

ROCKET CITY ROCKS & GEMS



The Monthly News Bulletin of the Huntsville Gem & Mineral Society, Huntsville, Alabama

Volume 56 No. 12

"We'll go to the Moon for a Rock"

December 2024

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Next Meeting Jan 28, 2025 6:30pm

*Merry Christmas, Happy Hannukah
& Happy New Year*



Web Page - www.huntsvillegms.org/ email - hsvgems@gmail.com



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PAY YOUR DUES NOW

HGMS memberships dues became payable starting Oct 1. If anyone didn't pay their dues before or at the show please mail them in to me or leave them in the EdCtr office, please. My address is on the membership application. All members who have not renewed their membership by Dec. 31, 2024 will be taken off the membership roll This will be your last newsletter.

Thanks, Theresa - Membership Chairman

CLUB SCHOLARSHIPS for William Holland and Wildacres Art Schools

Membership Winners are Kelly Baugher and Becky Rollston. Alternates are Ashlee Pool and Daniel Hudson. The Instructor Winner is Debbie Epperson, alternate Shelley Curran

<https://wildacres.org/>



HGMS Membership Meeting Minutes 26 Nov 2024

Meeting opened by President, Shelley Curran at 6:30 pm. 24 Attendees. 4 New members

Oct minutes as published in the October newsletter were adopted by show of hands.

Changes to Constitution & Bylaws cannot be voted on until Dec 9th Dinner meeting due to number of days posted.

Discussion: Christmas get together will be a Pot Luck at the Education Center south room on Monday Dec 9th, Bring a dish by 6pm.

Treasurers report phoned in: Club acct: \$7,453.

HGMS is providing 3 scholarships to Wm Holland School. 2 for members, 1 for activity instructors. Winners are Kelly Baugher and Becky Rollston. Alternates are Ashlee Pool and Daniel Hudson. The instructor winner is Debbie Epperson, alternate Shelley Curran.

Our Spring Fundraiser auction event will be in March 2025.

The Earth Treasures Show in Franklin TN is Dec 14th and 15th. They are offering metal clay classes both days.

RCJ: Restart in Jan 2025. 2nd Wednesday. Make up sessions on 1st Wednesdays 6-9 pm.

Pebble Pubs: New chair is Suzanne Miller. 28 kids were present at the October meeting, 52 people in all. January plan is to separate into 2 groups divided by age.

Metals: next class will be intro to corrugated metal sheet. Next certification class will be in Jan. There is a waiting list.

Speaker presentation by Bill Friday. FOSSILS AND MINERALS - WHERE ARE THEY? With maps and photos of nearby areas.

Lapidary Holiday Closing

The Education Center in general) will be mostly closed until early January,.
Check with your regular activity leaders for any random open sessions.



I hope everyone has a wonderful Holliday with family and friends!

For starters it's been quite a year. As a club we've accomplished a lot. Things that have been on the agenda for a long time have finally happened. The updated Constitution and Bylaws were passed. The new fluorescent tent (thank you Judy Osmundson) and lights happened. We were finally able to decide on a rebuild of the flume trailer. We had lots of first time volunteers at the show and stepping up for other positions. The Pebble Pups program has grown and is thriving. We had a potluck dinner at the Ed Center instead of a restaurant. I think we should do this every year. Great turnout and lots of fun

We've expanded opportunities in all of our educational areas plus community outreach. Lapidary has new equipment to foster new skills and the same in metals. RCJ continues to grow by leaps and bounds. Pups has grown so much they've split into two groups. I'm excited and optimistic for us all, let's keep the Club moving forward.

Thank you all, Shelley



Metal Smithing/Silver Group by Kathy Bowman & Shelley Curran **Thursday January 9, 2025 January Class: Bring in your Unfinished Projects**

Start the new year by finishing some of those projects that you never finished or start one that that you missed and really wanted to do. We will be there to provide help and any supplies. There is no class fee except the \$1 consumables fee. Any additional materials you may need will be available at cost.

