



The Helena Mineral Society Newsletter



Gem, Mineral, and Geological Education and Experience

June 2011

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From The Editor:

This month I will write about agates. Agate is one of two of Montana's official gem stones,(the other is sapphire). The Montana Agate, found along the Yellowstone River, is the official stone, but I think all agates found in Montana should be considered also. Some are very breathtaking. For example: Dry head agates found in the Big Horn Canyon and Dead Top agate found at Canyon Ferry Lake are two examples of the many fine agates that can be found in Montana.

Agate is composed of polycrystalline quartz. The name "agate" is supposedly derived from a river in Sicily named

Achates, now called Drillo. It's hardness is 6.5 to 7.

Most agate forms in nodules, either ball-shaped or almond-shaped. Agates can be found in sizes from a fraction of an inch to over six feet. The bands in agates are believed to form by rhythmic crystallization. This is one of the great mysteries that is debated and argued, no one is certain how they form.

Agates can fluoresce, and fluorescence varies with the bands. Colors are usually yellow and blue-white. If opal is present, it will fluoresce green.

Agates can be found as a solid mass or with a hollow center (geodes) with quartz crystals, barite, calcite or hematite lining the cavity.

The shores of Canyon Ferry Lake have agates in the gravels. I, among others, have found agates on all of the beaches surrounding the lake. Streams and rivers are a good place to search for agates. When you are out mineral hunting, keep a watchful eye, agates can be found everywhere, not just by water.

**Helena Mineral Society
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If you are heading to the Quartzite area, Tom and Geri White have material they will donate to HMS for grab bags, ball toss and silent auction. Contact them at 262-442-5216, 262-442-5279 or wa9yff@mt.com

Upcoming field trips:

June 18- Sauerbaer garnet dig, depart old Dillards', parking lot at 7:00 AM. This is about a 2 1/2 hour drive each way.

Tentative- Sunday June 25, Sally Ann clean-up, depart 9:00 AM Ben Franklin parking lot.

July 9- Sally Ann picnic

July 16- Crystal Park, depart old Dillards' parking lot at 7:00 AM. There is a \$5.00 per car charge at the park. Car pooling is advised to save \$\$.

July 30- Agate dig at Lemhi pass. More info next month.

Watch for updates on field trips on the web site or contact Martin.

Don and Betty Walker are looking to purchase a good used tumbler for their grandson. Contact them at 442-9475.

HMS is raffling off Dry Head agates we purchased. There are about 10 high end specimens. If you win one of these, you will

not be eligible for any more. There will be more at the Christmas party available for everyone.

Next regular meeting is July 14, 2011

Collecting at Copper City



Meetings

The Helena Mineral Society meets at the Mountain West Bank located on Montana Avenue between Aspen and Poplar. Meetings are the second Thursday of every month at 7:00 pm. There is no regular meeting for the month of December. See you there! Friends, guests, and new members are always welcome

Leland Stanford has a pellet stove with wall outlet, stove pipe and 2 tons of pellets, \$1300.00. Will talk price. View at 150 W Lincoln RD. He has no phone.

Pictures and Articles Needed:

If you have a picture that you want to share, please send it to me, along with a short description of the activity, where it took place, and when, and I'll put it in the newsletter. If you'd like to share your field trip adventures with those members who are unable to attend, please feel free to contribute to the newsletter. Just e-mail me your experiences, and I'll make sure they're entered. Remember, this is your newsletter, and your contributions make it better.

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