



Ore-Cutts

Volume XL, Issue VIII

August, 2005

Habits of Halite

By Dick Shields and Ralph Bishop, Members, OMS

“Please pass the salt” is such a common phrase few of us would give it a second thought. But did you realize that “sea salt” and “rock salt” describe a crystalline mineral rock-hounds consider “collectable”?

Mineralogists use the term “halite” to describe sodium chloride, commonly called salt. The word comes from the Greek words *halos* meaning salt and *lithos* for rock. In its pure form salt is colorless, but impurities change it.

Halite can harden into a crust on objects submerged in salt-rich water, and in special circumstances, result in a thing of beauty. Witness this well-preserved specimen of a dragon fly from Sherm and Bea Griselle’s collection:



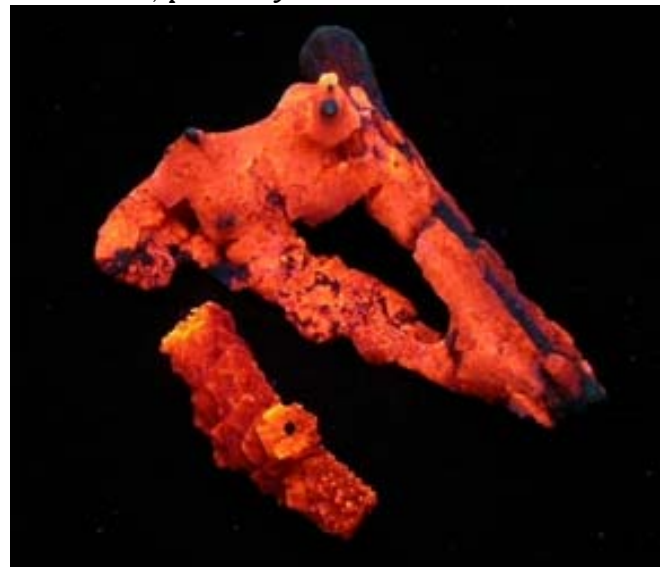
Halite-encrusted dragonfly from the Salton Sea

Impurities can also make halite fluorescent. We had high hopes that the dragonfly might fit into that category, but it didn’t. Only the part of the thorax (damaged by the 2003 San Simeon earthquake) showed some response to the UV lamp. Too bad! A glowing dragonfly would be so cool!



Halite-covered limbs from the Salton Sea in white light

As it turns out, Bess and I collected several examples of Salton Sea halite-encrusted limbs showing this “habit.” The halite in these specimens is a reddish-brown. They came from old collections, probably created in the 1950’s.



Under short wave UV, these pieces glow bright red

An article in the 1946 issue of "American Mineralogist" (see Websites of Note) describes the reason: minute amounts of manganese and lead, acting together. The article mentions two California sites, one near Amboy and another in Borrego Valley, identified by Thomas Warren.

Salt is a critical part of the human diet. We normally consume salt as a mineral in solution in food, but we also use it to preserve and garnish food. We get this salt by mining vast deposits of halite that occur in many regions of our planet, or by evaporating saline solutions (such as sea water). Halite is the most important ore of both sodium and chlorine. The Salton Sea is an evaporative lake that formed many times over the ages, refilling periodically with water when the Colorado River changed course.

Another specimen of halite in our collection is from Catamarca Province, Argentina, a large mass with 1" crystals. It displays a similar reaction when we shine short wave UV on it.



Argentinian halite showing similar red fluorescence

Our intrepid crew has one more habit of halite to describe. In our own collecting region (within several hours of bike pedaling from Santa Maria, if that's a hint) there is a deposit of selenite pseudomorphs after halite in form of

"hopper" crystals. This exciting find is producing crystals up to 3" on a side, and shows the existence of an ancient distilling water body that could produce hoppers. They form as growth crystals floating on the surface of brine water bodies.



