Nittany Mineralogical Society Bulletin

Nittany Mineralogical Society, Inc., meeting in State College / Boalsburg, Pennsylvania
Contact information on back page

August, 2026 **Visit our web site: www.nittanymineral.org** *Editor (see back page): David C. Glick*

August 19th meeting:
IN PERSON at BOAL HALL

Show and Tell
by NMS members and visitors

Our August meeting will be held Wednesday the 19th in Boal Hall (Boalsburg Fire Hall), 113 East Pine St., Boalsburg, PA 16827. Maps are on our web site.

7:00 to 7:45 p.m.: Social "hour," refreshments
7:45 to 8:00 p.m.: Announcements, door prizes, sales
about 8:00 p.m.: featured program

The event has free admission and free parking (lot just east of Fire Hall along East Pine St.), and is open to all; ***parents/guardians must provide supervision of minors.***
Bring your friends and share an interesting evening.

We plan to record the presentations (with permission of the individual presenters) for later posting to our web site.

The program topic for August will be Show and Tell, presented by anyone and everyone who would like to "show and tell" for up to 5 to 10 minutes or so. This is a great chance to bring in new specimens, lapidary work, books, photos, equipment, projects in progress, interesting contrasts and comparisons, anything you like which represents some area of interest in our hobby or science, and share it with others. You can speak about it as informally or formally as you'd like. Stories or questions on their own are fine, too. You can connect with other members who have similar interests, or awaken an interest or spark an idea in someone else. We've had many fun and interesting presentations in the past, and look forward to more this time around. T-shirts will be for sale (see page 2). *-Editor*

NMS at Happy Valley Maker Faire

NMS plans to have a booth at Happy Valley Maker Faire, to be held at Axemann Brewery, Bellefonte, on October 3-4. Bob Altamura and others will demonstrate lapidary - the ***making*** aspect of NMS - and publicize all aspects. If you'd like to help, we'll talk about it at meetings, and you can contact Bob (see page 8). See the web page linked from our main page. *-Editor*

NMS Picnic Saturday August 15, 3 - 6 p.m.

by Bob Altamura

We are planning our annual summer poolside picnic for members of The Nittany Mineralogical Society at my house near Lemont on Saturday August 15th from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., and would like it if you would come. We will have chips and snacks, spring water and drinks including beer and wine (bring your own favorite if you like). Hamburgers and hotdogs cooked on the grill will be provided. Feel free to bring an appetizer, salad, side dish, or dessert to share, and enjoy the pool if you wish! For those who want to stay later, we can manufacture an after-party. T-shirts will be for sale (see page 2).

Come chat with some club friends you may not have seen in a while! Feel free to bring a swimsuit and towel (water temp has been in the mid- to high- 70s - very nice and hope it will be the same for the picnic) and any special food. Also feel free to bring a guest.

Please let me know that you expect to come by emailing <raltamura@comcast.net> or by calling or texting my cell, 814 880-6762. That's just to give a rough count for our planning, it's not a commitment.

Rain date is the same time on Sunday. August 16th.

My address for GPS is
1601 Yardal Road, State College 16801; cell phone is 814-880-6762.

If you turn off East Branch Road onto Norle Street, then take the second right onto Yardal. My house is gray and the second driveway on the right (blue RFD mailbox). There is plenty of parking along the street; in my driveway - or at my neighbor, Jonathan Mathew's house, just two doors down at 1519 Yardal.

We hope you can make it.

ATTENDING THE AUGUST MEETING?
Donations of **one or two high quality, labeled door prize specimens** are invited.
Larger quantities can go in a giveaway box.
Bring a friend!

T-Shirts for Summer

Vice President Bob Altamura arranged to replenish our stock of NMS T-shirts in a variety of colors and sizes, printed on both sides. We'll have them for sale ($10 each) at the picnic and at the August meeting. *-Editor*

FEDERATION NEWS

Nittany Mineralogical Society, Inc., is a member of EFMLS, the Eastern Federation of Mineralogical and Lapidary Societies, and therefore an affiliate of AFMS, the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies. We encourage our readers to read their monthly newsletters, which are linked from the left sidebar of our web site, <http://www.nittanymineral.org>.

The AFMS newsletter (now digital only) for the month of June (they don't publish in July or August) is available at <https://www.amfed.org/newsletter>.

