

# THE VOICE

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NEWSLETTER OF THE EL PASO MINERAL AND GEM SOCIETY

P.O. Box 31516, El Paso TX 79931

Membership Dues are due and payable as of December of each year. Dues are \$12.00 for Adults (18 and Over) and \$4.00 for Juniors. Make check out to EPMGS and mail to PO Box 31516 El Paso TX 79931. **Delinquency of over 90 days will result in being removed from the Membership Roster.**

**Meetings will be held on the 4th Thursday of every month at The Memorial Senior Center, 1800 Byron, El Paso TX at 6:30 PM.** Board Meetings will usually be held a half hour prior to the general meeting

## THE VOICE

The Voice is the official bulletin of the Society and is published monthly. All articles must be in the editor's possession no later than the Monday following the monthly meeting. Any articles received after that will not be published until the following month.

E-mail [madtex@q.com](mailto:madtex@q.com) and mailing address: EPMGS, Editor, PO Box 31516, El Paso TX 79931. Members are encouraged to submit articles for publication. Permission is granted to reprint material from other sources provided that credit is properly cited. Ads are accepted from members for publication at no charge for the sale or exchange of items pertaining to the hobby.

**WEBSITE: [www.epmgs.com](http://www.epmgs.com)**

The El Paso Mineral and Gem Society, Inc. is a non-profit organization. The purpose of this Society shall be to increase and

disseminate knowledge about minerals and other geologic materials; to encourage mineral study, collecting and fashioning as a hobby; to conduct meeting, lectures, displays, field trips, and to sponsor shows for the general edification of the public.

## ADDRESS CHANGES

**NOTE: Anyone who has a change in mailing address, phone number, etc. please send e-mails to Judy Herd at [pyritejudy@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pyritejudy@sbcglobal.net), or mail to: EPMGS Membership, PO Box 31516, El Paso TX 79931. Thank you.**

Save a tree sign up for email delivery of the Voice.

## General Meeting

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Our next general meeting will **August 25, 2011 at 6:30pm**. There will be a presentation on wire wrapping and an introduction to an EPMGS scholarship candidate. Members whose last name initial begins with A-M please bring a desert.

## Secretary Report

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No report this month. Last meeting was our annual Picnic at Franklin State park.

## Field Trip

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Hello, All!

No, I did NOT fall off the face of the earth....

This is just a quick note to let you know what's happening on field trips. Unfortunately, two trips have literally been wiped out by recent fires. I simply cancelled the trip for July due to both the heat and the inability to enter the national forests where I hoped to have

us do some fossil hunting.

Due to my competition schedule, the August trip will be later in the month. I have tentatively scheduled this for 20 August to Rincon, NM for psilomelane and jasper, and possibly to the old barite mines for barite. We might also go to Hatch, NM (just up I-25 from Rincon) for petrified wood, banded rhyolite and jasper depending upon how everyone feels and how hot it decides to be that day.

Our September trip is tentatively scheduled for Mason, Texas for quartz and topaz. This one's for the faceters among us! This will be an overnight trip. More info will follow as soon as I get everything pulled together.

Our October trip is tentatively scheduled for Coronado National Forest/Geronimo Trail for banded rhyolite, agate, chalcedony, and geodes.

Our November trip is tentatively a local one to Anthony Gap for fossils.

In December we'll be having our show, so I haven't scheduled a trip for that month. But if there's demand for one, I'll pull one together.

That's it for now. As some of you know, Larry Hager and I have been scouting areas and finding spots that are relatively unknown and therefore not so picked over. Larry often posts pictures of his finds and slabs/cabochons that he makes from materials found so you can get an idea of what you can find at some of these locations. Look him up on Facebook to get a look at his pics. Happy hounding!

-Sue

# Mexican Fire opal

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[Mexican Opal](#) is considered a mineraloid and has no crystal structure. The term used for no structure is amorphous. Opal is scientifically written as  $\text{SiO}_2 \cdot \text{NH}_2\text{O}$ . It is called hydrated silicon dioxide. Stones that can commonly form Opal are limestone, basalt, rhyolite and sandstone. While Opal contains water, the water content does vary by stone. For instance, Opal has been found with water content approaching 20%; however, most Opal stones used for ornamental jewelry usually have water content of 3% to 10%. Fire opal, like all opal, has high water content. As a result, it should be protected from heat and prolonged exposure to strong light, which could dry it out. Dealers cure fire opal by drying it before cutting to make sure that any instability can be eliminated.

