

Victoria field trip by Linda Schroeder

Photos by Linda Schroeder and George Holm

Our final field trip of the year took us to Vancouver Island in British Columbia. On August 5th we met up at the Royal British Columbia Museum in Victoria. In attendance were Cheryl Roosma, Linda Schroeder, George Holm, Bob and Loretta O'Neill, Trevor Roberts, Teresa Anderson, Shary and Terry Almasi, and Shary's brother, Greg. We spent the morning touring the traveling exhibit, *Treasures: The World's Cultures from the British Museum*. The exhibit ranged from ancient Egypt through the modern world and spanned all the inhabited continents. It's an excellent exhibit, which runs through September 30th and is well worth a trip to Victoria.

We then took a break for lunch and in the early afternoon met up again at the museum. Rick Harbo and his daughter, Amy, joined us at this time. Moretta Frederick, the Collections Manager of Invertebrates, Fish, Reptiles and Amphibians, gave us a tour of the labs and storage area for the mollusk study collections. She had pulled out some of the drawers containing the Newcombe collection so we could have a closer look. (See Vol. 48(5) for a previous article about this collection.)

Next, Dr. Tom Cockburn, a Research Associate in Fossils/Earth History, took us on a tour of the Newcombe fossil collection, which Dr. Newcombe collected in the 1890's. We were also shown some miscellaneous fossils that he thought would be of interest to us. Most notably, we saw some specimens of the celebrated Coelacanth, the



One of the Coelacanth fossils

Triassic period fish long thought to be extinct until one was caught off of South Africa in 1938. These particular specimens came from Wapati Lake in NE British Columbia.

Tom then introduced us to Marji Johns, a professional paleontologist on contract to RBCM to work on the donated collection. She showed us a recently donated collection of fossils, which she was working on. They had all been found on Vancouver Island. The collection numbered over 20,000 specimens and contained mostly marine fossils.

The staff went out of their way to make us feel welcome and had done quite a bit of preparation for our visit. We congratulate them on their well-organized tour.

After our formal tour concluded, our group split up to each do their own thing. Some of us continued on to see the other museum exhibits, and some ventured into other parts of Victoria to take in the sights.



Moretta Frederick, at back wearing blue, is showing us the Newcombe Shell Collection.



Rick Harbo and his daughter, Amy [center], viewing the fossils



Dr. Tom Cockburn is here telling us about the fossils in the Newcombe Fossil Collection, which he is currently working on.

The following morning four of us set out to visit a fossil formation near Sooke, which is an hour west of Victoria. George, Linda, Cheryl and Bob set out for the fossil bed while the others either headed home or continued their visit in Victoria. We had only just started down the path to the beach when Tom Cockburn arrived. He had indicated he might come and so we proceeded to get another knowledgeable tour. The fossil bed is of the Sooke Formation, which dates to the late Oligocene epoch, over 23 million years ago. Digging into the bluff to retrieve fossils is not allowed but there were many loose fossils, which had washed down onto the beach, and we were allowed to collect these. Some specimens could be readily identified. These include *Mytilus mathewsonii* (Gabb), *Polinices sookensis* Clark & Arnold, and *Bruclarkia acuminata* (Anderson & Martin).



On the way to the fossil bed we stopped at Whiffen Spit, a potential site for a shelling trip. We hadn't planned this trip around a low tide but lucked out with enough of a low tide to see the potential of the area. It's very near to the fossil site, which also turned out to be a pretty good shelling location. We'll definitely have to take a field trip to the area in the future just for the shelling.

We had nice weather for the entire trip, wonderful tour guides and a good turnout of folks to make this a wonderful field trip.

Left and below - Tom Cockburn explained what we were seeing in the Sooke Formation..



Some of the fossils we found on the beach