President Ronna Watkins recognizes those involved in creating club bulletins, and 2026 AFMS/MWF convention in Chicago. PR Chair Jim Brace-Thompson's article is on 'Using "Rock Holidays" to Connect with Your Community,' with an interesting list of holidays. The Safety article, 'Getting a handle on Things,' is reprinted on page 3 of this Bulletin. The history article covers a 1950s science summer camp for teenagers in Oregon. 2026 AFMS Bulletin Contest results are listed. A new issue of Crack the News, the juniors newsletter, was published in May.

The Eastern Federation's <https://efmls.org/> June Newsletter includes president Andrew "Rockhound's" column, reprinted at right. There's a detailed, illustrated report on the 2026 Wildacres Workshop. - *Editor*

EFMLS President's Message

from
Andrew Rockhound

EFMLS News v. 73 no. 6
June, 2026

Happy June and beginning of summer to everyone! I mentioned last month that the EFMLS provides clubs with the ability to use our Zoom account, since some clubs can't afford to purchase an account on their own. Well, after discussing this with an interested club, we realized we needed to do it a better way. So, the EFMLS board has now approved moving forward with a Zoom account that can handle having a login for every club, should any need to use it! Zoom has become an increasingly important tool for clubs, and the EFMLS understands that. We will be working on getting this set up, and will have more details about the new account soon along with a listing of club resources every club should check out!

As a reminder, this will be the last newsletter until September as we prepare for our West Virginia Convention, so stay cool, hydrated and safe out there!

Web Site Updates

David Glick

Videos of meeting programs recorded over the past year are now up-to-date, including Dr. Peter Heaney's presentation from May. They're linked from the main page or at www.nittanymineral.org/programs.htm .

Pennsylvania Mineral Gallery

Calcite, York, York County PA. 13.7 cm. "An old York, Pennsylvania calcite specimen, extremely rich and sizeable, covered with light amber crystals to 3.3 cm." Rob Lavinsky, iRocks.com – CC-BY-SA-3.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>, via Wikimedia Commons, Calcite-130388.jpg

Getting a Handle on Things

by Safety Chair Ellery Borow

from EFMLS NEWS v. 73 n. 6, June, 2026

To use a common expression – it is generally a good idea to get a handle on how things are going. In this instance, the usage in with regard to a practical matter…

While the canvas shoulder bag is still used for carrying the specimens we collect on our field collecting trips, the modern five-gallon plastic pail is gaining ground for various and sundry reasons. Between the canvas bag and the plastic pail there is a huge difference. The difference is how we carry them. While the canvas tote is carried by a strap over our shoulder, or with straps such as with a back pack, the pail is carried in our hand.

The pail most often uses a metal wire handle with a small diameter plastic handle grip at its center. That small diameter plastic grip is the source of a concern as, often, that grip is broken, partially missing, or completely gone. When carrying such a damaged pail handle, especially with a heavy load, such as rocks, the weight puts a great strain on the biology of the hand. The solution to putting such a strain on one's hand is to carry fewer specimens, however that strategy defeats the purpose of having such a large pail.

There are several ways to solve the issue of a damaged pail handle. One could, for example, purchase a new plastic pail. But one is still left with a rather small plastic handle. While that is better for the structure of the hand as opposed to holding a bare wire handle. What is being suggested here is to modify the handle to make it easier and safer to carry. To do that it is possible to install a larger diameter handle on the metal wire loop. A larger grip is easier on the hand.

Ways to put a larger grip on the wire pail loop include:

Remove the existing plastic grip and

- install a short length of wood dowel, such as from a section of wood broom handle
- install a similar grip but with a section of metal broom handle
- install a grip made from a section of one inch diameter rigid plastic pipe,
- install a short length of one inch diameter hydraulic hose
- install a metal handle such as short section of tubing cut from a piece of old damaged folding lawn furniture, you know - the kind with the woven plastic webbing
- make a handle from flexible plastic potable water tubing
- visit a local hardware store and see what they might have for potential handle materials

First, some general ideas and information:

People have different size hands. Some people may prefer a hand grip of ¾inch diameter to be more comfortable to hold, some, with larger hands, may prefer grips of 7/8 inches in diameter, or one inch, or on up to one and one half inch in diameter. With making a new grip, one can customize its size to one' preference. In any case, the larger grip would be safer and more comfortable than the 1/8-inch diameter bare metal wire used in most pails. Some replacement grips can be slid over the bent metal shapes used to hold the wire loop onto the pail. The bent wire loop is not easy to detach from the pail but it can be removed with a bit of convoluted effort. One can always purchase a new five-gallon pail for a few dollars but it would still have a grip of only 7/16 of an inch in diameter. Such a grip is better than trying to carry the full pail using the 1/8-inch diameter wire loop but not as good as a custom fit grip.

