

ROCKET CITY ROCKS & GEMS



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

Volume 58 #6

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

June 2026

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HGMS PICNIC - 20 June 2026 - 9:00

Dear friends of the earth and cosmos,

It's picnic time! Saturday, June 20, starting at 9:00 am at Monte Sano State Park in the Trailhead pavilion. When you come in to the park, tell the person at the gate that you are with HGMS and you won't have to pay to enter. The club will provide pulled pork and BBQ chicken. You will provide the sides and drinks.

What a wonderful thing it is to serve with you all. I learn from each of you!

Start thinking about ways to support the show October 9-11. We have enough volunteer spots to keep EVERYONE busy! There will be sign-up sheets at the meetings or soon you will be able to sign up on line.

See you at the picnic!

Jan

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



Huntsville Gem & Mineral Society (HGMS) 2026. Reprinting Rights are granted for all material (except for minutes of the meeting and copyrighted articles) to any organization officially affiliated with the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies (AFMS) or Southeastern Federation of Mineralogical Societies (SFMS), provided credit is given to the author, the original publication, and this newsletter.



Metal Smithing/Silver Group by Kathy Bowman & Shelley Curran

July Project: Three Easy Earrings

Date: Monday, July 6, 2026 (Thursday, July 9 if the Monday class is full)

This is a fun easy project. Most can finish at least 2 of the 3 earrings in the class. There isn't much soldering in this project. The earrings will be exercises in metal forming. We use base metals, copper, brass, or nickel, to keep the kit cost affordable (\$5.00) How you combine the metals in your design is up to you. If you have 5-6 mm beads of pearls you would like to use, bring them to class. I will bring what I have to share. Silver wire will be available at market price for ear wires.

We have 9 seats available. If sufficient interest we will hold another session the following Thursday. To sign up for this class send email to HGMS@wildivystudio.com or sign up in person Monday and Thursday nights or at the HGMS meeting.



Certification/Safety Classes: The next Certification/Safety class is **Wednesday July 15th. (Note Date Change)**. Currently there are only a few names on the list. Send your name and contact information (name, email address, and cell phone number (for text messages) to: Certifications@wildivystudio.com. to get on the Wait List. Seats will be filled in the order we receive them. We only have space for 9 students per class. Note: If your email is requesting a seat for more than one student, I need the contact information (name, email, and phone number) for each student.

CERTIFICATION CLASS INFORMATION – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY:

After Certification Class dates are set, email notices with information about the class(es) will be sent to the first 9 people 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 the Certification Requests list.** If you are still interested in Certification, you will have to send in 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/ Store Manager	Bob Goble
Safety	Bob Goble
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 June 2026



RCJ is open to all HGMS 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. **Note:** If you're signed up for the **LME IX: Paddled Drops** class, and haven't made yours yet, there's 2 more opportunities: **June 17th, 6-9p** and **June 24th, 2-5p**. We enjoyed our first potluck lunch before class on the 10th. Thanks to Nannette for suggesting it!



How to Sign Up for Classes

Be sure to sign up at least a month before class. Please pay one month in advance so check in goes smoothly, and we can start class on time. To sign up for a class, please email Theresa at rocketcityjewelers@gmail.com. Include your **name**, **contact info**, the **class(es)** you want, and the date(s) (if you know them) you plan to take them. Or, you can sign up at RCJ meetings and monthly HGMS meetings (the June 20th picnic is in lieu of a June member meeting).

3rd Quarter Classes



July: Wire Woven Ribbon Bracelet and Wire & Bead Christmas Tree Pendant. It's Christmas in July! Weave a ribbon bracelet with wire and/or create a Christmas tree pendant with wire and beads. Kit \$8 (includes beads). Note 5th Wednesday.

July 1 & 15: 6 – 9p, class and make up.

July 8, 22, & 29: 2 – 5p, class and make up.



August: Turkish Round Maille Bracelet. Make a bracelet in the Turkish Round chainmaille weave using silver rings. This is a new weave for us! Kit \$5 (includes beads between weaving). If you'd like to make a second strand to add to this bracelet, bring gemstone chips and beads. Beading wire, crimps, and thimbles (wire guards) will be provided. August 5 & 19: 6 – 9p, class and make up. August 12 & 26: 2 – 5p, class and make up.



