

# ROCKHOUNDS HERALD

920 Yorktown Road, Dothan, AL 36301-4372

[www.wiregrassrockhounds.com](http://www.wiregrassrockhounds.com)

**July 2011**

## Words from...

### The President

Just a reminder, the next club social will be held on Saturday, July 23 at the Lambert's house in Dothan. Arnie and JoAn will provide the meat, utensils and drinks. As mentioned in the last newsletter, club members should bring a salad, vegetable or dessert. And—very important—be sure to bring something interesting and appealing for the silent auction. Help make the auction a successful fund raiser for the club. JoAn says to arrive around noon and expect to eat at 1:00 PM. The Lambert's address is: 920 Yorktown Road, Dothan, AL. If you need directions, call 334-792-7116.

There has been talk of having an August social, but the initial arrangements have fallen through. If we get something planned and on the calendar, it will be announced in the August newsletter. If not, the September meeting and the start of the new club year is just around the corner.

And on a sad note, we offer our condolences to Hospitality Chair and long-time member, Meredith Capshaw. Meredith's younger brother, Eddie Brewer, passed away suddenly on Sunday, July 10. Please remember Meredith and her family in your thoughts and prayers.

**B**

**Tina Polakoski – 21** – I enjoy the “science” of collecting. I travel a lot for business so I get to buy local specimens at the area rock shops—mostly tourmaline, turquoise or fossils—and then my husband turns them into jewelry. But, my favorite piece is an 8-carat quartz heart he collected on a trip to Arkansas with Arnie and Bill. He did the faceting and made it into a ring for my birthday.

**I**

**R**

**T. J. Moore – 22** – I'm a flint knapper so it makes sense that I'd end up a rock collector, too, especially since Brazilian agate is my favorite stone to work. My first field trip with the club was to collect petrified wood. Not many people went that day, but those of us who did had a great time. It was a lot of work, but so worth it to break open a big piece of rock and realize you're the first human to see all those amazing black crystals inside.

**T**

**H**

**Diane Tetzlaff – 25** – I always liked geology in school, but I joined the Dothan Club because my parents were members. Once on a trip to Foley we stopped to look for agates and my father left me at the car with my mother to go out into the “collecting area” by himself. He found several small pieces, but while he was gone I also found a nice piece buried in the road near where we parked. It weighed 25 lbs...and he never took me back there!

**D**

**A**

**Meredith Capshaw – July 31** – I've been a club member since 1994 and loved every minute of it. The people are just wonderful! My collection is eclectic; I've mined for rubies in Tennessee and hauled home lots of smooth, dark gray shore rocks from Maine—probably basalt or volcanic rock. I even have an arrowhead flipped out of the dirt by my horse's hoof one day, but the quartz calcite crystal I found north of Marianna is probably my most spectacular piece...and it is so huge it took several vehicle changes and a whole crew of those “wonderful people” to help me get it home.

**Y**

**S**

**Ellen Webber – ??** – (unfortunately, Ellen couldn't be reached for comment.)

# Special Guest Feature

## Choosing Beads

I don't think anyone would purposely buy poor quality beads. But how do you pick the good ones? The hole...is a very important part of the bead, and if it's a round bead, it *should* be DEAD CENTER unless of course it's a side drill.

Stretch the string between your hands and spin the line of beads on it. If they appear to "jump up and down." then they are off center. While doing this, try to move the beads back and forth on the string. There should be some play. If they're too tight on the string, that could be a sign of bad holes. Sometimes a bead is drilled from one end with a slightly cone shaped drill and then drilled from the other end. If the holes don't meet properly in the center, then they're bad and can be a bear to work with. Neither should the hole be too big as that can cause grief too.

There may also be cracks, air bubbles, flat places, and "%\*\$#&"s in your beads. Be sure to check them before buying. If it's a hand carved bead, is it a good one? Be critical! Is it dyed? More and more gemstone beads are being dyed; in fact it's hard to find gem beads that haven't gone into the dye pot. What color is the string? If it's the same as the beads, that can be a giveaway. Becoming familiar with what the stone is supposed to look like is the best way to tell.

