
Bay Area Mineralogists April 2016

Meeting: Wednesday, April 13, 2016; 7 pm
USGS, 345 Middlefield Road, Menlo Park
Building 3, 2nd Floor, Auditorium

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The Bay Area Mineralogists meet monthly during the school year, on the 2nd Wednesday. We meet at the U.S. Geological Survey in Menlo Park, on the second floor of Building 3, where the campus map (<http://online.wr.usgs.gov/calendar/map.html>) says "Rambo Auditorium." The front doors will be locked so you'll have to come up the stairs on the Middlefield Road side of the building. Parking is free.

Santa Clara Show & BAM Display

The annual Santa Clara Valley Gem & Mineral Society show is coming soon – April 16 & 17, to be exact. BAM members will be participating, as dealers and/or exhibitors, and there's always good stuff to see. Whether as participant or viewer/buyer, be sure to visit the show.

And consider helping BAM out: It looks like we will be able to put in a BAM display. It won't be the giant display case we had last year, but it still takes a good number of mineral specimens to fill in the standard 2' x 4' exhibit case. Dan Evanich is spearheading this effort, and would appreciate loaner specimens to help flesh it out. You can bring your specimens to Dan at the April 13 meeting, or bring them to the show venue on Friday (and help with set up?), or make other arrangements directly with him.

April Program:

The Onganja Mine, Namibia, and its minerals, by Don Windeler

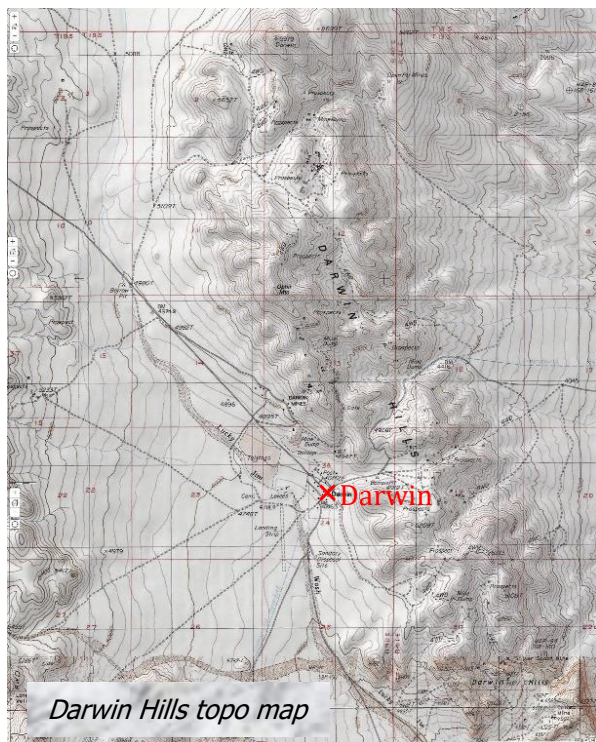
The Onganja deposit is located approximated 65 km southeast of Windhoek, Namibia, and comprises a set of Cu-(Mo-Au)-bearing veins. Also known as the Ogonja or Emke Mine, it has produced world-class specimens of cuprite and native copper. This talk will provide an overview of the history and geology of the mine along with a sampling of some of the minerals that made it famous. Bring specimens from Onganja (or your other Namibian favorites) for show and tell.



*Crystallized copper, Onganja district, 7cm.
Bruce Cairncross specimen and photo.*



Not much has changed in the Darwin area over the past seven years. That was the last time we had a BAM group field trip to the locality. Several BAM members recently visited this historic mining region while attending the Southern California Friends of Mineralogy symposium held at Jawbone Station on March 19. Three of us, Paul Favia, Cliff Imprescia, and Dan Evanich, could not make the symposium date and arrived later on Sunday, the 20th, to collect in Darwin area through Wednesday, the 23rd. Following are a few details of what we experienced.



Cliff and Dan arrived Sunday afternoon and found time to take a side trip up to Cerro Gordo. It's a deceptive looking seven mile road to the top with a tough, steep grade up, in loaded down trucks. Even though the temperature in the area was mild (in the 70s), both trucks reached the high end of the temp gauges. Dan spun one tire and blew it out, so the trip ended up more costly than anticipated. We explored several dumps just below the town site finding very little in the way of collectable material, but fun nonetheless. There are literally hundreds of visible mine dumps and prospect sites in the region, so it would take a multi-day effort to really do this effectively. The wind was constant with gusts easily in the 45mph plus category, so after a few hours, we were happy to head back down to Lone Pine for the night.



Cerro Gordo mine dumps

Paul Favia joined us in Lone Pine on Sunday night and we reviewed our plans at dinner for the next three days for exploring the Darwin area. To start the trip, we met Paul Skinner on Monday morning and followed him into Darwin where we were given a tour of his assay shop at the mining operation. Paul indicated that the current owners were very close to closing a deal with two investors (one domestic and one overseas) to renew mining operations. They still need to do additional work to meet MSHA standards regarding lighting, airflow, safety, etc., with reclamation plans being prepared as well.



