

CRAWFORD SWAP AND FIELD TRIPS

By Sharon Marburger

Jim and I headed out to Crawford on Thursday before Labor Day, hoping to participate in all of the field trips offered by the Crawford club. We got a late start due to an appointment, so we made it only as far as Alliance that night, thereby missing the early Friday morning field trip.

No worries. We wandered around the swap on Friday. It was a fairly warm day, so it was probably good to not be out in the agate beds with no shade. I found several slabs and an ocean jasper marble I thought I couldn't live without, and a beautiful azurite slab I figured Jim would be very happy to have. We talked with nearly all of the vendors; it's always fun talking rocks!

There were not many visitors at the swap on Friday, which I found somewhat disappointing. I have heard stories during the 25 years that I've lived in Nebraska about how wonderful, crowded, and awesome the swap is. I hope for the club's benefit that things picked up on Saturday and Sunday.

Jim and I camped at an RV park in Chadron as there were no campsites available in Crawford. We got up extra early on Saturday and Sunday to drive to Crawford to meet up for the field trips on those days. Saturday's trip was out to an agate bed near Boardgate Reservoir off Sugarloaf Road. We picked up lots of specimens for our show's Nebraska Gem Dig. Some folks headed back to the swap, some folks stayed, and Jim and I went exploring. We drove around trying to figure out what areas were still open for collecting. The Forest Service has shut down many "roads", and now we are only allowed to drive on Forest Service marked roads containing 3 numbers. We were able to still get back to the Nebraska Blue Agate beds. It amazes me about how much material is still there to be picked up. We collected lots—some for the gem dig, some for the juniors to share with their rock pen pals, and some for us.

Sunday's field trip was to another agate bed off Sugarloaf Road. We collected some prairie agates there, and a couple of pieces of petrified wood.

It was a good rock collecting trip. It is too bad that no one else from our club was able to go, as they have in past years.