Chip and nugget beads are some of the cheapest stone beads; they're just left over hunks that are tumbled and then drilled, although some of the better stones can make a nice informal necklace. Many glass beads have coatings that rub off. Some Delicas, and other Japanese cylinder beads have this problem and some of them are dyed too. Neither treatment is permanent, but you can get some good information from bead companies online as to which beads to avoid.

When buying faceted beads, stone or glass, always check the edges of the facets. Sometimes they have little chips running along the edges, and you don't want those. This can be a problem with vintage crystal beads. Also, many of those old crystal beads, such as Swarovski, have an AB (Aurora Borealis) coating, which can be badly worn, and ends up looking gross.

There's really no magic to choosing good beads. You just need either good eyes, good glasses, and/or a loupe or optivisor. Take one with you. Look at the beads closely and study them. It has always amazed me how people just seem to buy things without giving them a good looking over. Anything you buy, anything, should be carefully examined whether it's a used car, a plant that might harbor bugs, or some really yucky beads.

### ***How Many Beads in a Strand?***

As there are 25.4 millimeters in an inch, and as beads are often measured in millimeters (mm), this is only a matter of mathematics. A common length for a strand of beads is 18 inches, and there are approximately 460 mm in such a strand. Thus, the average 18 inch strand will contain the following approximate number of beads:

4 mm = 115 beads  
6 mm = 79 beads  
8 mm = 58 beads  
10 mm = 46 beads

This should help you know if you have enough beads for the strand you are planning.

by Mary Sue Bucher, San Francisco GMS  
*Reprinted from: The Glacial Drifter – 11/2009*

## Learning Series: Birthstones – July

# Ruby – The July Birthstone

### Background

The story of the July birthstone traces to the ancient Silk Road of China. Notes about the transport of rubies can be found all the way back to 200 BC, as Asian traders imported rubies into to their native cultures where they were held in very high regard for their gem quality and red color; a good luck color in many Asian cultures. Rubies were used not just for jewelry, but to ornament armor, scabbards and harnesses for wealthy noblemen. Some wealthy people even laid rubies into the foundations of their homes as a good luck charm.

The word “ruby” comes from the Latin “ruber,” meaning red. It is a variety of the mineral Corundum and for a ruby to be born in the natural environment, a perfect combination of aluminum oxide, correct temperature, correct pressure in the earth’s crust and very low silicon content is a requisite. This makes rubies very rare and large rubies (over 2 carats) even rarer. Host rocks of rubies often include metamorphic dolomite marbles, gneiss, and amphibolite. However, rubies are not normally extracted from the primary deposits due to the high cost of mining. They are retrieved from the secondary deposits which are usually alluvial. Mining of rubies is still fairly primitive and takes many man-hours of labor to find the stones. Once the gem bearing alluvial material is identified then the gravel is sifted through wire screens and picked out by hand.

Rubies were once known in eastern legends as “blood drops from the heart of the Mother Earth”. Until about 1800 all red gemstones were called rubies. Many stones which were initially thought to be rubies were in fact red spinel, red tourmaline, and red garnet. An example of this is the “Black Prince’s ruby” in the English State crown that was thought to be a ruby, but in fact is red spinel.

Inclusions of tiny parallel Rutile needles causes an asterism effect in polished rubies. These are known as “star rubies” and often show six-ray stars and occasionally twelve-ray stars. The type of inclusion in the ruby makes it easy to identify the origin of the gem. In terms of clarity, rubies tend to be less clean than sapphires. Many rubies will fluoresce in long or short wave UV and this property can also often be used to help identify a stone’s geographic origin. Burmese rubies often fluoresce so strongly that the effect is noticeable even in sunlight; such stones seem literally to glow. Thai rubies generally lack this property. Ruby is considered to be a superior gemstone for its unique color, outstanding hardness, and dazzling light performance. In fact, in the Sanskrit language ruby is called “ratnaraj”, which translates as “King of Gemstones”.

### Composition, Chemical Formula, Colors, and Sources

**Composition** – aluminum oxide

**Chemical Formula** –  $Al_2O_3$

**Colors** – rubies are always some shade of red. Depending upon the chromium and iron content of the stone, the secondary hues can range from pink, orange, purple and brown. Of the four, purple is preferred because it reinforces the red making it appear richer. The finest ruby, often referred to as “pigeon’s blood”, is best described as being a vivid medium-dark toned red with a hint of blue. Color is the most important consideration for choosing a ruby, with clarity a distant second.