A group of selenite pseudomorphs after halite hoppers from the Santa Maria area

*Those Were The Days, My Friend,
We Thought They'd Never End!*

(Ralph's part starts here, in case you couldn't tell.) The words of a song, I believe, from the early part of the 1900's. Well, for rockhounds and our hobby, those days were the late 50's and 60's. "Like de-za vue, all over again". There are few of us to remember those glory days when a person could collect good rock almost anywhere. Kay Vollmer remembers those days. Helen Smith was likewise in the thick of it. Charlie Azevedo, a big smile comes across his face. Yes, folks, those WERE the days. Rockhounding was the most popular hobby around. Computers? Whuzat?

When I was a young teenager, there was a rock swap (no sales) in the city park at Templeton, the home of biconoids. There was a large contingent of rockhounds every year from far and wide. One old scudder was from the Salton Sea area, and usually brought fire agate and nodules from Wiley Wells. But the real interesting thing he brought was from the Salton Sea area. They were salt crystals.

They weren't all that beautiful, but they were encrusted over objects. Mostly sticks, Ho Hum, right? How about salt encrusted dragonflies? OK. How about horned toads and side winders? Well, he held these specimens at a high value, probably the most valuable at the swap. Benitoite, ho-hum. There was lots of that stuff. But, a salt rattlesnake? WOW! Salt bugs - WOW!

Well, I never had enough sagenite or marcasite to even approach a trade for these rarities. But, one day in the back of his '58 Ford station wagon, I saw him open a box. OH MY GOD, there were 5 or 6 snakes, and 5 or 6 dragonflies. It dawned on me that this ole scudder might be more than lucky in finding these rarities. You don't suppose he could be an assistant to Mother Nature... Yup, it's possible.

For several years at swaps I watched and, sure enough, he always seemed to have a "rare" supply of salty critters. This memory had slipped into the crevices of my cerebral cortex long ago. Then one day, I visited Sherm and Bea Griselle's Rock Museum, and there in a case was a rare Salton Sea "Dragon Fly".



The whole rock (and dragonfly) is covered by the halite crystals

Those were the days, my friends, we thought they'd never end...

(Note: A special thanks to Don Nasholm and Wes Lingerfelt for adding to our fluorescent halite collection. One other factoid to ponder: Ocean water contains an

average of 2.6% NaCl, or an estimated 120 million short tons per cubic mile – an inexhaustible supply!)

Check our OMS web site at <http://omsinc.org> or send email to info@omsinc.org.

Glimpse Ahead

Rootin' around Rowley

By Dick Shields, Member, OMS

Of course I wanted to go. It was Saturday, work was finished, and the wulfies were waitin'!

When Bill Gardner and Ed Davis offered me the chance to see the progress Ed and his friends have made at Rowley, I gave myself a reward for working long hours on our business proposal last week in Phoenix.

Let me set the stage: Phoenix, summer, the monsoons were just starting, but the temperature was averaging about 111 every day. A big supply of Costco water and ice was in order, topped off in Gila Bend with a root beer float at Billy's favorite stop, the Dairy Queen.

We arrived at the mine just as Ed and Bill Jaeger were quitting for the day. Exhausted, covered with red dust, but grinning from ear to ear, proud of their latest discovery – a pocket of vanadinite pseudomorphs after wulfenite! We looked carefully through the microscope and confirmed...true pseudomorphs!



Vanadinite replacing wulfenite from Rowley Mine

We fired up the generator, grabbed our tools (mine was a camera), and headed under

ground. Ed and his partners have removed a great deal of unsafe ceiling material that showed serious cracking. Their focus area is about 100' below the surface at a boundary of barite. Ed calls this spot the "wall of 1000 pockets", and he's finding some incredible specimens there. Here's a sample, a piece they've already sold for \$1000.



Wulfenite on mimetite and andesite from Rowley Mine

As the heading for this article suggests, it's a lead-in to a longer article about the current effort to harvest great Rowley specimens. We spent about 3 hours, and produced 4 flats of good specimens (none as fine as the picture, but well worth our efforts). Fearing we might exhaust the generator gas, we finally surfaced to the coolest evening in a month in Maricopa County. The temperature actually dipped to 79 degrees in the rain!

