

B.C. ROCKHOUNDER MAGAZINE

Issue# 1 ~ 2020

Back to the Beach : Hunting for Jet on Vancouver Island

EDITOR'S NOTE

Well here we are again folks. It has been a while since I slung ink on behalf of rocky goodness, and I have to admit I have missed the endeavour a bit. There is a certain enjoyment to be had from sharing your own perspective on things, particularly things that you have in common with other good people. So with the blessing of the BCLS Executive, the digital version of the B.C. Rockhoulder Magazine is back in production.

This means you will have to tolerate more of my caveman-speak of course, but it also means that there is a venue for you all to contribute to, to share your adventures in rockhounding, wherever they may have taken you.

We rockhounds are a diverse bunch, each with their own proclivities and particular yearnings, but we share a passion for the geology of the province and all the things that go with enjoying it, be it hiking, off-roading or wandering beaches and waterways. There are so many of you talented and knowledgeable people out there in the lapidary and fossil hunting and rockhounding fields that this magazine should be flooded with content...

SO! With that thought in mind I would like to ask each BCLS member to consider submitting a piece on the history and founding of the club they belong to. Perhaps the various club executives could help organize this, or supply interested writers with some of the club background and old photographs? I know I am curious about how the clubs around the province were founded and what stories help make up their histories... surely other people would also like to learn as well.

In this issue you will see most of the content was created by me - this isn't my preference, but was necessary to get the ball rolling for everyone. I have a few kind people already promising to contribute to the next issue, and I hope I can count on all you readers to also consider submitting pictures, stories or whatever you like.

As this is a digital only publication, I have chosen a size 14 font to try to make it legible on any sized device, and with any kind of eye sight. As always, I welcome all feedback, and ask only that if you have criticisms, you offer me alternatives to make things more as you would like to see them.

Greg Carson

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Many thanks to the folks who submitted for this issue, and to those who are in the midst of responding or submitting at this time. Rest assured that anything not published in this first issue, will be included in #2.

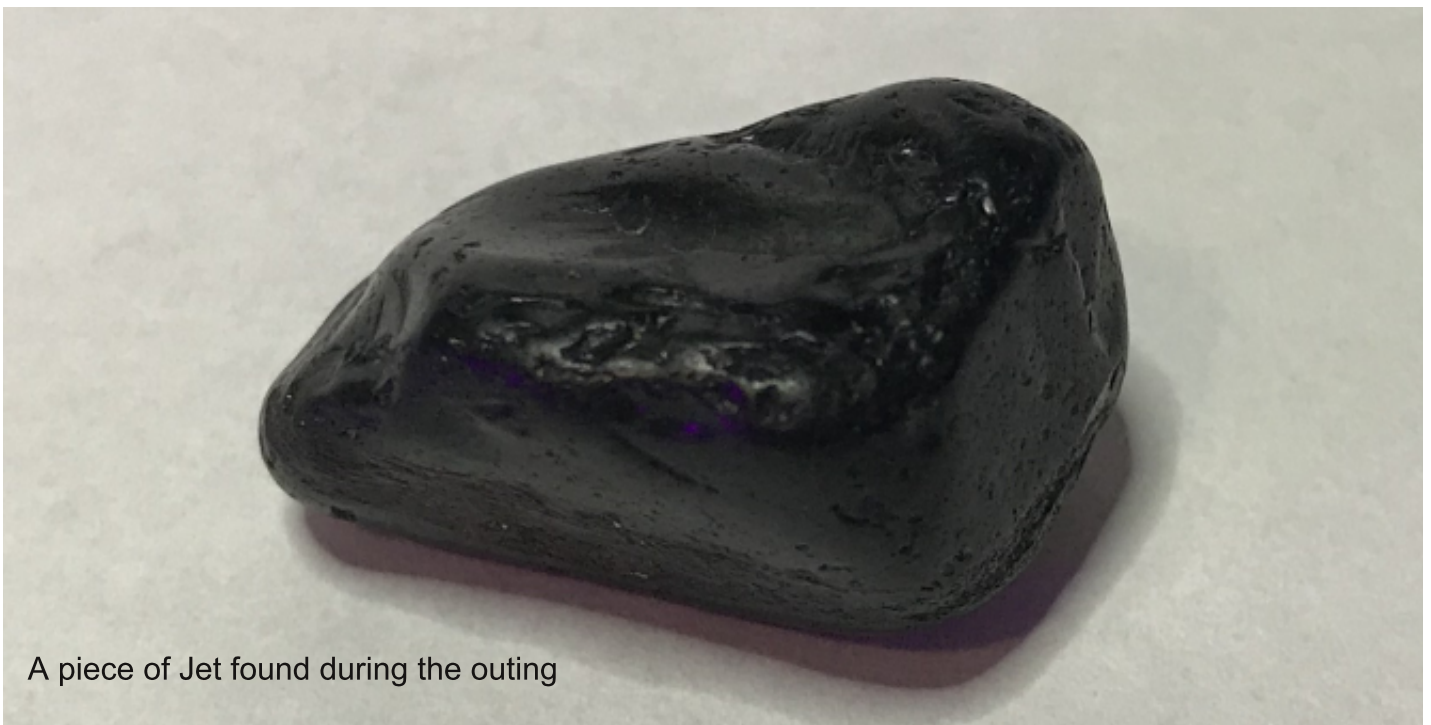
HUNTING FOR JET ON THE EAST COAST OF THE BIG ISLAND

by Greg Carson

The wind was coming in hard, churning the tops of the waves, and the large brown stain of silt from the creek was spread far and wide out into the waters of the Salish Sea, the result of recent torrential rains rushing down the hill sides and blasting out into the ocean. The sun was, surprisingly, peaking out and provided enough warm to offset the wind for the most part. It was, all in all, promising to be a good day on the beach, at least as far as February on the east side of Vancouver Island is concerned.

We had gathered around noon, as the sun was proving itself up to the task, in the parking lot of a small public access area - you will have to forgive me for not providing an exact location, as some will take advantage and over harvest rare materials, rather than taking a piece and leaving others for all to enjoy. It was time for our monthly field trip with the club, and our intrepid guide this time around was Jim Jeffs, who had coordinated with previous wagonmaster Jim McKinnon to research and provide insight into our latest target - Jet.

We appeared as Rockhounds often do at this time of year in this area, layered in varying colours of water and wind resistant materials, with buckets, backpacks and assorted tools, although for this particular run, nothing more than hands, eyes and the will to search were required. One of our members even brought along a small barbeque in the back of his truck in case anyone should want a hot meal during a break in the hunting. We in the Parksville & District Rock and Gem Club try to make the outings comfortable as well as engaging and educational, at least as much as the surroundings allow!



A piece of Jet found during the outing

Jim provided a few samples of the local Jet for everyone to feel and to help identify the unique weight and sheen of this material. This was integral to our success, as the beach surrounding the creeks outflow was laden with all shapes and sizes of stone, and much of the various Basalt bits could resemble Jet at a glance, especially when wet, although they would be many times heavier if handled. He suggested that we prioritize the high tide line, as the material is very light and more likely to still be in place in those areas where it might have been hurled further up the beach, out of reach of the smaller tides reclamation process.

Jet is a type of lignite, a precursor to coal, and while it is considered a gemstone, especially those specimens of sufficient hardness, it is not considered a mineral. It is instead listed as a mineraloid, and it was created by wood (commonly from the family of Araucariaceae) that had been subjected to extreme pressures and moisture. The hard specimens usually resulted from carbon compression and salt water, while fresh water was present for the softer type. The Vancouver Island Jet has the unique properties it does because it was formed in a dual environment, first as part of the seabed and then lifted into position on land and then being eroded via rivers/creeks over millions of years. This results in specimens that can be hard or soft, and creates a small but constant supply as it erodes out and spills onto the beaches.

We spread out rapidly and soon the entire landscape was covered in people scraping stones, crouching, kneeling and digging, flipping driftwood and seaweed this way and that. I remained engaged in this endeavour for the better part of two hours and came up with two small pieces of Jet, both trapped under seaweed at the high tide mark, choosing the one I liked best and returning the other to the sea - I don't hold with those who gather more than they need, especially when it comes to those materials that are rare and take a very long time to form.

Several other members also found nice sized pieces and it was, all in all, a nice way



Left to Right: Jaspers, Garnetite/Skarn, Sedimentary rock capped with pink quartzite

to spend the afternoon. It is an easily accessible location with a constant (albeit relatively small) volume of the material being deposited regularly via the creeks natural action. In addition, several other nice materials including Dallasite, intensely red Jasper, Gneiss and various Granites and Basalt colourations, and mixed bag sedimentary and metamorphic variants of all of these were present. Of course there were also interesting pieces of driftwood and sea growths, and various shells and bits of sea glass and other human created items for those interested.

Just before three in the afternoon, the sun was dipping behind the western mountains and putting the beaches into shadow, allowing the moon to stand out clearly in the sky. I said my goodbyes and snuck off alone to a second beach south of the creek, to test a theory that although the currents drive the material north, as they do in many areas of the east coast of the island, perhaps some also ends up drifting or shifting in the other direction, but alas, I came up empty handed. I noted interestingly enough that the types of seaweed and size of stones tossed up on this new beach were utterly different than those around the corner and to the north by only 500 meters - a clear demonstration of how currents, tides and weather can have considerably different effects, even in a relatively small area.

Combined with the meeting of fresh and salt water, they create a unique stretch of beach with quite an impressive diversity of rock and sea life at our very fingertips. Sea lions, eagles and numberless other sea birds to enjoy, photograph or just observe... in addition to the company of our fellow rockhounds, of course.



Hey all you Rockhounds! I want to hear your stories, see your pictures and share your adventures! BUT... I need you to share them with me first! Please send your submissions to me at the email below. If you want to send huge sizes, I suggest placing your files into a cloud based program and just sharing the link with me, so I can download them directly, and neither of us is limited by email size restrictions.

Rockhounder@shaw.ca

Greg Carson, Editor

(& general all around rock smasher)

DALLASITE VEIN CHASING IN THE WOODS OF THE FAMOUS ALBERNI INLET

by Greg Carson

We were a solid thirty kilometers down the Forest Service Road, which although it was in good condition as such things go, equally well over an hours drive, before we came to the main vein we had been looking for. All the way along the road we had stopped and observed signs of Dallasite being blasted and used as road fill or fill along the new culverts that had been freshly installed. Jim Jeffs and Lance Mitchell had done the recon on the road a while previously, having gone the full loop in search of potential goodies, and Jim had returned to lead the group of us (from various clubs on the central and north island) to the motherlode.

The weather promised to be as unpredictable as it every was in December in the woods surrounding Port Alberni, on the west coast of Vancouver Island, but our fleet of AWD and 4x4 vehicles were well equipped to deal with whatever might come our way, and there were quite a number of us in total, rather than the smaller excursions I am used to on the Island. Heavy fog was replaced by brilliant sun, only to be replaced with fog once more, and the mud was splashed happily up the sides of the caravan of rockhounds.

The vein that we had been looking for was a massive two part. One ran in smaller fingers under a seasonal waterfall over a rock face on the inside of the road, while the second main was an entire rock face slightly further along. It had been dynamited by the road crews for use as shot rock, and presented a fabulous opportunity to freely load all sized pieces of Dallasite into our vehicles, be it small paperweights, medium sized stones for slabbing and lapidary, or large garden stones, like the mixed piece of Dallasite and black/purple Calcite that I was lucky enough to find a little way down the road from the main site. This was in addition to the quartz crystals, spiffy calcite formations and various other goodies that were to be found in the rock wash and ditches all along the road.

We had spent the first half of the trip exploring all those small sites along the road, stopping to





see what outcroppings and other goodies could be located, and it was in the shot rock filled drainage ditches that I lucked out and found some nice sized quartz crystals. Now for those who are not familiar, locating good sized crystals on Vancouver Island is a challenge, and while there are (and have been historically) a few truly impressive locations and wonderful finds, they are few and far between. This is due to how the Island was formed, the constant accretion and erosion of new plate bits and pieces, and the vast difference in age and origin of those parts.

So I was very pleased to have located what are for me and my humble collection, some of the largest crystals I have found in these parts, albeit certainly not record holders for the Island overall. I also enjoyed finding quite a range of minute calcite crystals and unique mini formations in the various vugs and holes in the matrix stone, also in the ditches, although I did not collect these to keep, as previous experience has taught me how fragile such tiny formations are, and unlikely to survive the handling a rock smashing neaderthal will give them.

Others in the caravan loaded buckets of treasures into their vehicles, or flat beds of pickups for the more size/quantity enthused collectors, and we turned about and began the relatively long drive back out of the FSR toward Port Alberni, from there to disperse to our varied clubs up and down the Island. It had turned out to be a great weather day, sun consistently creeping amongst the fog, and a success filled hounding outing, with everyone finding something to take home for their efforts.







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ROCK EVENTS PROVINCE WIDE

Please check with the Club hosting the event to see if it is still on - with the recent health concerns, many clubs are cancelling shows and meetings.

APRIL in COURTENAY - Rock Show!

April 18 & 19, 2020 SAT: 10am - 4pm SUN: 10am - 4pm
At the Native Sons Hall, 300 Cliffe Avenue, Courtenay BC

Hosted by the Courtenay Gem and Mineral Club

MAY in RICHMOND - Rock Show!

May 2 & 3, 2020 Sat: 10am - 5pm; Sun: 10am - 4pm
At the Richmond Cultural Centre, 7700 Minoru Gate, Richmond BC

Hosted by the Richmond Gem & Mineral Club

MAY in QUESNEL - Rendezvous & AGM!

BCLS ANNUAL RENDEZVOUS

May 15 - 18, 2020 (see the BCLS website for further details)
At the Barlow Creek Campground, 3801 Trembley Road, Quesnel BC

Hosted by the Quesnel Tumbling Rivers Rock Club

JUNE in CASTLEGAR - Rock Show!

June 6 & 7, 2020 SAT: 10am - 5pm; SUN: 10am - 4pm
At the Castlegar Recreation Complex, 2101 6th Avenue, Castlegar, BC

Hosted by the Selkirk & Kokanee Rock & Mineral Clubs

JULY in COOMBS - Gemboree!

BCLS ANNUAL GEMBOREE

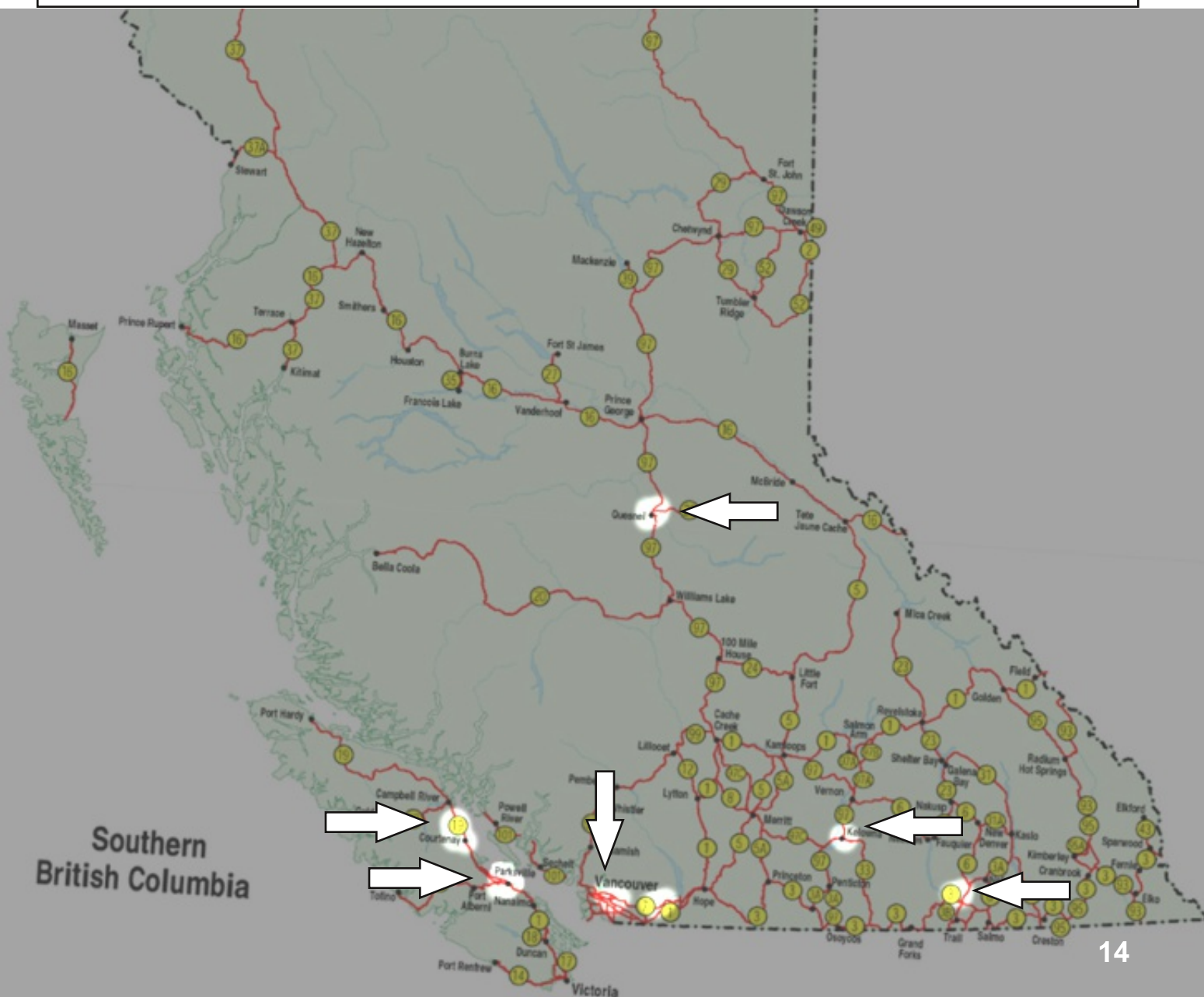
July 16 - 19, 2020 (see the BCLS website for package details)
At the Coombs Fairgrounds, 1014 Ford Road, Coombs, BC

Hosted by the Parksville & District Rock & Gem Club

JULY in KELOWNA - Rock Show!

July 17, 18, 19, 2020 FRI: noon - 8pm SAT: 9 - 5pm SUN: 10 - 4 pm
At the Rutland Centennial Hall, 180 Rutland Rd. N., Kelowna BC

Hosted by the 1120 & Vernon Rock Clubs
WEBSITE: www.okanagangemshow.rocks



SMASHING ROCKS TO FIND OLD STUFF (OR LOOKING FOR FOSSILS, CAVEMAN STYLE)

by Greg Carson

Let me just start this article with the clear statement that I am most assuredly an amateur when it comes to both finding and extracting fossils. Everything I know I have learned from either research in books and online, or through hands on experience. I mention this so that no one starts reading expecting extremely clear and concise instructions of a professional grade. You are in fact lucky that I did not write this article in crayon, on coffee stained newspaper, with horrendous penmanship. With that caveat applied, we can move on.

I have a favourite locale for looking for fossils, and this article will take you along and help you find goodies there. If you have ever been in the line up for the Departure Bay ferry, you have been (literally) a stones' throw away. At the end of this write up I will share directions on how exactly to get there, with maps and all those goodies, for those of you who come this way. Hint: If you ever get stuck in a two or three ferry wait here... you have time to take the 1km walk and get yourself some fossils!

We start our fossil hunting fun by wandering past the far side of the park boundary and onto the shoreline, where years of wave action is slowly undercutting the clay banks. Every big storm brings down more and more material, and the beach acts like the worlds' largest tumbler and slowly erodes the clay off the rocks. This is great for us Rockhounds, but less ideal for the people who built their homes on the top of these banks and whose yards are now falling into the ocean! My sympathy for them is equally eroded when I come across evidence that some of them are just dumping garbage and yard waste over the cliff and onto a public beach... but I digress.





Start by looking for downed trees – these group around the areas with the largest amount of material sliding down the bank, and their branches and root systems tend to gather up interesting collections of smaller rocks and such. Although the clay banks extend all the way along, and I have found fossils all along the area, I direct you to the newest material because in addition to fossils, these areas also tend to have the coolest and least worn mineral items to be found here, including some really brilliant jasper and the only piece of rhyolite in the style of picture rock (like the Hope Slide material) that I have ever found on the Island.

To clarify - I never, ever dig in the clay banks themselves. Not even at the foot or in the slide piles up from the beach. With unstable masses, there is always the chance that something unseen will shift or fall, or create a full on slide. I also personally think it is a bit disrespectful to chip away at a structure that is holding up someone's house. But in the tidal zone right at the edge of all that is where some of the larger, harder pieces of clay mass tend to remain, and are available for smashing! Now we start to hunt for rocks that have a layered sandstone-like appearance. This area in Nanaimo is made up of mostly layers of sedimentary materials that have metamorphosed after placement, like sandstone, various conglomerates and mudstone, with coal seams sprinkled throughout. So it is in this type of material we look for our fossils. I have found the most success looking for fossils in materials that have clear transition layers in the rock – that is, those that show a clear difference either in texture/granularity or in colour. Sometimes I luck out and find a little black line on the outside – this is often a branch/root fossilized! But let's use pictures rather than more caveman chatter, shall we?





I have found fossils in all of these styles of rock, but only small, crumbly and poor quality specimens. It is common to have these either shatter under the hammer or fall apart as soon as they dry. These are not the rocks we are looking for...



I caught a glimpse of a solid looking briefcase sized piece of sedimentary goodness and gave it a half dozen whacks with my trusty rock hammer... it split open to reveal the lovely branch/root fossil below, which I was very impressed with.





Another before and after set - I saw a promising looking piece and after a few whacks with the hammer, some beautiful branch fossils appeared. I reset these pieces so they were visible to others walking on the beach and left them in place. I always do this when I am out, and other people always stop to admire or to maybe take a sample or two - an easy way to spread the hobby and enjoyment of natural bounty.



The last two of the day were a mixed result - and full disclosure - there were a half dozen others that didn't make the cut for the magazine. The first was a complete zero, with very nice, hard and clean structure but absolutely nothing organic remaining. The second was a treasure, one of very few that I will add to my permanent collection. I have to admit that I beat the rock into a ton of pieces and it was on the last breakage that the joy below revealed itself.



A lovely imprint of grass/flowers from millions of year ago, happened upon through sheer chance... and revealed by, of all things, the brute force of a hammer wielded by an amateur Rockhound.

I hope you all get the opportunity to visit this little slice of fossil finding heaven, and enjoy not only the fossils but the jasper, porphyry, dallasite, epidote and other assorted goodies that end up on the beach here. The following page will have details on how to access this beach and where to park.

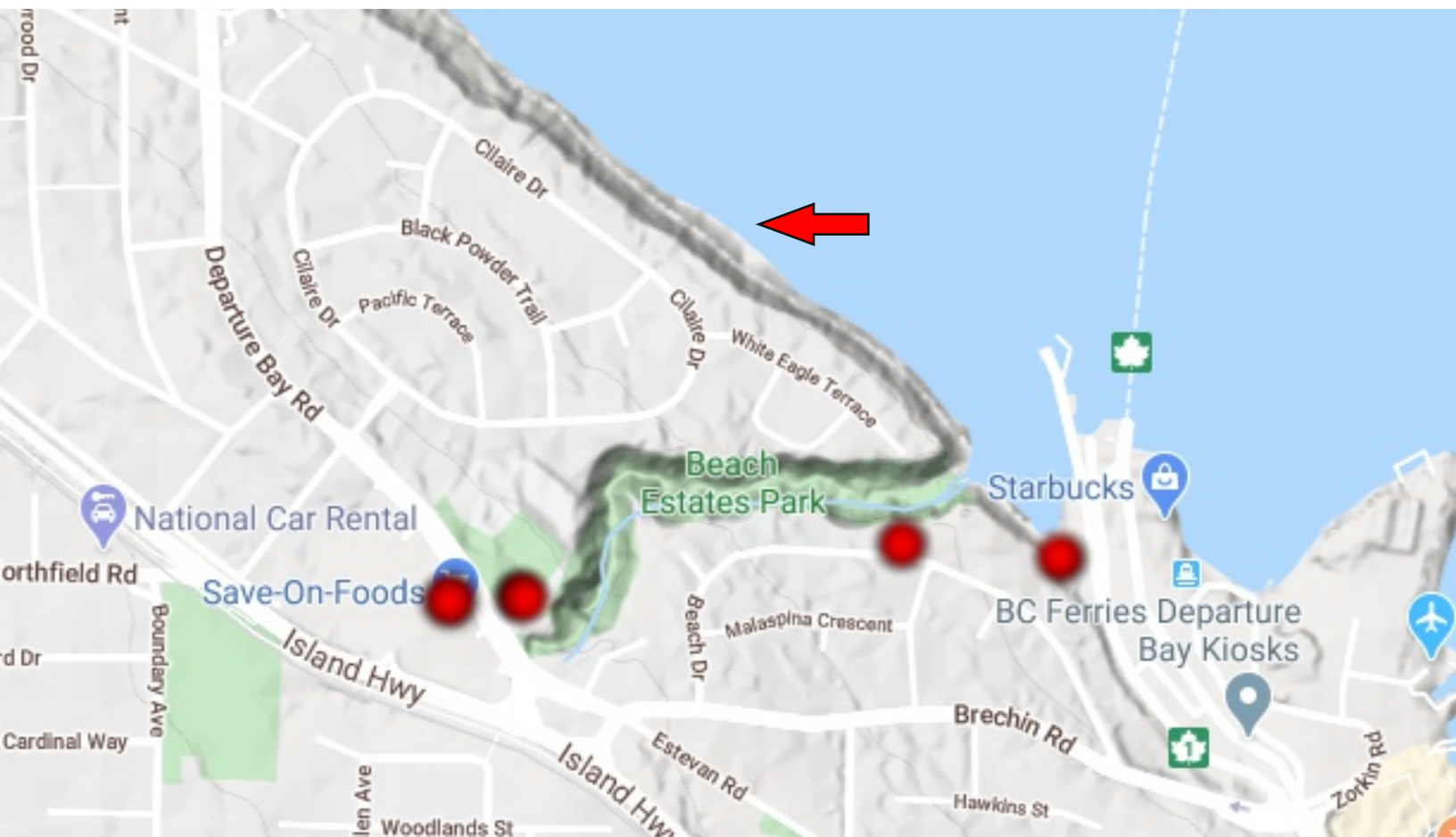
I also hope that my attempt to share my solo adventure in learning about fossil finding the hard way, will encourage you to share your own treks and wanderings with me and all the readers of the B.C. Rockhoulder.



JUST NORTH OF BEACH ESTATES PARK IS WHERE WE GO TO FIND FOSSILS AND ALL MANNER OF OTHER GOODIES.

But please be sure to pass this sign noting the park boundary before you start collecting

Parking for this central Nanaimo park is available at the church at the trail head, in the mall just across from the trail head or from the Beach Drive access point. There are five ways to access the beach, including simply walking there along the waterfront from Departure Bay beach or along the wide pedestrian path that runs from the Ferry terminal to the beach staircase. However there are also a couple of private stairwells leading up from the beach, so be sure you are heading up a familiar path. I have marked the main trail head (both parking areas), the Beach Drive access point and the access path from the BC Ferries terminal area on the map below, as these are the simplest. Please do make sure you walk past the park boundary sign before you start collecting.
(Credit to Google Maps for the image I have used below)





I thought it might be fun to do a Where's Waldo kind of image... above is the hidden treasure shot and below the treasure close up. Perhaps some of you who hunt agates on the Fraser or in gravel pits in the interior have some neat shots to share?





Alexandra Beech, a rockhounder new to the hobby, explores an old gravel pit in the Pemberton area. Here she was after some of the quartz that runs rampant through many of boulders in the pit.

There are no rock clubs close to Pemberton, but that hasn't slowed her down from learning about rocks and minerals, nor did the February snow and cold evident in these pictures she kindly submitted to share with our readers. Thanks Alex!

All Photography credit for these images goes to Charlie Knight Photography

DIE HARDS FROM THE VERNON LAPIDARY CLUB SCOUR THEIR GRAVEL PIT DURING A CLUB FIELD TRIP IN DECEMBER 2019

Photos courtesy of Tony Heisterkamp



ALBERNI VALLEY ROCK AND GEM SHOW

by Greg Carson

I had the pleasure of attending the AVRGC event this year and meeting with some of the members, in addition to attending the BCLS meeting within the show. It was well represented with almost every kind of display you might imagine, in addition to the showcases brought in by the participating clubs from abroad (see following pages). I took in the show on the Sunday morning, before the crowds reappeared, so had an excellent opportunity to slowly cruise the floor and absorb the mineral goodness.



Vendors, members and participants interact across the show floor, dealing in everything: slabs, sculptures, cut gems, cabs, findings, paintings on rock and more.









We try our best to cover the events we can, but we can't make it to every show and every club gathering. If you attend a show, please consider submitting a review, some pictures of the event or a combination of the two, detailing your experience.

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