

FAIRBURY AREA FIELD TRIP

By Corey Beer (photos by Corey)

Back in early April, the club had planned a collecting trip right before the main gem show so that the local club members and all the visiting members of the Midwest Federation could all go out together. It ended up getting such a high level of interest from the Federation members, over 30 if I remember correctly, that the local club members were asked to hold off from going on that trip; another would be held later for just club members.

On June 28, about a week after Summer Gem Fest, the second trip finally happened! We met at 8:00 a.m. at Bethany Park to discuss plans and allow for some members to carpool together. Once we all loaded up, we headed out to Fairbury, Nebraska to meet up with the second group of people who were participating in the day's events. We all circled around trip leader Woolly so he could explain the plans to the second group and to hand out the information packet on the first location we were visiting



We drove a little ways further out of Fairbury and pulled into the driveway of a very unsuspecting house. After walking a short distance up the hill next to the house, and onto a small outcropping of Dakota sandstone, you could quite clearly see a large, 3-toed (dinosaur) footprint imprinted into the rock. It was over a foot long and at least that wide. There were 22 total footprints, all in different states of preservation and completeness. I had heard of this location before, but it's a whole different thing to get to be in the field to see it in person. Also pretty amazing is that this is the only known dinosaur trackway in Nebraska!



After seeing the footprints, we went to a nearby road cut where Indian paint pots (round sandstone concretions) and fishtail selenite crystals can be found. One of the juniors found an extra large selenite plate that was probably 2½ feet across. She was very proud of her find, just as she should be!

At this point, it was about 12:30 in the afternoon and getting quite hot out so we decided it was time to go to the public park in Fairbury to eat lunch, cool down, and prepare for our next stop. Once the group had finished with lunch, we drove to the old Rose Creek clay quarry. I had been to this location many years ago but I was young enough I couldn't quite remember what it looked like. Woolly opened the gate

when we pulled in, and since my vehicle was the last to pull in, he asked me to close the gate behind us. It turned out to be quite the challenge to close so my dad, Brian, had to get out and help. I only mention this because if you're ever wondering how many beers it takes to close a gate, the answer is 2.

The inside of the old quarry was very reminiscent of being in the badlands out in western Nebraska with the highly eroded white and red cliffs. There was an abundance of interesting fossils to be found here but the one you can find the most is the fossilized ghost shrimp burrows. They were weathering out of the clay all over the place, but in certain areas you could find them sticking up vertically out of the ground in the position they originally formed, with hundreds of sections of these burrows littering the ground.



The final collecting site we visited was a freshly graded road cut that had exposed the limestone and the thousands of fossilized clam shells within it. I didn't personally collect any because I already have a bunch myself, but I know quite a few people collected great specimens for their personal collections.

We finished the day at the Pioneers Inn Restaurant in Gilead, Nebraska. They had great food and got it out to us pretty fast considering 20 of us all showed up and ordered at once. It's always a great time getting to sit and talk about our best finds at the end of a long day of collecting and it was even better seeing the whole table of juniors having a good time, too. But the most important part of the day was when we went to pay and I got their last slice of blueberry pie! Nine out of 10, would recommend!

Huge thanks to Woolly for coordinating this field trip, it was a great time as always!



FIELD TRIP REPORT

By Barb Engquist

On the bright, sunny morning of June 28, 2025, a caravan of vehicles headed out for adventure, a field trip in the Fairbury, Nebraska area.

The first stop of our nearly 20 person group, was to view dinosaur tracks. These tracks, discovered in 2002, were made by dinosaurs that roamed the shores of the Western Interior Seaway. The tracks are amazing, however, having no protection from weather and foot traffic, are disappearing.



Our next stop was a roadcut, where the group found ironstone concretions at the base of the cutout.



Further up the hill were nice pieces of selenite. The excitement ran high as one of our youth, Joy, found a large slab of selenite layered in rock. With many helpful hands, the large rock was dug out and carried to a nearby pickup truck. Awesome spotting Joy!



After a nice picnic lunch, the group headed to a clay pit to search for selenite crystals and ghost shrimp burrow fossils. Selenite was uncovered every time the picks moved the soil. The ghost shrimp burrow fossils were intriguing; many pieces were laying on top of the ground.



As the heat and humidity increased, we headed back to the vehicles to cool off, get a drink and head to the final roadcut.

The final location was full of limestone marine fossils. Beautiful shell fossils were everywhere, as well as a scorpion, who was upset when one of the youths disturbed his hiding place.



We ended the field trip with dinner at Pioneer Inn in Gilead. The Inn was built in 1887, out of limestone, to house and feed railroad workers. The group enjoyed good food, conversation, and relaxation before the trip home.

Thank you to all who made the field trip happen and to those who attended.