OMS Annual Show

Mark you calendars: the biggest event of the year for Orcutt Mineral Society is here!

Volunteer Opportunities!

So, you aren't sure who to contact? Just give the following chairmen a call, and say, "I'd like to help out!" Together, we can make it bigger, better, friendlier, and more fun!

Chairman	Lucky Virgin
Co-chair	Sharon Duncan
Dealers	Wes Lingerfelt
Exhibits and Demonstrations	Lucky Virgin

Country Store	Debbie Hood
Snack Bar	Sylvia Nasholm
Treasure Chest	Dee Dee Magri
Decorations	Ralph Bishop
Grab Bags	Bess Shields
Hostess	Dee Dee Magri
Electrical	Wes Lingerfelt
Publicity	Wayne Mills
Signs	Don Nasholm, Wes Lingerfelt
Security	Robert Bullock
Show Layout	Wes Lingerfelt
Skirting, set-up & clean-up	All members
Thursday Dinner	Sylvia Nasholm

The Wanderer

Gem Show Homilies

- We were all newcomers once.
- Make a plan, show up early, and encourage volunteers.
- Expect the unexpected.
- Take the time to watch new demonstrations by experts.
- Club cases were invented for those individual special and unique pieces.
- The more we learn, the more we seem to forget.
- Life is a work in progress, just keep moving.
- Questions indicate interest, and answers are worth much to newbies.
- The more we volunteer and give, the more we get back.
- Pick a shady spot, slow down, and listen to the rock-related tall-tales flow.
- Volunteer now while your health is good.
- Be sweet as you meet and greet.
- Open your arms to friendships, both new and old.
- Take time to teach an interested child.
- Cook with all your heart (and give the resulting pies to Sylvia).
- Sit-down volunteer jobs are important, too.
- Barbecues are a great time for sharing.
- Humor dispels tension.
- Clean garages mean full Country Stores.

- Sharing new techniques is a loving thing, and practice makes perfect.
- Sit down with a senior, and listen to their rockhounding stories.

I hope to see you at the Gem Show.

Happy Hunting,
Love, Bess

Orcutt Mineral Society

Board Meeting
Mussell Senior Center, Santa Maria CA
5 July 2005

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. by President Lucky Virgin. Present were Lucky Virgin, Sharon Duncan, Wes Lingerfelt, Bess Shields, Sylvia Nasholm, Geary Sheffer, Bob Bullock, DeeDee Magri, and Debbie Hood. Guests attending were Don Nasholm, and Bill Hood.

Minutes of the previous General Meeting were approved as read.

Treasurer's Report was read by Wes Lingerfelt, and accepted as read.

Committee Reports:

Adopt-a-Highway: Lucky Virgin is looking for a volunteer since Marshall Reeves has moved to Oregon.

Bulletin (*Ore-Cutts*): Bess Shields will announce the 9 CFMS winners at the General Meeting next week, and will present the awards.

Field Trips: Bob Bullock invites us to the Vandenberg field trip on July 9th.

Raffle: Lucky Virgin needs a volunteer to run the General Meeting Raffle.

Show:

BBQ: Bob Bullock has the shopping list, and will begin buying supplies.

Food: Sylvia Nasholm is finalizing the volunteer team. Elaine VonAchen will purchase the beverages.

Displays/Demos: Lucky Virgin is assembling the list of demonstrators, displays, and exhibits for the Show. He received fresh input from the Board about additional display case needs.

Treasure Chest: DeeDee Magri needs a lot more donations. Perhaps a reminder on the Phone Tree would prompt more response.

Raffle Tickets: Wes Lingerfelt distributed some packets tonight, and will bring the remainder to next weeks' General Meeting.

Correspondence:

- *Dinny's Doin's* newsletter.
- *Pick & Shovel* newsletter.
- *Rockonteur* newsletter.