Mexican Opal is rated at 5.5 to 6.5 on Mohs's Scale of [hardness](#). The physical structure of Opal is unique. Tiny spheres of silicon dioxide form a pyramid shaped grid interspersed with water. Tiny natural faults in this grid cause the characteristic "[play of color](#)" - opalescence. The effect is similar to the rainbow colors displayed on a soap bubble, only much more dramatic. The incredible play of color is exhibited by the gemstone due to the presence of small spheres in the silica gel that causes interference and refraction appearance. Silicon and oxygen chains are packed in the spheres and these are uneven in size and incoherent in concentration. These are set in a compact structures thus, when ray of light falls it dissects the light on its way through the stone resulting in the awesome

color play. As per the size of the spheres within the structure, changeable colors of the gamut are diffracted. With the increase in the consistency of the spheres position, more intense and brilliant would be the color play.

[Mexican opal](#) that displays play of color but is rare because volcanic opal forms relatively quickly and the spheres of silica rarely have time to settle into the diffraction grids that create play of color.

Fire opal glows with the fire of the sun: hot honey yellows, oranges, and reds so bright they look as though they might glow in the dark. Fire opal sometimes does have opalescence or play of color like other opals but it does not need this to take a starring role in jewelry. Its juicy [color](#) is just the right accent to earth [tones](#) or black and also looks great paired with other bright tones.

## Cut

Fine Opal stones are cut and polished to round or oval cabochons or other softly domed shapes so as to display the best color. [Cut](#) is a very important characteristic of Opal, as the beauty of the crucial feature (i.e. color play) of the stone is dependent on its [cut](#). The cut of the stone is the key to revealing its magnificence. First, the cutters remove the inclusions present in the stone with a diamond cutting wheel. Next a soft dome shape is given in order to bring out the fine color play. After cutting, the finishing is done using sandpaper, and finally the polishing is done with the help of a wet leather wheel. Jewelry designers can get many desirable cuts or the shapes from this striking stone. [Oval](#), circular and [round cabochons](#) are preferred as in these shapes

the color play is displayed at its best. Some other popular shapes are teardrop, [square](#), rectangle and triangle etc.

Unlike most opal, [fire opal](#) is often faceted, so you can choose sparkle as well as color. Because it is light as well as bright, fire opal is especially good for earrings, where even small sizes have a big punch of color. Only the very finest qualities of Fire Opal are suitable for faceting.

### Treatments

Opal is a soft stone and therefore is occasionally treated or impregnated with colorless oils, plastic, resin or wax which act as a bonding agent, reduce the visibility of the inclusions and improve the overall clarity of the stones. Black Opal is occasionally treated with chemicals, smoke, or dye. Opals are also sometimes backed with foil, black paint or lacquer. Thin opal is often made into doublets or triplets by covering the back and front.

### Sources

Opal began its formation 15 to 30 million years ago, during the tertiary period. Starting out as a liquid, the slurry seeped through sedimentary layers of earth, settling within impervious clays at a depth of 20 to 30 meters. Over the course of millions of years, the liquid slurry crystallized, becoming precious opal.

[Mexican Opal](#) was born in fire, in the ancient volcanoes of Mexico. Fire opal forms when water seeps into silica-rich lava, filling seams and hollows. Under heat and pressure, the silica forms a solid gel, trapping the remaining water within its

structure. Small pebbles of fire opal are found embedded in lava flows

Fire opal is found in Central America, South America and the United States (Idaho and Oregon), typically within cavities formed in volcanic lava flows. The vast majority is from Mexico. Mexican opal is mined in the Mexican states of Queretaro, Hidalgo, Guerrero, Michoacán, Jalisco, Chihuahua and San Luis Potosi. The most important mines in Queretaro were discovered in 1835 and are still producing today. AJS Gems.



Fire Opal & pendant by Taco Rocks



Fire opal



Serious wrong turn

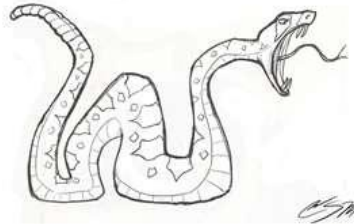
## FROM THE MINE OF THE EDITOR



On a recent outing again in the Rincon area a rock hound friend and I were relatively misplaced from our original destination, not lost. We came across a watering hole and the cows asked "Are you lost?" "Misplaced I responded," We figured as long as we are visiting the cows we might look around. To

our surprise we found some multi colored orbicular rhyolite. So just because one is misplaced, stop and look around, you just might find what you were not looking for.

## Dangerous Fangs



Rattlesnakes go with the territory. They were here first and they'll be here when we leave the field. The Rattlesnake is not evil nor is it your friend. It does deserve and demand our respect.