Darwin assay shop

Paul Skinner runs his assay shop for the owners as well as doing contract work for other miners. We were given a demonstration of the process that morning before heading over to collect on the main dump from the Radiore tunnel. This is where most visitors are allowed to collect mineral specimens. The dump is heavy in sulfide minerals so our focus was on argentiferous galena from the Essex and Defiance Mines. The rich form of galena from these two mines is noted as having a fine-grained texture and is higher in silver and bismuth content, particularly the material from the 400' level. We collected several samples of galena similar in appearance and hope that some will show element analysis along these lines. Stay tuned...



Paul and Dan collecting on the Radiore dumps

On the way to Darwin Canyon, we took a side road up to the Ajax mine that is perched on the top of the mountain looking down to the Custer, Lucky Lucy, and St. Charles mines. Again, wind gusts were pretty constant in the 30-40mph range. Not much remains at the Ajax Mine other

than a well-preserved headframe and an overturned outhouse, but the view over Darwin flats looking east to the Argus range and the Panamints was fantastic.



Views from the Ajax Mine



Once in Darwin Canyon, we set up camp for the next couple of nights. The wind didn't die down much on Monday night, and dinner had to be set up on Dan's truck tailgate. Carnitas with avocados and tortillas taste great in almost any weather, though.



Darwin Hills camp site

On Tuesday morning, the weather front moved through and we had much improved collecting conditions. After bacon, eggs, and bacon-fried cinnamon toast for breakfast, our main focus turned to the dump material located between the Custer and the Lucky Lucy Mines.



BAM collectors on the Lucky Lucy dumps

The Lucky Lucy Mine exploited an unusual (for the area) copper/zinc ore body and we were able to collect some very colorful examples showing aurichalcite, serpierite, hemimorphite, brochantite, and smithsonite. If you dig deep enough in older tailings, you can still collect nice miniatures:



Miniature specimens from Lucky Lucy Mine



Tuesday afternoon, we visited the St. Charles No.2 Mine and explored the main adit leading underground. About 150' in, this level offers fluorescent calcite. There are several other levels, but we chose not to test the ladders down, as some appeared a little "sketchy". After collecting some calcite specimens, we headed up to St. Charles No. 1 Mine just to check it out. This was a haulage way, so no collectable material was expected and our expectations were easily met. Back to camp with better weather conditions this night.

With little wind, and temperatures expected to drop below freezing Tuesday night, we built a "BAM furnace" to stay warm during the early evening. Paul and Cliff engineered a very functional hobo-heater with an old metal barrel and a V-shaped heavy equipment hitch assembly. There is still a good amount of old metal and hardware in the area left over from the last mining operations in the 1950s. Dinner was even better that night with Cliff's and Paul's menu consisting of two pasta entrees, tossed salad, artichoke heart appetizers along with a can of the traditional "food of kings" ...



Paul enjoying the BAM furnace.

After thawing out Wednesday morning we had breakfast and packed up most of the camp before heading up to the Custer Mine to collect on the dumps for a couple of hours. The main dump consists of mostly goethite and limonite throughout. We found a good number of pseudomorph examples of limonite after pyrite, but not much more. About noon, we cleaned up and began the journey home.



Limonite ps pyrite, Custer Mine

As noted in the beginning, not much has changed in Darwin. The same feeling of eyes watching you while driving through the main town still

persists, at least for me. Not one person was seen other than a small group of foreign tourists that were sight-seeing. The roads are all pretty much the same as they were seven years ago, and the mines we visited looked almost exactly as I remember. It was a memorable trip with good mineral collecting, beautiful vistas of the Death Valley area, typical desert resort weather, and great friends.



Happy Miners (l to r): Dan, Cliff, and Paul

Member Suggestions Needed!!

We are always in need of good speakers for our meetings. Whether you have a presentation you could give to us, or if you know of a good one out there, please let Don know. It doesn't even need to be strictly minerals – related and also far-fetched ideas will be considered!

Newsletter Contributions Appreciated!

I am always happy to get newsletter contributions from members, and I think you'll all agree we've had a lot of good ones recently! Don't hesitate to submit field trip reports, book reviews, mineralogical exposés, etc...

Upcoming Area Shows

Apr 16-17, San Jose CA

Santa Clara Valley Gem & Mineral Society
Santa Clara County Fairgrounds, 344 Tully Road
Hours: Sat 10-5, Sun 10-5.

Apr 23-24, Santa Cruz CA

Santa Cruz Mineral & Gem Society
Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium, 307 Church Street
Hours: Sat 10-5, Sun 10-5.