- *Future Rockhounters of America* correspondence.
- *Breccia* newsletter.
- *Rollin' Rock* newsletter.
- *The Agatizer* newsletter.

Unfinished Business:

Wes Lingerfelt printed new color posters reflecting our website contact, and new flyers. Wes distributed some to Board members, and will bring the bulk to the General Meeting.

Due to a recent sprinkler system malfunction, the Gem Show (Church) parking lot is a swamp.

Wes is contacting the local newspaper reporters who will hopefully feature our Gem Show again this year.

Dealers space signups are down this year.

Table skirting is worn, and needs replacement. Sharon Duncan will look into this project.

Wes will make the BBQ tickets next week.

Sylvia Nasholm will plan for 125 chicken dinners to be served on Thursday evening (to feed OMS volunteers, dealers, and case display participants).

Wes will line up security for the Gem Show.

New Business:

None.

The program for next week's General Meeting is a film entitled "Amazing Caves". Display will be "Your 1' x 1' Display". Refreshments are pies.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m. by President Virgin.

Secretary, OMS

Respectfully submitted,

Bess Shields, Secretary, OMS

Orcutt Mineral Society
General Meeting
Mussell Sr. Center, Santa Maria CA
12 July 2005

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. by President Lucky Virgin. Flag salute was led by Geary Sheffer. Invocation was given by Mike Henson.

Minutes of the previous Board Meeting was approved as read.

Treasurer's Report was read by Wes Lingerfelt, and accepted as read.

Elaine VonAchen reported 37 members and 9 guests were present. Guests were Hans Borm, Robert Cochran, Kevin Cochran, Roger Leeman, Roney Right, Linda, Lynette Clements, Cindy Quinn, and Jack Quinn.

Committee Reports:

Adopt a Highway needs a volunteer to head the committee.

Breakfast: Ken Kreh reported that 14 members attended the last Breakfast.

Field Trips: Bob Bullock reported a successful trip to Vandenberg with 13 members attending. Jasper, xonotlite, agate, and chert were found.

Library, Books, Videos: Geary Sheffer has numerous books and tapes that members can check out tonight. There is a good turnover in materials.

Raffle: Wayne Mills volunteered to conduct the raffle at monthly meetings.

Sunshine: Debbie Hood reported that Herta Borm has bone cancer, and would enjoy receiving cards. Jerry Har is in the hospital, and won't be attending our Gem Show this year.

Correspondence:

- *Dinny's Doin's* newsletter.
- Lapidarian newsletter.
- Rockonteur newsletter.
- Rocky Review newsletter.
- Pick & Shovel newsletter.
- Agatizer newsletter.
- Future Rockhounds of America letter.
- Breccia newsletter.
- Rollin' Rock newsletter.
- *Rock Chips* newsletter.

Unfinished Business:

Gem Show – Lucky Virgin needs volunteers in all areas. Wes Lingerfelt reported that the grounds and driveway in to the show are in terrible shape.

Volunteers are asked to assemble on Wednesday, August 3rd 9:00 a.m. to mark the blacktop and vendor spaces. Coffee and donuts will be provided.

Thursday, August 4th, report at 8:00 a.m. to set up tables in the hall, skirt tables, assemble lighting, place display cases, and prepare the welcome table. A member will be needed to hand out welcome packets to all dealers, demonstrators, and exhibitors as they arrive (starting at noon).

Thursday chicken dinner for dealers, OMS volunteers, and those displaying/demonstrating will start at 5:30 p.m., and will conclude at 6:30 p.m.

Friday, August 5th, the show begins at 10:00 a.m.

Saturday, August 6th, BBQ Dinner begins at 6:30 p.m. and costs \$8 for adults/\$4 for youngsters.

Sunday, August 7th, the Raffle begins at 4:00 p.m. Wes Lingerfelt has the spare tickets.

Sylvia Nasholm asks each member to donate a pie on Thursday or Friday.

Debbie Hood needs help in the Country Store.

Remember to wear your club vest or an OMS tee shirt (available for sale at the Hospitality Table tonight, or at the Gem Show).