In New Mexico, the Rattlesnake varieties are numerous and every local has them. Some say when speaking of being bitten this particular one or that variety is more venomous. It's like being hit by a car, that it's better to be hit by a small car or large one, run over is run over. A Rattlesnake bite is very serious,

In most circumstances, if you see a Rattlesnake and give it room to pass or to stay where it is all turns out well. Ignore that rule and you might just get what you're asking for, bitten.

This is what to do after being bit according to the NM Department of Health Veterinarian Dr. Paul Etterstad:

Try to remain calm and inactive.

Get to a hospital or doctor ASAP.

Loosen or remove restrictive clothing or jewelry from the area near the bite.

Watch for signs of shock. Treat if necessary by lying down with feet elevated and keep warm.

Identify or photograph the snake safely.

What NOT to do in the event of a Rattlesnake bite:

Don't make incisions over the snake bite.

Don't constrict the flow of blood.

Don't immerse a limb in ice water.

Don't elevate the bitten area (this will increase the flow of venom to other tissues.)

Don't use your mouth to extract venom.

Don't run or carry unnecessary items as you go for help to avoid elevating your pulse rate.

Don't try to catch or kill the snake.

Don't administer any pain medications or antihistamines unless instructed by a doctor.

Rattlesnakes are most active at night and early morning. To prevent potential bites, wear over the ankle or calf high boots, loose fitting long pants, chaps or anti snake bite leg coverings. Don't reach into or place your hands where you cannot see. Step on

rocks and logs not over them. Be careful when walking in tall brush or thickets.

Rattlesnakes have a role in our environment. Most people are bitten when trying to catch or kill them.

Source; NM Dept. of Health

## Silversmith Tips

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### SOLDERING PRONGS

I often use prongs to hold an irregular cab or other object on rings and pendants. But they're a little tricky to solder. You have to find some way to hold them all upright while soldering, and what looks like a strong joint sometimes turns out to be a fake. There's nothing worse than having a prong break off when you're setting the stone \*#~\*!

I solved both problems with one little trick. Locate and center punch the location for each prong. Then drill holes just a little smaller than your prong wire. Sand a small taper on the ends of your prong wires and insert them in the holes. The wires support themselves, soldering is easy, and the joint is stronger because of the increased soldering area.

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## TWISTING WIRE

Twisting wires together can be done with an old hand drill but goes much faster with a power tool. My preference is to use a screw gun, although a Dremel or Foredom should do well. Just make a little hook out of coat hanger wire (or use a screw-in cup hook) and chuck it up in your screw gun. Fasten the ends of the wires in a vice and slip the other ends on your hook. Keep a little tension on the wires as you twist.

Note that a power drill is too fast a tool for this unless you have one with a variable speed control.

## SMOOTHING EARWIRES

Any time you make your own ear wires, the hardest part for me is to sand and polish the end that's inserted into the ear. Sharp edges are no fun. I've tried using sanding sticks, cup burs, and

silicone polishing wheels. I've tried buffing on a Zam wheel, and I've tried spinning the wire in the Foredom to polish the tip. While all of these techniques do the job, none are very easy or fast.

Then it occurred to me - I could melt the wire smooth. One quick touch in the flame of the propane/oxygen Little Torch does the trick - not enough to form a bead on the wire but just enough to round off the tip.

More Bench Tips by Brad Smith are at [groups.yahoo.com/group/BenchTip](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BenchTip) [facebook.com/BenchTips](http://facebook.com/BenchTips)



## "AGATE RENDEZVOUS 2011"

The "Chaparral Rockhounds" of Roswell, NM, would like to cordially invite all Rockhounds of all ages to "AGATE RENDEZVOUS 2011", our annual ten-day, nine-night fieldtrip event through the Labor Day weekend held at Apache Creek, New Mexico, from August 27<sup>th</sup> to September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011. This is an "Inter-Federation Campout & Fieldtrip Event" for the whole family with the Rocky Mountain, California and the South Central Federations (and all other Federation who wish to attend). We have seven days of very adventurous and interesting fieldtrips every day from 20 to 200 miles round-trip from our base camp. Each day we leave at 8:30 AM with a picnic lunch to different areas in the region to collect a very wide variety of rocks, minerals and/or crystals that can include: Agate, Banded Agate, Blood Stone, Chalcedony, Crystalline, Flat Band Agate, Geodes, Golden Luna Agate, Hematite, Jasper, Lava's, Luna Blue Agate, Obsidian, Plume Agate, Quartz Crystals, Red Luna Agate, Snowflake Agate and Thunder Eggs just to name only a few. A couple of our fieldtrips might be into the eastern portion Arizona along the state line. Several of the areas that we travel into, one will need a high-clearance or 4WD type vehicle. If you do not have this type of vehicle, don't worry, someone would be happy to carpool with a little "\$\$\$\$" help for gas.