Replacement grip specifics –wood dowel:

Cut the dowel (such as wood broom handle) to three and 3/8 inches long. Drill a ¼inch diameter hole the long way down through the center of the dowel. Next, use a band saw to cut through the dowel, also through the center, such that one now has two semi-circular pieces of wood with a semi-circular groove in the flat (sawn) side. The two halves of the dowel can then be placed over the wire pail loop and wood-glued together to make a complete handle.

Metal broom handle:

Cut a section of broom handle to three and 3/8 inches long. Using a hack saw, cut a slit the length of the metal. Gently spread the slit apart and slip it over the wire loop of the pail. Lastly, wrap tape around the tubing to hold the slit closed. Several wraps of electrical tape or duct tape should do the trick of holding it together on the wire loop pail handle.

Hydraulic tubing handle:

Cut a section of tubing to three and 3/8 inches long. As above, slit the tubing, put it over the metal wire and tape it closed. If the wire loop can be removed from the plastic pail, the hydraulic hose may be slid over the bends of the wire loop instead of slitting the tubing lengthwise.

Rigid or soft plastic piping:

Use much the same techniques as above.

Tips: If one does not have long wood drills, one can use a table saw to cut 1/8 deep by ¼inch slots in the semicircular wood pieces. Instead of a band saw one can use a wood workers hand saw or hack saw to cut the dowel into two semicircular halves. Instead of a knife or hack saw one can use a rotary tool and cutting disk to slit metal or plastic tubing. A visit to a hardware store may offer other options for a more comfortable grip for a 5-gallon pail. If one lacks the necessary tools, perhaps a helpful and well tooled club member can help replace grips on the pails?

The general idea is to get a good grip on your handle, and be kind to your hands. If all else fails, please consider carrying less weight in your plastic 5-gallon pails.

Your safety matters, and that applies to your hands as well. Happy and safe collecting to you. ❄

NMS Tours Russell Stone and Bilgers Rocks

by David Glick
photos by David Glick unless otherwise noted

About 15 Nittany Mineralogical Society (NMS) members attended a field tour in the Grampian, PA, area on June 19, 2026. The first stop was Russell Stone Products, where we were hosted by consultant Dave Curulla. He had presented NMS's October 2025 meeting program on Russell Stone, and had invited us to come and visit in warmer weather.

As Field Trip Chair Dale Kephart wrote in the trip invitation, "Russell Stone is located on our nearby Appalachian Plateau, Russell Stone https://russellstoneproducts.com/ mines high grade, durable, highly siliceous decorative sandstone and fabricates on site dimensional stone products for architectural and other design applications This aesthetically pleasing stone has been used for such prominent structures as the facades of the Washington DC Visitors Center and the Princeton University Chapel as well as the Philadelphia Museum of Art's broad, iconic steps so prominently featured in the blockbuster movie 'Rocky.' "

"More recently and closer to home, Russell Stone sourced the beautiful decorative facings of the new Palmer Museum of Art at Penn State, and stone walls in the adjacent Arboretum." The company's web site at <https://russellstoneproducts.com/> has photographs of many of their projects and installations.

The rock at these sites is the Homewood Sandstone within the lower Pennsylvanian Pottsville Formation, about 316-320 million years old (Berg, T. M., McInerney, M. K., Way, J. H., and MacLachlan, D. B., 1983, Stratigraphic correlation chart of Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania Geological Survey, 4th ser., General Geology Report 75, 1 sheet. [Available online.]). The Pennsylvanian period accounts for the coal deposits and much of the rock at the surface of western Pennsylvania.

Our group assembled at the property's front gate, where Dave Curulla gave us an introduction and history of the operations. We then drove to an overlook of a partially flooded quarry pit, which was not active at the time.

Host Dave Curulla gives the lowdown

Partially flooded sandstone quarry pit.

We saw large blocks of stone which had come from the quarry, some of the equipment used to convert them to finished products, and the extensive stockpiles of those products.

Rough blocks straight from the quarry.

A huge diamond saw slicing into a block

Sawn blocks ready for shipment

Some attendees took home some interesting pieces from the large pile of scrap stone.

After about two hours at Russell Stone, we headed down the highway and around the corner, about one mile, to Bilgers Rocks. After administration as a private park by Bilgers Rocks Association since 1988, the property was donated to Moshannon State Forest in May. Dale Kephart wrote, “This is a fun site and a popular destination for exploring the 100+ acres of a fascinating "rock city" of building-sized blocks of the same sandstone as is found in the Quarry, with narrow passageways for walking and exploring in between.”