September: Layered Metal Earrings X (LME X): Rolled Patterns. Bring any beads you'd like to add to your earrings or project. LME class instructions always include a skill or process for you to try. Our tools will be out, and you can make whatever you like! Note 5th Wednesday. Sept 2 & 16: 6 – 9p, class and make up. Sept 9, 23, & 30: 2 – 5p, class and make up.

Note: Should severe weather occur on any RCJ meeting day, the meeting will be canceled, and members will be notified.

Pebble Pups

June Meeting

Thursday, June 25th - 6:30pm

HGMS Education Center

7901 Bailey Cove Road SE

Huntsville, AL 35803



We spent our May meeting talking about weathering, erosion, and deposition. The Pups had a chance to get their hands involved in learning about the processes and how they work together to create the world we live in. A huge thank you to member Kit Gaston for leading this program! Your expertise made this a fun program for all who attended. The highlight may have been the mechanical weathering portion because who doesn't love to involve a hammer in their education?! It was fun to see erosion in action and then learn how that material is moved and changes the landscape it gets deposited into.

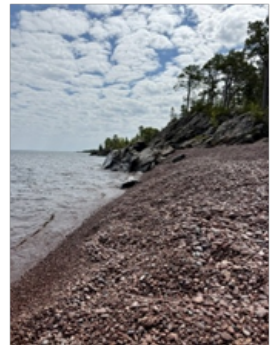


Get ready for a great June program on Plate Tectonics and Volcanoes! Join us to learn about how these giant slabs of earth shift, collide, or pull apart – and the immense heat and pressure that is created as they do. Pups will also be learning how this movement forms and influences volcanoes and magma. We will look for ways to tie this understanding to our previous programs on the types of rocks and the rock cycle, as well as how this activity has helped shape Alabama into what we see today.

Rockhounding in the Great Lakes Region

By: Jack Miller, age 13

Just recently, my family and I went on a 10 day roadtrip up through the great lakes region where we started off in Chicago, Illinois, up into a town outside of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, through the Wisconsin Dells, up into the Keweenaw Peninsula of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, down into the Lower Peninsula of Michigan, into Indianapolis, and back down to Huntsville. We spent explored as we went, looking in the Great Lakes for lots of different stones and fossils and searching for copper on the Keweenaw Peninsula with our metal detector. Some examples of great lakes rocks include Lake Superior agates, unakite, Yooperlite (a fluorescent variant of sodalite), Petosky stones and Charlevoix stones (which are prehistoric coral found along Lake Michigan and Lake Huron), and Leland Blue Stones (which are a slag glass produced during the smelting of iron ore).





The Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies (SFMS) has announced they will be continuing their “Year in Rocks” contest again for 2027. Start thinking about how you can use your rocks, minerals, gems, fossils, or even lapidary equipment to showcase the year 2027 in a way that totally rocks! The deadline for submissions is November 21st, 2026 and you can visit <https://www.southeastfed.org/contests-awards/juniors-year-in-rocks-contest> for rules and guidelines for entries

Are you or your child interested in learning more about lapidary techniques? The William Holland School of Lapidary Arts has a variety of unique courses to learn traditional techniques, jewelry-making, or more creative outlets like wire-wrapping, beading, or chainmaille. You can visit their website at www.lapidaryschool.org for more information and to register for courses.



The American Federation of Mineralogical Societies (AFMS) sponsors the Future Rockhounds of America (FRA) program for kids under the age of 18. The HGMS Pebble Pups participate in FRA Badge Program. You can check out all the badges that our Pups can earn by visiting their page at <https://www.juniors.amfed.org/fra-badge-program/the-badges>.

Pups who complete activities outside of club activities can send an email to HGMSPEbblePups@gmail.com to receive credit for their activities. If your Pup would like to share what they have learned, seen, or found with the rest of the group, please let Suzanne Miller know and we can give them time at the beginning of the meeting to talk to the group! Sharing will help Pups earn their presentation and communications badges. Is there a topic your Pup would like to learn more about?



Do you have an idea for an activity that our group would enjoy? Have you found a great place to hunt for rocks, fossils, or gems? Email Suzanne Miller at HGMSPEbblePups@gmail.com to share your ideas!

Would you be interested in sharing what you know about rocks, minerals, gems, fossils, or how to find/use them? We would love to have you come lead one of our monthly programs! Please reach out to Suzanne Miller at HGMSPEbblePups@gmail.com to discuss.



- About 75% of the world’s volcanoes are located in the Ring of Fire, a 25,000-mile horseshoe-shaped region in the Pacific Ocean.
- Earth is the only known planetary body in our solar system that exhibits plate tectonics.
- Tectonic plates only move about as fast as your fingernails grow.
- Lava from a volcano can reach 2282* Fahrenheit.

Mineral of the Month – Hematite

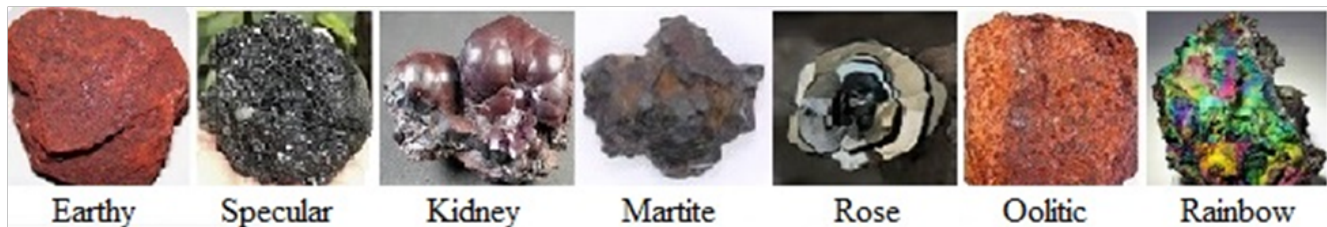
By Leslie A. Malakowsky



Hematite is an iron oxide with the chemical formula Fe_2O_3 . It's one of the most common and widespread iron ores on Earth. Fun fact: Hematite is the official Alabama state mineral (designated in 1967). The name hematite (also known as “bloodstone ore”) was derived from the Greek word for blood (*haima*) because of the red coloring in some varieties. (*Haima* was derived from the ancient Greek words *haimatites lithos* meaning “blood-red stone”.) This mineral is harder than pure iron with a hardness of 5.5 – 6.5 on Mohs scale (harder than apatite, but softer than quartz), yet it's much more brittle than iron. Hematite is a member of the corundum group including corundum (Al_2O_3) and ilmenite (FeTiO_3) with which it forms a complete *solid solution* (a family of minerals that consist of a variety of chemicals but have the same crystal structure).

Hematite occurs in a variety of forms based on its geological formation, crystal structure, and physical appearance. Its outward color can be black, steel or silver-gray, brown to reddish-brown, or red, but its streak is always rust-red to reddish-brown. The varieties include:

Red Earthy (“red ochre”/“paint ochre”) – Soft, porous, earthy or chalky consistency. This variety is the main coloring source that causes the distinct rust-red and red-brown staining in regional surface rocks and soils. Fun fact: This variety was used by early humans for cave art. **Specularite** (specular hematite) – Aggregates of sparkly or shimmery metallic flakes. Some of the best specimens are found in Brazil. **Kidney Ore** (reniform hematite) – Rounded bubbly grape-like botryoidal masses that resemble a human kidney. Some of the best specimens are found in England. **Martite** – A pseudomorph where hematite replaced magnetite but kept magnetite's original crystal shape and appearance. **Iron Rose** (“Eisenrose”) – Thin tabular crystals grouped in a radiating pattern resembling a blooming flower. Some of the best specimens are found in Utah and in the Swiss Alps. **Oolitic** – A pseudomorph where hematite replaced sedimentary limestone (calcite). This earthy, reddish-brown variety consists of small spherical grains called *oolites*. Fun fact: This is the variety (known locally as “soft red hematite”) that was mined from the Red Mountain Formation in Birmingham, Alabama, to create the iconic Vulcan statue. **Rainbow** – Displays an iridescent play of vibrant “oil-slick” colors on its surface caused by an ultra-thin coating of aluminum phosphate. Some of the best specimens are found on Graves Mountain, Georgia.

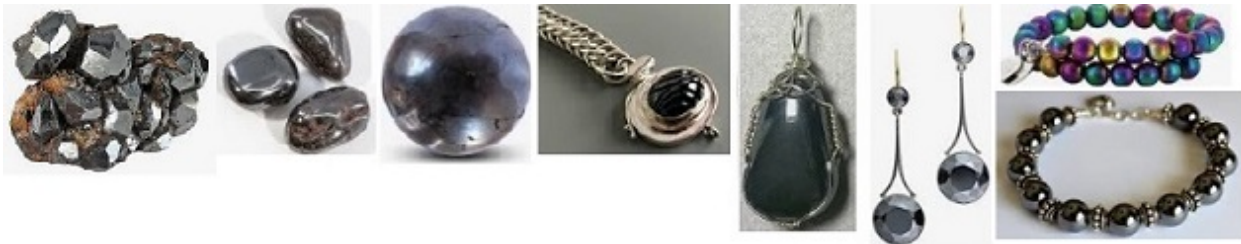


Because iron is so abundant in Earth's crust, hematite forms continuously through the chemical weathering of other iron-bearing minerals such as magnetite and siderite creating large amounts of fine-grained hematite. The largest deposits of hematite occur as sedimentary iron ore such as banded iron formations (layers of iron oxides and chert) and basins (huge depressions in Earth's crust where sediments accumulate over geologic time). These formations often contain fine grained red hematite instead of large individual crystals. A gray variety of hematite is found in standing water or mineral hot springs such as in Yellowstone National Park. Hematite can also result from volcanic activity.



Hematite has also been found on Mars! In April 2004, NASA's Mars Exploration Rover Opportunity discovered hematite in the form of small spherules dubbed "blueberries". Scientific analysis indicated that these concretions formed in a water solution. "Knowing just how the hematite on Mars was formed will help us characterize the past environment and determine whether that environment was favorable for life". (NASA, December 22, 2018.) For information on NASA's Mars rovers, see [Mars Exploration Rovers: Spirit and Opportunity - NASA Science](#).

Magnetite (Fe_3O_4), another important iron ore, is similar to hematite except that magnetite is highly magnetic. Pure hematite is not magnetic, but hematite that contains traces of magnetite can be weakly magnetic. To distinguish these two minerals, check their streaks: magnetite has a black streak while hematite always has a distinctive rust-red to reddish-brown streak. If you find strongly magnetic material that looks like silver hematite, it's a synthetic imitation sold under the trade names "hematine" or "hemalyke". Also bear in mind that the vibrant color on hematite beads sold in craft stores is not rainbow hematite, it's a man-made coating. Hematite is collected from iron mine tailings and used for tinting house paint. It's also popular for collecting, tumbling, and making decorative objects and jewelry.



Statue of Vulcan
Vulcan Park
Birmingham, Alabama

This month's mineral was chosen to celebrate the 122nd anniversary of the statue of Vulcan (the Roman god of fire) in Birmingham, Alabama! The statue was commissioned in 1903 to symbolize the city's growing iron and steel industry and officially dedicated on June 7th at the 1904 World's Fair. Vulcan consists of about 100,000 pounds of iron. Oolitic hematite was mined locally on Red Mountain, and smelted in the nearby Sloss-Sheffield furnaces. The resulting "pig" iron (so called because the channels into which the molten iron was poured resembled a sow nursing her piglets) was used to cast the statue. Fun facts: Vulcan's pedestal is clad with Sylacauga Marble, and, at 56 feet tall, he's the largest cast-iron statue in the world! Vulcan Park was created in 1939 to permanently display the statue. In 1981, the Sloss Furnaces were designated a National Historic Landmark. The site is open to the public and serves as a metal arts center. For information on Vulcan Park, see [Vulcan Park & Museum: Birmingham, AL](#) For information on the Sloss Metal Arts program, see [Home | Sloss Metal Arts](#). References: [wikipedia.org](#), [mindat.org](#).