The very small town of Apache Creek is located in the central-western part of the state about 117 miles west of Socorro, NM, on NM-12 southwest of the small town of Datil, NM. Apache Creek campground, used as our base camp, was once a CCC Base Camp back in the 1930's. It is a beautiful and tranquil camping area with tall majestic Ponderosa pine trees towering over the entire camp area for plenty of cool shade during the warm days of August. The area is large and spacious enough for the largest of RV's to the smallest of pup tents and everything in between. Being a rustic camp area, there are no facilities, water or electricity, just one coed chemical toilet, so you must come prepared. There is no cost or camping fees at Apache Creek campground. The town of Apache Creek has one main structure in town, a small country store where one can buy the "very basics" and is where we get our spring water for washing out rocks. The small town of Reserve is twelve miles to the southwest and has a grocery store, bank/ATM, garage/gas station and a small motel for anyone who does not want to campout. The majority of the time, Mother Nature cooperates. The weather in August has warm days in the upper 70's to 80's and cool nights in the 50's with some possible 40's and even 30's. Occasionally, late summer thundershowers may wonder through the area to put a damper on things, so come prepared for the unexpected. The elevation of our base camp is about 6400 feet with day outings that can be up to 8500 to 9000 feet.

Every afternoon about 4:30 or 5:00 PM after a day of collecting, some of the rockhounds get together and have a happy hour to socialize and talk about the day's findings. Then everyone has supper on their own around 6:00 PM. Afterwards around 7PM, we sit around the campfire and tell TALL stories of old mining, prospecting and Rockhounding glory days. The nighttime skies at Apache Creek are breathtaking. With no light pollution, one can see millions of stars. So, if you have a good pair of binoculars or a telescope, be sure to bring them too for some spectacular stargazing. On both Saturday afternoons after returning from our outing, we all get together for our traditional "Apache Creek Group Photo" about 6:00 PM. Afterwards, we all get ready for our traditional potluck supper. Everyone makes their favorite camp dish and we share them while telling more stories around the campfire. On each Sunday morning at 8:00 AM, we will have a Rollin' Rock Club meeting if we have enough folks interested.

Rockhounds that show up can camp-out anywhere from a couple of nights to the entire campout. Some just come for the last weekend to visit and see old friends. Some Rockhounds camp out for over two weeks. Everyone that comes always has a great time with all the camaraderie and collecting, and everyone **ALWAYS** goes home hundreds of pounds heavier. Each year, it only gets better. We really hope that your club members can join us this year to make some new friends and really have some good old "**Rockhounding Fun and Adventure.**" For the last 13 years, we have averaged 50+ Rockhounds that have attended the campout from at least half a dozen states. Just the right size for a Rockhound get together. And folks, if you have any good unique swapping/trading material from your home area, be sure to bring it. And in addition, if you have a CB Radio, be sure to bring it along. We use CB Channel 7 on all our fieldtrips. When you arrive at the campground, just look for the "White Framed Canopy", that's our HQ. Please stop by and sign in.

After seven straight days of fieldtrips, Saturday, Sunday and Labor Day on the last weekend are open days. For those not interested in going out rock collecting, there are several other things to see and do in the area:

New Mexico Bureau of Mines Mineral Museum is located in Socorro, NM on the campus of the New Mexico Bureau of Mines. The museum is one of the "Top Three Mineral Museums" in all of North America and well worth the trip.

Very Large Array (VLA) Radio Astronomy Telescope is where the movie "Contact" with Jodie Foster was filmed. If you are interested in Astronomy, you defiantly want to check this place out. They have a very interesting, informative and education Visitors Center.

Apache Creek South Mesa has some unique 600-year-old Petroglyphs located on the south side of the mesa. The site is only a two-mile round trip hike from the campground.

Catron County Fair in Reserve, NM is the place to be on the first weekend of the campout. On August 26<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup>, the town will be having their annual County Fair with a Livestock Show, Arts & Crafts, a Rodeo and Dance.

Catron County Gem & Mineral Show during the Labor Day weekend will be at the Reserve Civic Center. The local Rockhounds and Artisans will be having their 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Rock Show with an Open-Tailgate Rock Swap on Saturday. Bring your Rocks to buy, sale or trade. Dealers are welcome.