We are going back to our pre-Covid Project Class schedule. Project classes will be taught on the first Thursday of each month. If there is sufficient interest, a class can be repeated on the following Monday. Classes will not be offered twice monthly on a regular basis anymore. Open Studio days and hours will remain the same. The signup sheet will be available during Monday January 6 class. You can also sign up for this class by sending email to HGMS@wilddivystudio.com.



Certification/Safety Classes: The next Certification/Safety Class is scheduled for Tuesday, January 21st. Please send your name and contact information (name, email address, and cell phone number (for text messages) to Certifications@wilddivystudio.com to get on the list for the class. Seats will be filled in the order I receive them. If you end up on the wait list, you will be added to the next scheduled class. Certification classes are scheduled approximately every other month.

CERTIFICATION CLASS INFORMATION – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY:

After Certification Class dates are set, email notices with information about the class(es) will be sent to everyone who is currently on the request list about a week before the scheduled date. You must reply to that email to be scheduled for the class or to request a future class. One reminder email will be sent to those who do not respond to the first email. If there is no reply after the 2nd email, **your name will be removed from Certification Requests list.** If you are still interested in Certification, you will have to send your information again to get on the current list.

Facebook Users: The Metalsmithing class has our own page in Facebook groups. You can see info on classes, examples of project classes and other general information. Members of the group can post their finished class projects. Our class page is HGMS Metalsmithing Group.

The link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/438777169648170>

Volunteer Positions *

Class Instructors:

Kathy Bowman
Shelley Curran
Jan Edmunds (Monday AM)

Tools/Equipment Inventory

Position Available

Store Manager

Position Available

Kit Manager

Shelley Curran

Webpage & Social Media Management

Kathy Bowman

***Note: We are all volunteers, so the schedule is subject to change.**



Rocket City Jewelers (RCJ) News

December 2024

RCJ is open to all HGMS members 16 and older. All skill levels are welcome! No certification is required, but experience using jewelry tools is a plus. We offer one class a month with 4 opportunities to finish the project.

Many thanks to Laurie Porter for hosting our Christmas party! A wonderful time was had by all! Good friends and good food. **Remember we don't meet December 25th and January 1st.** Classes will resume on **January 8th, 2025.**

Please see the 1st quarter 2025 class lineup below. To sign up for a class, please email Theresa at rocketcityjewelers@gmail.com at least a month before class. Include your name, contact info, and the class(es) you want. You can also sign up at RCJ meetings and monthly HGMS meetings. **Important:** If you want to take the **Standing Tree of Life (TOL)** class, and you haven't signed up yet, **please sign up now.**

2025 - 1st quarter RCJ Class lineup

		
<p>Jan - 7" tall TOL on stone, copper BYO - Rock chips drilled for 24g wire and a fist sized rock to mount tree on Kit = Copper wire provided</p>	<p>Feb - Japanese bracelet (EC gold) Kit = will have Gold toned Enameled Copper rings and clasp.</p>	<p>March - links and beads chain bracelet and/or pendant BYO - 6mm beads or crystals for bracelet and/or pendant. If making a pendant, BYO 4-6mm beads and 1 15 - 20mm coin bead for center. Kit = copper wire and clasp</p>

January: 7" Standing Tree of Life (TOL). Hot glue or adhesive will be provided.

Jan 8 & 27: 6 – 9p, class and make up.

Jan 15 & 29: 2 – 5p, class and make up.

February: Japanese Weave Chainmaille Bracelet.

Feb 5 & 19: 6 – 9p, class and make up.

Feb 12 & 26: 2 – 5p, class and make up.

March: Links Bracelet and/or Flower Pendant. Choose from one of the styles shown.

Mar 5 & 19: 6 – 9p, class and make up.

Mar 12 & 26: 2 – 5p, class and make up.



**Pebble Pups - Thursday October 24, 6:30 -
at the Education Center**

Hey Pups and Parents!