**Sources** – The most beautiful crystals are thought to be from Burma (now Myanmar) and 90% of the world’s supply comes from there. Quality rubies are also found in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Madagascar, and Tanzania, Other deposits of some importance are found in: Afghanistan, Cambodia, Kenya and Vietnam. Less significant deposits are in: Australia, Brazil, India, Malawi, Nepal, Pakistan, Zimbabwe and the United States (specifically Montana, North Carolina and South Carolina). More recently large ruby deposits have been found in Mozambique and under the receding ice shelf of Greenland.

**Note:** Aside from having good color, the most valuable ruby has a high level of clarity with few or no milky inclusions. However, because many ruby treatments exist that artificially enhance the color or clarity of the stone, a complete lack of needle-like rutile inclusions can sometimes signal treatment by a gemologist. More than 90% of the rubies found in the market today are treated to enhance their quality. A notorious and undesirable treatment is known as “glass filling” and involves adding lead glass to the fractures inside the ruby which dramatically improves the transparency of the stone.

## **Identification**

**Streak** – white

**Hardness** – 9

**Crystal system** – hexagonal

**Transparency** – transparent to opaque

**Specific gravity** – 3.97 - 4.05

**Luster** – adamantine to vitreous luster

**Cleavage** – none, but separation planes parallel to the basal plane common

**Fracture** – small conchoidal, splintery, brittle

**Fluorescence** – strong; carmine red

**Pleochroism** – strong; yellow-red, deep carmine red

**Associated Minerals** – occurs with albite, acmite, andalusite, cordierite, muscovite, almandine

**Best Field Indicators** – hardness, high specific gravity, and striations on parting faces

## **Folklore, Legend and Healing Properties**

The ancient Hindus thought the color of a ruby was due to an inextinguishable fire that burned inside the gem. It would endow its wearer with long life and could even cause water to boil.

Ancient Burmese warriors believed that when a ruby was inserted beneath the skin it generated a mystical force, making them unconquerable in battle.

Ruby was thought to grow darker when peril was imminent, and to return to its original color once danger was past—provided it was in the hands of its rightful owner!

The ruby aids in the cure of peptic ulcer, fever, rheumatism, and gout. They are also believed to eliminate depression in the wearer and make him bold and courageous. For therapeutic purposes, the gem must be set in gold and worn on the ring finger.

Women are discouraged from the regular use of rubies for it is believed to destroy body luster.

## **Trivia**

Ancient Hindus, Burmese, and Ceylonese believed that rubies ripen with age. They believed that sapphires were unripe rubies and that inclusions in stones meant that they were overripe. They also used the gems as bullets for blowguns.

The Breastplate of Aaron is described in Exodus as containing a "sardius", the ancient name for ruby. Other books of the bible that mention ruby by various names include Ezekiel, Isaiah, Job, Proverbs, and Lamentations.

Rubies have a famous place in science - the first lasers were made from artificial ruby crystals. Some natural ruby crystals show the fluorescence (actually very short term phosphorescence) that makes a laser possible.

There have been many large size rubies recorded in history, however, such large sizes are extremely rare today. Some famous rubies include: the 40-carat oval Chhatrapati Manick Ruby; the 43-carat Peace Ruby found in 1919; the 167-carat Edwards Ruby--a large gem, though not of top quality--kept in the British Museum; the 138.7-carat Rosser Reeves Ruby from Sri Lanka (one of the finest star rubies on display at the Smithsonian); the 100-carat oval cabochon De Long Star Ruby located in the American Museum of Natural History in New York; the 105-carat Anne of Brittany Ruby, a polished but irregular gem housed in the Louvre in Paris; and, the unfaceted 250-carat ruby mounted in the Bohemian St. Wenzel's Crown.