Catron County Gun Show during the Labor Day weekend will be at the Reserve Fair Grounds.

Mogollon, NM is an old historic and famous ghost town in the Mogollon Mountains, Gila National Forest. There are Antique Shops, a very interesting Mining Museum, the "Mogollon Rock Shop", the Old Theater and have lunch in the Old Town Café with homemade pies.

The Catwalk is a very beautiful, tranquil and scenic canyon for hiking. Therefore, if you love hiking, the Catwalk is for you. In addition, there are numerous places to go hiking throughout the Gila and Apache National Forests.

Silver City Gem and Mineral Show in Silver City, NM. The local club will be having their 28<sup>th</sup> annual 3-day show during the Labor Day weekend. It is only a two-hour drive south and the very beautiful and scenic landscape will make the trip a memorable one.

**Lodging:** For those folks who do not wish to camp out, or need electricity and water for their RV, there are the following alternatives. Be sure to make any reservations as early as possible due to Bow Hunting season for Elk, which starts on Monday the 1<sup>st</sup>. The rooms and RV spaces fill up fast.

Apache Creek Deaf & Youth Ranch located just six miles north of Apache Creek has both rooms and cabins for rent. They run about \$35.00 donation a night. They also have a few RV sites with full hookups. 575-533-6823 or 575-533-6820

Apache Creek RV is located in nearby Cruzville. They have a Dump Station, Ice, Laundry, Propane & Showers. 575-533-6166

Rode Inn Motel is located on Main Street in Reserve. They have Cable TV, Direct Dial Phones, Queen Beds and a Laundromat. Rooms run around \$55.00 a night. 575-533-6661.

**Dining:** For those folks who wish to have a change of diet from camp food, there are the following alternatives.

Carmen's in Reserve has authentic American & Mexican food.

Ella's Café in Reserve has home cooking.

The Adobe Café & Bakery in Rancho Grande.

The host for AGATE RENDEZVOUS is the Chaparral Rockhounds of Roswell, NM. If you are planning on coming to AGATE RENDEZVOUS, please RSVP NLT the 19<sup>th</sup> of August. For any additional information about the Rendezvous, please contact Yonis Lone Eagle, RMFMS New Mexico State Director at 505-860-2455 or via e-mail at: [rockymountainrockhounds at yahoo.com](mailto:rockymountainrockhounds@yahoo.com). All rockhounds that attend will abide by the American Federation of Mineralogical Societies "Code of Conduct".

## School information

**Call 915-562-4268 for information and to enroll in Lapidary and Jewelry-craft classes.** The Instructors are volunteers from the school committee of the Society and are not paid in any way by the Society or the students. If you want to enroll in one of the classes, all you have to do is sign up at the Memorial Park Senior Center which is located at 1800 Byron Street, El Paso TX. It is important that you register early because a minimum of three students is needed for a "Go" with a maximum of six students per class. Sign up well in advance as there are usually waiting lists. Each Class has a \$20 fee plus a Lab Fee and any other material costs. The \$20 fee payment is to be made on the first day of the class to the Senior Center, and the Lab Fee will be paid to your instructor. All other material purchases should be paid for at the time of purchase or delivery.

### SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

The meetings are all held at noon in the conference room at the Memorial Park Senior Citizens Center. Anybody who wishes to sit in on any of the meetings is welcome. We recommend that you call Rose Strong at the Center first to make sure that the meeting date has not changed. Her number is 915-562-4268.

Wed Jan 26	Tue Feb 22	Mon Mar 21	Tue Apr 19
Wed May 25	Tue Jun 21	Mon Jul 18	Tue Aug 23
Mon Sep 19	Tue Oct 18	Mon Nov 14	Tue Dec 13

### 2011 CLUB OFFICERS

President Liz Kosturakis (915)595-1413	Vice President P.J. Schabacker (575)589-5068
Treasurer Riitta Gillespie (915)821-4273	Secretary Teresa Ziraldo (915)526-9445
Historian Marty Gaugler (915)859-6634	Editor Matt Durning (915)491-3244
Field Trips Sue Critz (915)203-4783	Membership Judy Herd (915)821-7818

3 Year Trustee Tom Smith (915)778-5240	2 Year Trustee Miguel Chrisman (915)740-0301
1 Year Trustee Matt Durning	Show Chair Harry Bruntz (915)345-2415
Assist. Show Chair Jeanette Carrillo (915)533-7153	Webmaster Matt Durning

**Area show dates [www.rockngem.com/showdates](http://www.rockngem.com/showdates)**