As we close out 2024, we want to thank Mike Harrison for leading the Pebble Pups and helping make it a program that we are all proud to be part of. Your shop is exciting, but we can't wait to see you at some of the Pebble Pups meetings next year!

This has been such a busy year for the Pebble Pups! We learned about the birthstones for each month, we made our own jewelry pieces and keychains, and we learned about so many things: petrified wood, seashells, sand, the lapidary, chatoyancy, special effects in rocks, how to store our collections, fossils, and so much more! We took a field trip to Wolde Flooring to learn about how rocks and minerals go from the earth to our homes and then another to Twenty Mile Creek in Mississippi in search of fossils and shark teeth. The HGMS Picnic gave every Pebble Pup who attended the chance to use the sluice and find real gold!

Our first Pebble Pups holiday party was a great end to the year! Thank you to all who were able to join! The rock swap introduced some beautiful and very interesting specimens! As you find rocks in 2025, think about what you might want to bring for the next rock swap!

Speaking of 2025, we are working to make 2025 even better for the group! Each child will receive their very own vest to put the badges they earn on! It will be a great way to see your progress! Your Pebble Pup leadership is working to put together great topics for the new year and we think you are going to be just as excited as we are about it. We will be talking about fluorescent rocks, rocks in space, rocks that don't follow the rules, stone age tools, and lots of other fun topics! You do not want to miss out on any of it! Older kids will have a chance to learn more challenging techniques in jewelry and metalsmithing and we will also have new field trips coming up that will give anyone who wants to join the chance to find something special for their collections.

We hope your holidays are merry and we look forward to seeing you in the new year!

Your Pebble Pups Team,

Suzanne Angela, Kendall, Matthew, Dee Dee, Bill, Theresa, Jeff, and Mike



There are still a few Fall Show Yard Signs out, so please return them to the Education Center at your earliest convenience.

Thanks, Tony Smith

Mineral of the Month – Amber *By Leslie A. Malakowsky*

This article was inspired by the traditional Christian story of the nativity. Two of the gifts that the Magi (also known as the “Three Kings” and the “Three Wise Men”) gave the infant Jesus were frankincense and myrrh. Frankincense is an aromatic resin harvested from five species of *Boswellia* tree. Frankincense is used in perfume, in aromatherapy (a pseudoscience based on aromatic materials), and in medicine (for its anti-bacterial properties). Myrrh is an aromatic resin harvested from a small, thorny species of *Commiphora* tree. Like frankincense, myrrh is used as perfume, incense, and medicine.



An ant trapped inside Baltic amber

Amber is fossilized tree or plant resin (a highly viscous substance of botanic origin). It's not a mineral, but one of several *organic* (made from, or came from, living, or once living, things) gemstones. Other examples of organic gemstones include pearl, abalone, coral, horn, ivory, and jet. Amber originates from the resin of three types of plants: conifers (cone bearing seed plants), angiosperms (flowering plants with enclosed seeds), and gymnosperms (having a stout woody trunk, a crown of stiff leaves, and open seeds). The composition of resins is highly variable because each species produces a unique blend of chemicals. But scientists have defined five classes of amber based on chemical composition. (For information on amber classification, see wikipedia.org.) To become amber, resin must be resistant to decay, so when the plant dies, it must be buried quickly. Dead trees and plants are usually broken down by physical and biological processes. For example, exposure to sunlight, rain, microorganisms such as bacteria and fungi, and extreme temperatures tend to disintegrate the resin. The high pressures and temperatures of overlying sediments cause molecular polymerization (a chemical change in which molecules form three-dimensional networks), transforming the resin first into copal, the intermediate stage of polymerization. Eventually, sustained heat and pressure drive off the terpenes (organic compounds that deter herbivores) in the copal transforming it into amber. Because it originates as a soft, sticky tree resin, amber sometimes contains impurities such as plant or insect matter. Amber having these types of impurities is highly sought after by collectors. A piece of amber with an insect trapped in it was made famous in Michael Crichton's 1990 novel *Jurassic Park* and the 1993 movie adaptation by Steven Spielberg. In the story, industrialist John Hammond creates a theme park featuring cloned dinosaurs and prehistoric plants. Hammond's scientists extract dinosaur DNA from a mosquito preserved in amber and combine it with DNA from modern frogs to create the dinosaurs.

Amber has a heterogeneous (nonuniform) composition consisting of plant resins associated with bituminous (sticky, black, and highly viscous liquids or semi-solid forms of petroleum) substances. Most amber has a Mohs hardness between 2.0 and 2.5 making it about as soft as gypsum but not as hard as calcite. Amber has a specific gravity between 1.06 and 1.10 and a melting point of 482–572 °F. It occurs in a variety of colors. In addition to the usual yellow-orange-brown that we associate with the color “amber”, the stone can range from a whitish color to a pale lemon yellow, to brown and almost black. Other uncommon colors include red amber (sometimes called "cherry amber"), green amber, and the rare and highly sought after blue amber of the Dominican Republic.



Blue amber from the Dominican Republic

Non-organic inclusions can cause amber to have an unexpected color. For example, pyrite inclusions can give amber a bluish color (not to be confused with Dominican blue amber). Numerous tiny bubbles in the resin give “bony amber” a cloudy opacity. Amber is found all over the world, in addition to the Dominican Republic, mainly in Cretaceous or younger rocks. About 90% of the world's extractable amber is located in the Kaliningrad Region of Russia along the Baltic Sea. In that area, amber is torn from the seafloor and thrown up onto the beach by wave action. The amber is collected by hand, dredging, or diving. In the Caribbean, amber is mined through bell pitting, a primitive excavation method where the cross section of the pit resembles a bell. Baltic and European ambers are from two types of fossil resins - one from a family of conifers called *Sciadopityaceae* that once lived in Northern Europe, and one from a family of conifers called *Agathis* now growing only in the Southern Hemisphere. American and African ambers are from fossil resins closely related to the modern flowering plant family called *Hymenaea*.

The name amber is derived from the Arabic word *ambar*, meaning ambergris. (Ambergris, or “grey amber,” is a solid waxy aromatic substance created in sperm whales’ intestines. Ambergris was harvested in ancient and modern times for use in making perfume.) In the early 15th century, the term “amber” or “yellow amber” was adopted in English to mean *fossil resin*. The two terms, “grey amber” and “yellow amber”, were used interchangeably for a while because both substances were found washed up on beaches. But today, we know the difference. The ancient Greek term for amber is *elektron*, meaning “beaming Sun”. According to Greek myth, when Phaëton the son of Helios (the Sun) was killed, his mourning sisters became poplar trees, and their tears became *elektron*, amber. The word *elektron* eventually gave rise to the words electric and electricity because of amber's ability to bear a static electricity charge. Amber can also have alternate names depending on where it occurs. For example, amber found in coal seams is also called “resinite”. And amber found specifically within New Zealand coal seams is also called “ambrite”.



Amber has been prized for its color and natural beauty since the Neolithic period of the Stone Age, about 12,000 years ago. Amber ornaments have been found in archaeological sites in Greece and across Europe. In ancient China, it was customary to burn amber during large festivals because it gives off a characteristic “pinewood” fragrance. Traditional Chinese medicine used amber to “tranquilize the mind”, but there is little evidence to support this. In ancient Greece, amber was used in a variety of treatments up until the early twentieth century. Even the Greek physician Hippocrates, the “Father of Medicine”, approved of it in his time. Today, amber is made into a variety of decorative objects and jewelry. And like frankincense and myrrh, amber is used in folk medicine for its purported healing or analgesic properties. Unfortunately, a variety of natural resins and man-made plastics are often used in the gem trade to imitate real amber, so buyer beware. Real amber has an allure all its own. The largest collection of amber is housed in the Palanga Amber Museum near the Baltic Sea in Palanga, Lithuania. The museum showcases the unique colors of Baltic amber. About half of the museum’s collection contains insect, spider, or plant inclusions. Much of the museum’s amber collection is in the form of jewelry and artwork.

Amber also helps paleontologists reconstruct extinct ecosystems preserving plants and organisms that can’t become fossils. Plant matter, insects, spiders and even their webs, annelids, frogs, crustaceans, bacteria and amoebae, marine microfossils, wood, flowers and fruit, hair, feathers and other small organisms have been recovered in Cretaceous ambers (deposited c. 130 million years ago). The oldest amber to contain fossils (mites) is a Triassic (230 million-year-old) sample from Italy.

References: wikipedia.org



DMC Field Trip Sharing Program

The Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies, Inc



The Friendly Federation - Founded in 1976 to serve

www.southeastfed.org

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No DMC Field Trip for January 2025

There is no DMC field trip scheduled for January 2025. Thank you to all of the clubs that hosted trips in 2024! I'm sure everyone is looking forward to DMC field trips in 2025! - Lori Carter



Spring Auction



June Picnic



Outreach - Jones Valley School



Huntsville Library



Field Trips - Lacon Quarry



Pebble Pups



Fall Gem Jewelry & Mineral Show



Christmas Dinner

Brad's Bench Tips

"Bench Tips for Jewelry Making" and "Broom Casting for Creative Jewelry" are available on Amazon www.BradSmithJewelry.com For those who enjoy these bench tips, I'm happy to announce a second volume is now available on Amazon. "More Bench Tips" includes 86 additional ways to save time, avoid frustration or improve quality at the bench. These new tips cover problems in fabrication, stone setting, casting, soldering and polishing.



DIVIDERS

A set of dividers is a tool I find very useful in laying out the geometry of a piece I'm making. It has two needle-like tips with an adjustment to set the spacing between them.

They can be used to transfer a measurement. Let's say you need a 7mm wide strip of sheet metal. Set the spacing between the divider tips to 7 mm on the ruler. Then lay the sheet on the bench, put one tip against the edge, and run the dividers down the edge scribing a line parallel to the edge.

Dividers can be used to mark equal segments of a line or arc. For instance, assume a line between A and B that might be straight or curved, and you want to divide it into 5 equal lengths. Set the dividers to an estimate of the distance. Starting at Point A, use the dividers to mark off five lengths along the line. If you end up short of Point B, lengthen the distance on the dividers. If you end up overshooting Point B, shorten the length of your dividers. After a few tries, the length on the dividers will be the exact distance you need to mark the 5 segments.

Dividers can let you quickly find the center of a circular disk. With one tip of the dividers at the edge of the disk, set the other tip to an estimate of where the center might be. Fix one tip of the dividers at the 3 o'clock position and scribe an arc with the other tip near the center. Do this again from the 6 o'clock, 9 o'clock, and 12 o'clock positions. The arcs at the center will form a small four-sided box. The center of the box is at the center of the disk.



PIECE OF LEATHER

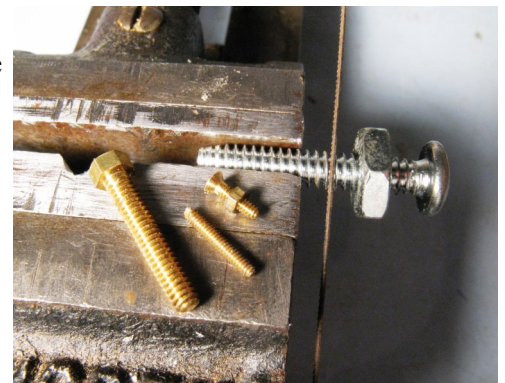
Leather has a multitude of uses in the shop. I often use a scrap of it to work on to avoid scratching the back of a piece of jewelry while setting stones. It's also great for times when you need to clamp one of your tools in a vise, for instance a drawplate. Scraps of leather can be salvaged from purses or belts that are being thrown out.

CUTTING A BOLT

Whenever you have to cut a threaded bolt shorter, it's often difficult to get the nut to thread back onto it. And the smaller the bolt, the more difficult it is to restore any distorted threads. The problem is easily solved with the use of a nut. Here's how I do it.

First, screw a nut onto the bolt before cutting it. Grip the bolt by the threaded section that is to be sawed off. Then saw the bolt to the desired length, taper the end with sandpaper or file, and unscrew the nut from the bolt. that will be thrown away.

Unscrewing the nut over the freshly cut end of the bolt will straighten out any damage that sawing and filing did to the threads. Gripping the bolt by the piece to be sawed off localizes any crushing damage to the piece



The Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education, 7901 Bailey Cove Rd. SE, Huntsville AL 35802
Metal Smithing/Silver Instructors: Shelley Curran, Kathy Bowman, Jan Edmunds
Lapidary: Bill Friday, James Yack, Anthony Zwilling, Les Bartel, Theresa Chivers, Deb Epperson
Rocket City Jewelers: Judy Osmundson, Theresa Chivers, Leslie Malakowsky
Pebble Pups: Suzanne Miller, Angela Mendoza, Theresa Chivers, Dee Dee Morton, Bill Friday

Monday	Metal Smithing/Silver	5:00pm - 9:00pm
	Lapidary	1st Monday each month 9:45am-2:00pm (Except Aug and Sep)
	Lapidary	6:00pm - 9:00pm
Tuesday	Lapidary	9:00am - 2:00pm
	HGMS Meetings	6:00pm - 8:30pm 4th Tuesdays
Wednesday	Lapidary	6:00pm - 9:00pm
	Rocket City Jewelers 1st & 3rd Weeks	- 6:00pm - 9:00pm
	Rocket City Jewelers 2nd, 4th, 5th Weeks	- 2:00pm - 5:00pm
Thursday	Metal Smithing/Silver	5:00pm - 9:00pm
	Lapidary	6:00pm - 9:00pm
	Pebble Pups	6:30pm 4th Thursdays
Friday	Lapidary	6:00pm - 9:00pm
Saturday	Metal Smithing	9:00am - 3:00pm irregular 1st Saturday of the Month
	Lapidary	9:00 - Noon - First Saturday of the month



PURPOSE OF THE SOCIETY: The Huntsville Gem & Mineral Society is a non-profit educational organization for people interested in mineralogy, geology, paleontology, and related lapidary arts. Its primary purpose is the education and enjoyment of the members and the general public in these areas. This purpose is accomplished through programs and activities, shows, lectures to school children and organizations, and exchange of rocks, minerals, artifacts, and newsletters.

DUES: Annual dues are \$20.00 per person, \$25.00 per family, and are due on October 1st of each year

Membership Applications may be found at our webpage www.Huntsvillegms.org or at the HGMS Education Center during a meeting or at one of our activity periods: 7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 35802

Meetings: 4th Tuesday of the month except for March Auction, June picnic, Christmas Dinner and major holidays.

The Society is affiliated with the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies , the Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies, and the Dixie Mineral Council

Federation Newsletters: DMC: http://www.amfed.org/sfms/_dmc/dmc.htm

SFMS: <https://www.southeastfed.org/newsletter> - new, under construction

AFMS: www.amfed.org/news/default.htm

2025 CALENDAR

- 28 Jan '25 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 25 Feb '25 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 22 Mar '25 Sat - Annual Rock Sale / Auction - details to be announced
- 22 Apr '25 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 27 May '25 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 21 Jun '25 [**Saturday**] - Annual HGMS Picnic, Monte Sano State Park
- 22 Jul '25 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 26 Aug '25 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 23 Sep '25 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 10-12 Oct '25 - Fall Gem, Jewelry, and Mineral Sale - Jaycees Building, Airport Rd
- 28 Oct '25 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 25 Nov '25 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm

Deadline for Next Newsletter
January 19, 2025

Dated material
Do not delay

December 2024

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