## **Sources:**

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[http://gemstone.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=85:ruby&catid=1:gem-by-gem&Itemid=14](http://gemstone.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=85:ruby&catid=1:gem-by-gem&Itemid=14)

<http://gemstonesruby.com/ruby-information/ruby-gemstones-legends-ruby-gemstone-lore/>

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<http://www.gemselect.com/gem-info/ruby/ruby-info.php>

# Rocks Gems Minerals Rocks Gems Minerals

## Upcoming Shows

August 12 - 14	Harrison County Gem & Mineral Society, Inc.	Pass Christian, MS
September 1 - 4	Henderson County Gem & Mineral Society	Hendersonville, NC
September 3 - 5	Golden Isles Gem & Mineral Society	Brunswick, GA
September 23 - 25	Jacksonville Gem & Mineral Society, Inc.	Jacksonville, FL

## Upcoming Field Trips

**Note: Currently there are no further field trips planned for the summer due to excessive heat. Field collecting will resume in September or October.**

## Meeting Information

**Time:** 2:00 PM  
**Date:** Fourth Sunday of each month (except June, July and August)  
**Place:** Fellowship Hall – Tabernacle United Methodist Church  
4329 S. Brannon Stand Road  
(intersection of Brannon Stand Road and Hwy 52)  
Dothan, AL

## Officers

**President – Jeff DeRoche**  
334-673-3554

**Vice President – Chris Wisham**  
334-774-0964

**Secretary/Webmaster – Pat LeDuc**  
334-308-2948

**Treasurer – Aida Ward**  
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**Show Chair – Arnie Lambert**  
334-792-7116

**Field Trips Chair – Ken Wilson**  
850-547-9577

**Hospitality Chair – Meredith Capshaw**  
334-684-9448

**Club Hostess – Laural Meints**  
334-723-2695

**Website:** [www.wiregrassrockhounds.com](http://www.wiregrassrockhounds.com)

## Objectives

To stimulate interest in lapidary, earth science and, when necessary, other related fields.

To sponsor an educational program within the membership to increase the knowledge of its members in the properties, identifications and evaluations of rocks, minerals, fossils and other related subjects.

To cooperate and aid in the solution of its members' problems encountered in the Club's objectives.

To cooperate with other mineralogical and geological clubs and societies.

To arrange and conduct field trips to facilitate the collection of minerals.

To provide opportunity for exchange and exhibition of specimens and materials.

To conduct its affairs without profit and to refrain from using its assets for pecuniary benefit of any individual or group.

## Classified Ads

**Looking for an item to round out your rock collection?**

**Got a specimen, tool or handicraft for sale or trade?**

**Submit the pertinent details to me by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month and your inclinations will be made known to the membership in the next bulletin.**

**N. J. Blackwell**  
28 Lakeview Trail, Apt. C  
Daleville, AL 36322  
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Email: Tsavorite7@aol.com

## Annual Dues

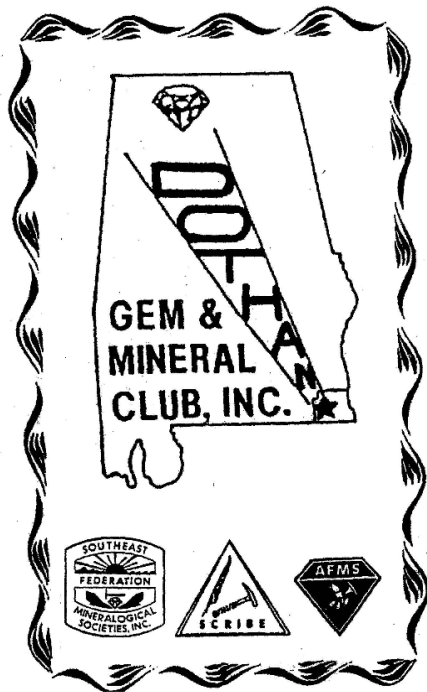
Single \$15  
Family \$20

## Refreshments

**JUL – no meeting**

**AUG – no meeting**

**SEP – Pat LeDuc & Joan Blackwell**



## Where you might hear...

The term “mineral habit” is used to refer to the mineral’s preferred mode of growth—that is, to the arrangement and proportion of the faces on the single crystals. Some of the commonly seen forms are:

1. Acicular – needlelike
2. Bladed – broad, flat and elongated
3. Dendritic – branching or “tree-like”
4. Equant – roughly same diameter in all directions
5. Prismatic – elongated in one direction
6. Striated – very shallow, parallel grooves on the crystal faces
7. Tabular – thick or thin flat plates

Source: National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Rocks and Minerals, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1994

**Member of**  
**Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies, Inc.**  
**American Federation of Mineralogical Societies**

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