven Bland, Mike Schlabach, Jerry
Rawdon, Bill Sullivan



**"It took 3 days
to recover the
lower jaw
portions of the
plesiosaur
skull"**



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NARG

North America Research Group

NARG meets the first Wednesday of every month at the following location:

Fax: 503-647-2418

E-mail: abland@narg-online.com

See you there!

vini, vidi, fossum

NARG participates in WAMS '05 Federation Show

August 5th—7th is the 2005 Northwest Federation Show sponsored by Willamette Agate and Mineral Society (WAMS). The show is being held at the Linn County Fairgrounds in Albany, OR. NARG will have a number of display cases setup for this event. We hope to see you there!



NARG Research Projects and Publications

In a cooperative effort with our Advisory Board, NARG has undertaken the following research projects.

Current Research Projects and Publication in Process

RANINOIDES CRAB FROM THE UPPER MIDDLE EOCENE RICREALL LIMESTONE MEMBER OF THE YAMHILL FORMATION, OREGON, USA

This project and subsequent publication is on the research of the *Raninoides* decapod crustaceans collected from Yamhill Formation.

MARINE INVERTEBRATE FOSSILS FROM THE UPPER MIDDLE EOCENE RICREALL LIMESTONE MEMBER OF THE YAMHILL FORMATION, OREGON, USA

This project and subsequent publication is on the research of the marine invertebrate

fossils collected from the Yamhill Formation.

FLORA FROM THE EOCENE CLARNO FORMATION, CENTRAL OREGON, USA

Aaron Currier, NARG member, is currently researching the Eocene fossil leaves of the Clarno Formation in Central Oregon. The project has started with collection and identification of specimens from a specific location in the Clarno Formation. These specimens are being drawn and cataloged with the guidance of a university professor of paleobotany, Dr. Jeff Myers. Research will continue and be published on any first-occurrence specimens that may be discovered.

Future Research Projects and Publications
NEW SPECIES OF LOBSTER FROM THE CRETACEOUS BEAR PAW FORMATION, MONTANA, USA

Proposal approved and permits obtained

NARG has been shown evidence of a new species of lobster discovered at the low water line of the Fort Peck Reservoir. The proposal has been approved and necessary permits obtained. Any new species will be written up in conjunction with Torrey Nyborg M.S., and deposited with him. Subsequent specimens not used to be deposited with the Burke Museum, the North Carolina State Museum of Paleontology and other institutions interested in receiving them.

FOSSIL DECAPOD CRUSTACEANS OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

An effort to consolidate information on the current published fossil decapod crustaceans from the Pacific Northwest.