We took a brief break for lunch, and many of us toured the Education Center. NMS’s Dr. Duff Gold had donated his collection of mineral and fossil specimens to the Association a few years ago; we saw the portion of those which they had room to display. The State Forest hopes to find some more space in the future.

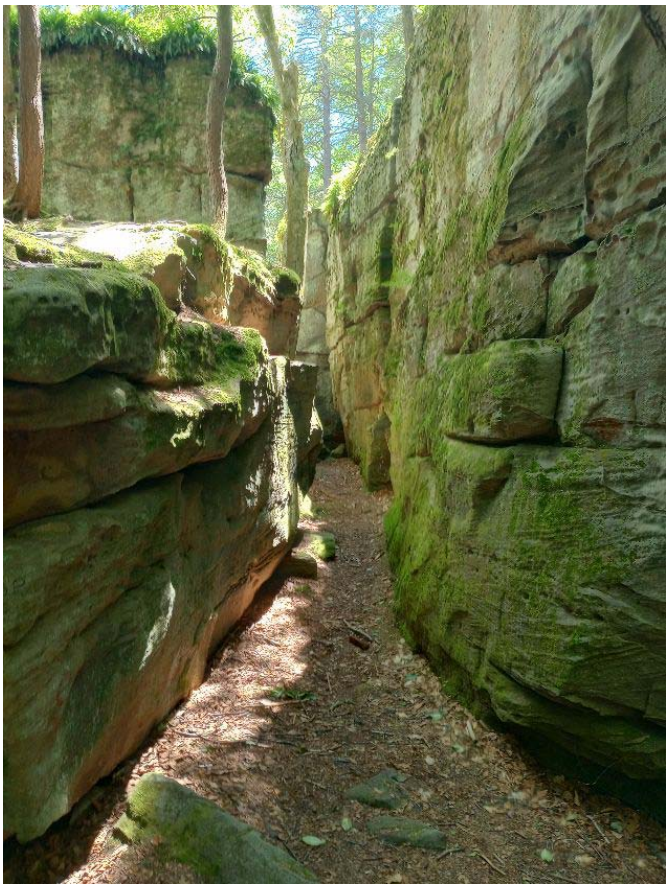
Education Center at Bilgers Rocks

Specimens displayed in the Education Center

Roadside trail entrance to Bilgers Rocks

Representatives from both organizations were present for our visit, and each led a hike through the rocks, one more difficult walking and squeezing than the other. Self-guided tours are also available there.

Getting ready to hike through the rocks.



On the trail through Bilgers Rocks, showing bedding and joints enhanced by weathering. *R. Altamura photo*

Rocks creeping apart. *VitaleBaby photo, public domain*

Geo-Sudoku

by David Glick

The puzzle below contains the letters ACDHILRUY. One row or column describes a possible replacement part. If you've read this issue, you've seen it. Each block of 9 squares, each row, and each column must contain each of the nine letters exactly once. The solution is on page 8.

D		R	U		C			
	H	C			A		R	U
	L							
C			H				D	L
					L			Y
		L	I		D		H	R
		D	Y			I		C
		U				R	L	D
L				C				H

Autumn
Mineralfest
mineral, fossil, and gem show

One hundred plus tables overloaded with minerals, fossils, crystals, geodes, gemstones, and gemstone jewelry from six continents and outer space

Saturday, 3 October 2026
8:30 AM to 3:00 PM

Macungie, Pennsylvania
Macungie Memorial Park – 50 N. Poplar Street

FREE ADMISSION and free parking
Rain or shine - over 50 indoor vendors, plus outdoor tailgate section
Family oriented - younger attendees encouraged
Darkroom for fluorescent mineral vendors and displays

ADVERTISEMENT

LAPIDARY LESSONS

Learn to carve and polish semiprecious gemstones from exotic rough rock material under the tutelage of Bob Altamura, a lapidary artist of many years. Learn to saw rocks into slabs and to transform slabs into various outlines and to shape into domed gemstones (cabochons).

Prepare an actual gemstone. Lessons includes use of lapidary machines and tools, including lapidary rock saws, grinding wheels and laps that are necessary to create gem outlines (preforms); to dome the into cabochons, and to finely polish into the finished gemstone.

Instructor will provide a wide variety of rough rock materials for the student to select for their gemstone project. If desired the project gemstone can be set in a jewelry mount available from the instructor or jewelry supply catalogs.

A 1-hour personal lesson is priced at $40. If interested contact Bob at raltamura@comcast.net or 814-880-6762.