Don Nasholm and Wes Lingerfelt will put the advertisement signs out this week on Highway 101.

Do not park in the Church parking lot! Do park on the dirt area, or behind the BBQ area.

New Business:

None.

Following refreshments of homemade pies, Sharon Duncan showed a CFMS video on "Amazing Caves". Displays were 1' x 1' practice displays.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 p.m. by President Virgin.

Respectfully submitted,

Bess Shields

Secretary, OMS

Web Sites of Note:

August 2005

American Mineralogist Archive:

http://www.minsocam.org/MSA/collectors_corner/arc/fluorhal.htm

Trona Halite Dig – 64th Annual Gem-o-Rama:

<http://www1.iwvisp.com/tronagemclub/>

Formation of the Salton Sea:

<http://www.saltonsea.ca.gov/histchron.htm>

Polish Salt Mine history:

<http://www.saltinstitute.org>

Mineral Database:

<http://webmineral.com/>

Geospatial Resources:

<http://library.humboldt.edu/~rls/geospatial/calmaps.htm>

Geoglyphs Around the World:

http://survive2012.com/nazca_lines_5.php

Dirty Rockhounds, Gemstones:

<http://www.dirtyrockhounds.com/stategemstones.html>

Fire Mapping and Planning Tool:

<http://wildfire.cr.usgs.gov/fireplanning/>

Mark's Fluorescent Minerals collection:

<http://www.mtinfolpage.com/fluoresce.htm>

Halite hoppers:

<http://labs.sci.qut.edu.au/minerals/mineral%20photos/H/halite%20cp.htm>

California Federation of Mineralogical Societies:

<http://www.cfmsinc.org/>

American Federation of Mineralogical Societies:

<http://www.amfed.org/>

Official Stuff

OMS Purpose

Founded in 1958, and is named after William Orcutt, a geologist and civil engineer who worked in the Santa Maria Valley as a district manager for Union Oil Company in 1888. In 1889, Orcutt discov-

ered the fossil wealth of the La Brea Tar Pits, one of the most significant fossil finds in paleontological history. The Society is a non-profit club, dedicated to stimulating an interest in rocks and minerals. The club offers educational programs, field trips, youth activities, and other opportunities for families and individuals to pursue an interest in collecting and lapidary treatment of rocks, fossils, gems, minerals, and other facets of Earth Sciences. In addition, a goal of this Society is to promote good fellowship and proper ethics in pursuit of the society's endeavors. Operating rules have been set forth to guide the Officers and members of the Society in accomplishing these purposes. Affiliations: California Federation of Mineralogical Societies and American Federation of Mineralogical Societies.



Oms Logo

A rock saw cutting a piece of stone was selected when the first bulletin, *ORE-CUTTS* (namesake, William Orcutt) was first published in 1966. Member Helen Azevedo was the first editor.

2005 OMS Officers

President	Lucky Virgin	(805) 929-4525
President Elect	Sharon Duncan	(805) 929-2209
Secretary	Bess Shields	(805) 937-0357
Treasurer	Wes Lingerfelt	(805) 929-3788
Immediate Past President	Debbie Hood	(805) 481-6860
CFMS Representative	Wes Lingerfelt	(805) 929-3788

2005 OMS Board Members

Geary Sheffer	(805) 925-8009
Sylvia Nasholm	(805) 481-0923
Robert Bullock	(805) 928-6372
DeeDee Magri	(805) 595-2755
Wayne Mills	(805) 481-3495

Ore-Cutts Editors

Dick and Bess Shields	(805) 937-0357
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Webmasters

Dick Shields	(805) 937-0357
Wes Lingerfelt	(805) 929-3788

Ore-Cutts Photo Credits: "Halite" photos by Dick Shields; "Rowley" photos by Dick Shields and Ed Davis

Oms Membership dues are \$18 per year. Junior Membership is \$9.00. New membership dues are pro-rated from January 1st of the first year.