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. <http://amazon.com/dp/B0BQ8YVLTJ>



FANCY RIVET HEADS

For a nice looking rivet head, use brass escutcheon pins. You'll have perfectly rounded heads that are all the same size and shape. The pins are a little hard to find, so try the best hardware stores first. Be sure to get solid brass pins, not brass plated steel. If unsure, test them with a magnet.

The pins are readily available online. Lee Valley Tools has them in 14 - 18 gauge and lengths from 1/4 inch to 1 inch. Go to <http://www.LeeValley.com> and do an item search on "brass escutcheon pin".

For best results, select a drill that gives you a hole with a close fit to the rivet. Trim the rivet to leave a little less than one diameter sticking out the back side. Place the head on a scrap of hard plastic on the anvil so as to not flatten the head. I prefer a ball peen hammer (with a small 3/8 inch ball) for setting the rivet.



EASIER PRONG SETTING

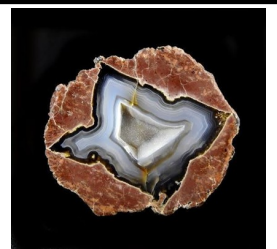
When setting stones in a prong mount, the tool is less likely to slip off the prong if you grind a shallow groove into its face or rough up the face a bit with sandpaper. Some folks prefer a prong pusher for doing this, and others like a set of pliers with a slight groove on one jaw.

The easiest way to create a slot on the pusher is with a file, and the quickest way to create a slot on one jaw of your pliers is with a separating disc. Then do a rough polish on the slot with a medium grit, knife-edge silicone wheel.



Monthly Rock Swaps - First Monday each Month - July 6

Everyone has fun looking over and trading rocks at the Education Center from 6 to 9 pm. Bring rocks to trade, or just come down to see a lot of interesting rocks. Have yours identified.



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,
Rocket City Jewelers: Judy Osmundson, Theresa Chivers, Leslie Malakowsky
Pebble Pups: Suzanne Miller, Matthew Sager, Theresa Chivers, Dee Dee Morton, Bill Friday

Monday **Metal Smithing/Silver 5:00pm - 9:00pm**
1st Monday Rock Swap 6:00pm - 9:00pm

Tuesday **Lapidary 9:00am - 2:00pm**
Lapidary 6:00pm - 9:00pm
HGMS Meetings 6:00pm - 8:30 4th Tuesdays

Wednesday **Lapidary 6:00pm - 9:00pm**
Rocket City Jewelers
1st & 3rd Weeks - 6:00pm - 9:00pm
2nd, 4th, 5th Weeks - 2:00pm - 5:00pm

Thursday **Metal Smithing/Silver 5:00pm - 9:00pm**
Pebble Pups 6:30pm 4th Thursdays
Lapidary 6:00pm - 9:00pm

Friday **Lapidary Discontinued**

Saturday **Metal Smithing 9:00am - 3:00pm irregular 1st Saturday of the Month**
Lapidary 9:00 - Noon - First Saturday of the month
Flint Knapping 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: SFMS: <https://www.southeastfed.org/newsletter>

AFMS: <https://www.amfed.org/newsletter>

2026 CALENDAR

- 28 Jul '26 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 25 Aug '26 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 22 Sep '26 - Regular HGMS Meeting, HGMS Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 9-11 Oct '26 - HGMS Fall Gem, Jewelry, & Mineral Show - Jaycee Building
2180 Airport Rd SW, Huntsville, AL 35801
- 27 Oct '26 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Ed Ctr
- 24 Nov '26 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 9 Dec '26 - Christmas Dinner - details as it gets closer
- We will have a great potluck dinner again at the Ed Ctr.
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 26 Jan '27 - Regular HGMS Meeting, Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm
- 24 Feb '26 - 26 23Feb '27 Regular HGMS Meeting,
Huntsville Gem & Mineral Education Center
7901 Bailey Cove Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 6:00pm

Deadline for Next
Newsletter July 17

Dated material
Do not delay

June 2026

Rocket City Rocks & Gems
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