FRIENDS OF MINERALOGY - Pennsylvania Chapter and West Chester University Earth and Space Sciences Dept.
SYMPOSIUM November 14, 2026 Field Trip Nov. 15
West Chester, Pennsylvania

For newsletters and field trips during the year, please join our chapter!
See "Join FM" on the web site

Symposium for mineral collecting enthusiasts - tentative plans include:
Saturday Nov. 14: Hybrid Symposium - ONLINE or IN PERSON
8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at West Chester University
Talks by knowledgeable **SPEAKERS** on **Pennsylvania Mineralogy and Geology and more:**
Geology of the Herkimer District - by Bill Stephens, PG, Stephens Environmental
History of Mineral Classification - by Dr. Peter Heaney, Penn State
Critical Minerals in Pennsylvania Iron Furnace Slag - by Dr. Maureen Feineman, Penn State
New Data on Mineralization at Herkimer- by David Tibbits, Rutgers
and two more to be announced

Silent Auction - Give-away Table - Conversation
Professional Geologists: 6 Professional Development Hour credits available for full lecture attendance

Sunday Nov. 15: Field Trip. Open only to symposium registrants.

Watch for details, registration form, changes and **UPDATES** on our **web site:**
www.rasloto.com/FM or **Friends of Mineralogy Pennsylvania** on Facebook

UPCOMING EVENTS

Confirm details of events before attending.
https://efmls.org/events/
See other show calendar links on our web site.

Sept 26 - 27, 2026: Annual Gem, Mineral & Jewelry Show, by Central Pennsylvania Rock and Mineral Club. Zembo Shrine Auditorium, 2801 N. Third St., Harrisburg PA 17110. Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-4. https://rockandmineral.org/rock-shows/

Oct 3, 2026: Autumn Mineralfest, by Pennsylvania Earth Sciences Ass'n. Macungie Memorial Park, 50 N. Poplar St., Macungie PA Sat. only, 8:30 - 3:00. https://www.mineralfest.com/mineralfest.pdf

Oct 16-18, 2026: EFMLS Convention & Kanawha Rock & Gem Club annual show, Charleston, West Virginia. https://www.kanawharockandgemclub.org/2026-annual-show.html

Nov 7 - 8, 2026: 57th Annual Gemarama, by Tuscarora Lapidary Society. Greater Philadelphia EXPO Center, 100 Station Ave., Oaks, PA Sat. 10-6, Sun. 10-5; www.lapidary.org

Nov. 14-15, 2026: Annual Fall Symposium & Field Trip, by Friends of Mineralogy - Pennsylvania Chapter. West Chester, PA. See page

Geo-Sudoku Solution

D	A	R	U	**H**	C	L	Y	I
I	H	C	L	**Y**	A	D	R	U
U	L	Y	R	**D**	I	H	C	A
C	U	I	H	**R**	Y	A	D	L
R	D	H	C	**A**	L	U	I	Y
A	Y	L	I	**U**	D	C	H	R
H	R	D	Y	**L**	U	I	A	C
Y	C	U	A	**I**	H	R	L	D
L	I	A	D	**C**	R	Y	U	H

INVITE A FRIEND TO JOIN THE SOCIETY

The Nittany Mineralogical Society prides itself on having among the finest line-up of speakers of any earth sciences club in the nation. Everyone is welcome at our meetings. If you'd like to be part of our Society, dues are $25 (regular member), $10 (student rate), $18 (seniors), $35 (family of two or more members, names listed). Those joining in March or later may request pro-rated dues. Your dues are used for programs and speakers, refreshments, educational activities, Bulletins, and mailing expenses. Please fill out a membership form (available at www.nittanymineral.org), make checks payable to "Nittany Mineralogical Society, Inc." and send them in as directed, or bring your dues and form to the next meeting.

We want to welcome you!

CONTACT INFORMATION

Come to our meetings on the third Wednesday of the month - see page 1

mailing address:
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Publicity:

The **Bulletin Editor** will welcome your submissions of articles, photos, drawings, cartoons, etc., on minerals, fossils, collecting, lapidary, and club activity topics of interest to the members. Please contact:

David Glick E-mail: xidg@verizon.net
425 Armagast Rd. phone: 814-810-2116 (h)
Bellefonte, PA 16823-9762

Newsletter submissions are appreciated by the first Wednesday of the month. Photographs or graphics are encouraged; please send them as separate graphics files (high quality JPEG files, about 1050 pixels wide, are preferred). Please provide captions and name of photographer or artist.

Visit us at www.nittanymineral.org