August 2005 Calendar

Tuesday August 2, 2005 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM	Oms Board Meeting -- Mussell Senior Center. All members are welcome at this business meeting.
Friday - Sunday August 5-7, 2005 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM	38 th Annual Oms Gem Show -- St Joseph's Church, 298 South Thompson Avenue, Nipomo. For details go to http://www.omsinc.org/tailgate.html For reservations call Wes Lingerfelt at (805) 929-3788 or Lucky Virgin at (805) 929-4525.
Tuesday August 9, 2005 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Oms General Meeting -- Mussell Senior Center. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program: "Oms Gem Show Recap with Slides" • Display: Agates from Everywhere • Refreshment: Cookies
Saturday August 27, 2005 8:15 AM - 9:15 AM	Oms Monthly Breakfast -- "Francisco's Country Kitchen" in Santa Maria. Call Ken Kreh at 343-7749 for details.

September 2005 Calendar

Tuesday September 6, 2005 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM	Oms Board Meeting -- Mussell Senior Center. All members are welcome at this business meeting
Saturday September 10, 2005 9:00 AM - 4:30 PM	Field Trip to Los Padres Forest -- Meet at Mussell Senior Center Parking Lot. Explore a local private ranch with an interesting green chert deposit and fossil shells. Accessible for 2 wheel drive vehicles and no hiking required. Bring lunch and water to drink. Contact Bob Bullock at 928-6372 for details.
Tuesday September 13, 2005 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM	Oms General Meeting -- Mussell Senior Center <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program: "Fluorescing" by Dick Shields • Display: Bring rocks and minerals to fluoresce • Refreshment: Cakes and Cookies
Saturday September 17, 2005 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM	Oms Highway Cleanup -- Intersection of Highway 101 and 166 After the cleanup we have coffee and pastry at "Francisco's Country Kitchen" in Santa Maria. Contact Lucky Virgin at 929-4525 for details.

Saturday September 24, 2005 8:15 AM - 9:15 AM	OMS Monthly Breakfast – “Francisco’s Country Kitchen” in Santa Maria. Call Ken Kreh at 343-7749 for details.
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October 2005 Calendar

Tuesday October 4, 2005 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM	OMS Board Meeting -- Mussell Senior Center. All members are welcome at this business meeting.
Tuesday October 11, 2005 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM	OMS General Meeting -- Mussell Senior Center. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program: To Be Announced • Display: Favorite Rocks from 2005 Field Trips • Refreshment: Pies.
Saturday October 15, 2005 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM	Field Trip to Clear Creek -- Meet at Mussell Senior Center Parking Lot A long day to hunt in a prized California gem collecting area. We can find botryoidal jade, orbicular pieces of jasper, chatoyant material, serpentine, cinnabar, and turtle jade. Bring lunch and sturdy shoes for short hikes. We'll eat dinner on the way home. Contact Bob Bullock at 928-6372 for details.
Saturday October 22, 2005 8:15 AM - 9:15 AM	OMS Monthly Breakfast – “Francisco’s Country Kitchen” in Santa Maria. Call Ken Kreh at 343-7749 for details.

38th Annual OMS Gem Show

Earth's Treasures - Rocks - Minerals - Gems
Exhibits - Tailgaters - Demonstrations - Lapidary Equipment
St Joseph's Church
298 South Thompson Avenue
Nipomo, California

3 Big Days! 10 AM-5 PM

August 5th, 6th, 7th 2005

ONE-OF-A-KIND CRAFTED STONE
MERCHANDISE FROM ALL OVER THE
WORLD. ROCK BOTTOM PRICES!

RAFFLES! PRIZES!

FOOD ON SALE!

MONSTER SANTA MARIA STYLE BBQ ON
SATURDAY NIGHT ONLY \$8.00 FOR
ADULTS, \$4.00 FOR KIDS 12 AND UNDER.
Free Parking – Free Admission!

Orcutt Mineral Society
P.O. Box 106
Santa Maria, CA 93456

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED