



DOWN IN THE DUMPS

WITH THE **Bristol Gem & Mineral Club**
On the web at www.bristolgem.org

**The next meeting will be on Tuesday, August 11th, 2026 at
7pm in the Beals Senior/Community Center, 240 Stafford Ave.
Bristol, CT**

August Program:

Manganese Megafauna: "Mexico's Hidden Treasures"

Presented by Mike Girard

You absolutely have to come to this one! On August 11th, we are honored to host a special presentation by **Mike Girard**.

[?] The Discovery

In 2023, a massive cache of Ice Age megafauna fossils was discovered deep within a cave system in Mexico. The site is a logistical nightmare for traditional exploration, featuring a suffocatingly tight vertical entrance, long crawls, and deep, submerged passages.

This presentation documents the gripping efforts of a small team of explorers, led by cave biologist Dr. Luis Espinasa, as they attempt to retrieve these ancient remains using a specialized **ROUV** (Remotely Operated Underwater Vehicle).

[?] The Big Questions

The expedition sets out to solve a profound scientific puzzle: how did thousands of bones from mammoths, giant ground sloths, camels, glyptodonts, wolves, and prehistoric cats all end up concentrated in this single cave? Could this be definitive physical evidence of the work of Ice Age human hunters?

The presentation will explore the intersection of deep-time paleontology, technical cave diving, and the primary geological and archaeological clues that point to early human activity.

[?] Get a Sneak Peek

Can't wait until August? You can watch the project online right now to prepare for the meeting:

- **The 3-Minute Trailer:** [Watch on YouTube](#)

The Full 44-Minute Documentary ("Crypt of the Megafauna"): [Watch on YouTube](#)
(Features both Mike Sandone and Mike Girard)

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– YOUR CLUB CONTACTS –

President:	Kim Dedominicis	kimdedom - - at - - gmail.com
Immed. Past President:	Tom Benedict	tbenedict10 - - at - - gmail.com
Vice Pres. - Programs:	Russ Behnke	russbehnke - - at - - yahoo.com
Vice-Pres. Spcl Events:	<i>open</i>	
Treasurer:	Laura Fitch	lafitch - - at - - att.net
Secretary:	Victoria Rieley	vicroy62 - - at - - hotmail.com
Director, Lapidary Center:	<i>open</i>	
Member-at-Large:	Eric Briggs	E.c.briggs76- - at - - gmail.com
Member-at-Large:	Fred Saccavino	imbearit665- - at - - gmail.com
Membership/Dues:	Judy Schuster	ctgmclub - - at - - gmail.com
<i>Pay at the meeting or mail to: PO Box 1764; Bristol, CT 06011-1764</i>		
Library Requests	Shianne Poynton	shipoynton- - at - - gmail.com
	Diana Scalzi	
Field Trip Coordinator:	Chris Palazzolo	chrispalazzolo114 - - at - - gmail.com
Fonda Claim Info:	David Dodds	david.dodds73 - - at - - gmail.com
Hospitality	Donna Grey	(860-309-9247)
Show Chair	Eric Briggs	E.c.briggs76- - at - - gmail.com
Photography & Facebook:	Frank Rossi	eaglewolf57 - - at - - comcast.net
Bulletin Editor:	Deane Williams	pyroartist - - at - - sbcglobal.net
Webmaster:	John Kringel	johnkringel - at - yahoo.com
Community Outreach	Bob&Sue Reynolds	bobr120 - at - sbcglobal.net or suzydruzy146 - at -att.net

July 29, 2026 **A message from your Prez!**

Hello BGMC Members!

I'm writing this a few days after our wonderful annual picnic at Woodtick Recreation in Wolcott. What a great day it was for weather, food, fun, rocks and socializing! It was so great to see so many in attendance! The official report is that we had 123 people attend

between Bristol and Meriden clubs with 2 people from Stamford and 2 more from New Haven and one from Danbury! I want to offer my kudos and compliments to all of those who worked to put this day together and who volunteered their time! I commented to Judy that it is so impressive how things always come together. It's like a "well-oiled machine". I'm already looking forward to next year!

As a reminder, there is a field trip to Beauregard in New Hampshire on September 12. Please remember to sign up with Eileen (email went out with all of this information). It sounds like it will be a promising day for discoveries and collecting! I am hoping we can persuade a few more volunteers to put together one or two more trips before the end of the year. Please reach out if you are interested.

The August meeting is fast approaching on August 11. As I will be on vacation that week, Tom will resume his old role and run the meeting. As I announced at the July meeting, Mike Z. has stepped down from his board positions of VP – Special Events, show chairman and as Lapidary Chair. According to our club bylaws, I need to appoint replacements for these positions. Since Eric Briggs has graciously agreed to be our show chairman, it seems fitting that he steps into the position of VP-Special Events. Likewise, as Fred Saccavino spends much time and thoroughly understands the functions and routines at the Lapidary shop, it seems fitting for him to take on this position. This leaves us with two positions of Members at large open on the board. I have asked Rhonda Detlefsen and Mike Goff to step in to those roles. I'm happy to report that all four of them have gleefully accepted these appointments. The final step will be for membership to approve these. I will ask for these approvals at the September meeting, giving you all time for reflection and questions that may arise.

I hope you all have a wonderful August and are able to find moments to appreciate summertime here in New England!

I'll see you all in September!

Kim DeDominicis

President

Minutes of the Bristol Gem and Mineral Club

July 14th, 2026

BGMC Meeting Minutes – *Generated via AI based upon the agenda (Actual minutes unavailable)*

Date: July 14, 2026 - Meeting called to order, unrecorded time

1. Welcome & Introductions

- **New Members:** New members stood and introduced themselves (Possible 3 new members?)

2. Approval of Minutes

- **Previous Minutes:** Minutes from the previous meeting were projected for review.
- **Action/Outcome:** Motion to accept previous meeting minutes. Passed

3. Announcements (Kim)

- **New Equipment:** Announced the acquisition of a new microphone.
- **Refreshments Policy:** Members are requested to wait until the scheduled break before getting refreshments.
- **Silent Auction Guidelines:** Board discussion highlighted a suggested limit of 5 items per person for the silent auction.
- **Member Support (Mac McCormick):** Carolyn and Dan Record visited Mac in rehab. Carolyn purchased cards to send weekly to cheer him up. Members were encouraged to sign cards for him.
- **Speaker Budget Approval:** The Board voted to grant Russ a \$2,000 yearly discretionary budget for presentation bookings.
- **Website Update:** Following member concerns and a detailed Board discussion, the Board voted to build a new website using Wix while keeping the current URL.
- **Leadership Absence:** Kim will be on vacation next month; Tom agreed to fill in.
- **General Note:** Kim offered apologies to the board and attendees for the length of the prior meeting and noted efforts will be made to keep future meetings concise.

4. Reports

- **Treasurer's Report (Laura):** Report projected and submitted for vote/acceptance.
- **Lapidary Center Report (Fred):**
 - Mike Z. stepped down to attend to personal matters; Fred has stepped up to fill the role.
 - Upcoming Lap Sale: August 1, 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM at Barnes, Shrub Rd. Bristol
- **Show Report (Eric):**
 - Mike Z. stepped down from the role; Eric has stepped up to lead.
 - Expressed gratitude and applause for Mike's years of dedication and hard work toward making the show successful.
- **Webmaster Report (John):** Update provided on web progress (related to the Wix rebuild decision). Work will begin shortly.
- **Membership Report (Judy):** Updates provided regarding the multi-club picnic.
- **Library Report:** Updates presented by Diana and Shianne.

5. Field Trips (Chris & David)

- **Upcoming Trips:** Updates discussed for upcoming trips; Betts trip has been postponed. Beauregard trip will be coming up in Sept.

- No update on Fonda claim.
- **Leadership Needed:** Looking for leaders for Rough Stone and HP shopping trips.
- **Field Trip Subsidies:** Discussion held on resuming club subsidies for field trips. The Board voted to **table the decision until after the annual show**. Members are strongly urged to volunteer, help advertise, and support the show to ensure its financial success.

6. Presentations Schedule (Russ)

- **Tonight:** Ted Johnson – Presentation on Australia.
- **August 11:** Mike Girard – “*Manganese Megafauna: Mexico’s Hidden Treasures*”
- **September 8 (TBD):** Options discussed include Judy Schuster on *Gemstone Enhancements*, a silent/live auction, or short 15-minute member talks.

7. Hospitality (Donna)

- **Leadership Transition:** Mary is stepping down as Hospitality Chair; Donna Gray has taken over (applause for Donna, and appreciation expressed to Mary for her hard work).
- **Committee Needs:** Current committee members include Donna, Jackie, Linda, Gloria, and Sue (with Mary assisting when possible).
- **Volunteers Needed:** Donna is seeking additional help for soda management/storage, as well as assistance with the annual show and Christmas party refreshments.

8. Unfinished Business

- **Scholarship Bucket:** Collection/updates regarding the scholarship fund.

9. New Business

- **New Club Logo Contest:** Planned for launch (likely in January) with submission guidelines coming soon. Current logo will be used for merchandise before being retired. Discussion held on voting timing; proposed member vote/discussion set for September.
- **Merchandise (Laura):** Updates presented regarding club merch offerings.

10. Additional Activities & Program

- **Kids' Activity:** Led by Jackie and Victoria in adjacent room. Encouraged attending kids to participate.
- **Bob's Learning Corner:** Educational presentation/discussion.
- **Show & Tell:** 2 members shared.
- **Door Prizes:** Drawing held for door prizes. 5 members won.

Break, Silent Auction & Key Note

- **Break:** 10–15 minute break for mingling, refreshments, and participating in the silent auction.
- **Presentation:** Following the auction signal/whistle, members completed payment/cleanup and transitioned to the main presentation by Ted Johnson.

Meeting adjourned – unrecorded time.

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The Strickland Kunzite: A Connecticut Treasure

Russell E. Behnke

My father had one true love among Connecticut's mineral localities: the Strickland Quarry on Collins Hill in Portland. For years he visited three or four days a week, patiently working the historic dumps until, I suspect, no collector before or since came to know that ground as intimately as he did. Watching him return, week after week, to piles of rock that generations of collectors had already searched, I came to understand why this quiet, abandoned quarry still occupies such an important place in New England mineralogy. He believed the earth always had one more secret to reveal to whoever was patient enough to ask.

Opened around 1840, Strickland is regarded as the most mineralogically diverse pegmatite locality in New England, with approximately 170 recorded mineral species. By the time my father began collecting there, the quarry had been silent for decades, but the dumps remained. Eventually a golf course covered most of the old workings, burying nearly all of the historic tailings beneath fairways and greens. Only one long dump escaped the bulldozers. It survives today as the last tangible reminder of the quarry where so many of Connecticut's finest mineral specimens were discovered.

Although my father introduced me to mineral collecting, another mentor expanded my horizons. In 1972, Cliff Trebilcock invited me to accompany him into Maine's famous pegmatites. Together we explored the Consolidated Quarries at Topsham—now better known among collectors as the Swamp Quarry—where Cliff had discovered uraninite crystals so sharp and lustrous that they could often be freed from their microcline matrix with a single tap of a hammer. Many Swamp Quarry uraninite crystals eventually found their way into Harvard's mineral collections. Cliff also enlisted me in an ambitious plan to drain the Fisher Quarry in hopes of relocating Harvard's celebrated topaz pocket, and we climbed Percy Peak, another legendary New England locality that produced some of the region's finest topaz crystals.

Years later, during the 1980s, our paths crossed again at Strickland Quarry. There Cliff recovered an exceptional 11.5-centimeter spodumene crystal—kunzite in its gem variety—still standing proudly in a matrix of massive quartz. He later sold the specimen to me, and I was delighted to add it to my collection.

Another friend, Vandall T. King—who, as an author and lead editor, has published five major multi-volume or standalone works on minerals spanning a period of 28 years (from 1994 to 2022)—has produced books on the minerals of Maine and Franklin, New Jersey, that are by far the best available. Van considered this kunzite the finest spodumene specimen ever found in New England and selected it for illustration in his *Collector's Guide to Granite Pegmatites* (2010). While Massachusetts produced some notable spodumene crystals, eons of weathering had left them dull and brownish or grey. This Connecticut crystal escaped that fate, retaining the

fresh luster and delicate pink color that make it one of the region's truly outstanding pegmatite treasures.



-- End--



Beauregard Mine Field Trip - Sept 12th

Don't miss out on this extraordinary opportunity. Yes, this sounds like just so much hype, but this mine lives up to its reputation. The Beauregard is in the heart of the New Hampshire beryl deposits, just outside Gilsum (only a little over 2 hours from Meriden, CT). Unlike many old mines in the area, this is still open to mineral clubs for collecting.

Collecting is done in open dump areas which is turned over periodically, exposing fresh material.

Photos below are just a sampling. To be successful, you have to dig and move rock, but the crystals are *definitely* there! Including big ones.

Fee is \$25 per person, payable at the site on day of trip. Cash only. Limited to 40 people maximum. Youths between 10 and 16 must be accompanied by a parent. No one under 10 is permitted. No dogs (or other animals), power tools, alcohol, or vehicles with trailers. Appropriate PPE is required. A list of tools and safety equipment will be provided after you are registered.

There is ample parking within 900 feet of the digging area and walking to the site is not very difficult; no hill to climb, going or returning to your car! There is very limited parking closer, accessed by a rough road. Those with high-clearance vehicles (such as a pickup truck) might be able to carry equipment for those who walk to the mine area.

To register, please contact [Eileen Williams eileenvw@gmail.com](mailto:eileenvw@gmail.com)

Sat. Sept 12, 2026

Details will be provided once you've signed up.

The Mining Area



Rock, Gem and Mineral Events in our area

September 12-13, 2026

Danbury Mineralogical Society Show, Danbury High School, 388 Danbury Road, New Milford, CT.
Admission \$6. Saturday 10am-5pm; Sunday 10am-4pm.

August 14-16, 2026

East Coast Gem, Mineral, and Fossil Show, Better Living Center, Eastern States Exposition, 1305 Memorial Drive, West Springfield, MA. Admission \$10.

October 17-18, 2026

53rd Annual Gem & Mineral Show, hosted by Bristol Gem and Mineral Club;
Bristol Community/Senior Center, 240 Stafford Avenue, Bristol, CT. Saturday
9:30am to 5pm, Sunday

September 12th

New activities continue to be added for the Annual NEMA Mineral Tailgate Sale from 9am-4pm on September 12, 2026! The sale is held at the home of the Havey Tourmaline Quarry at 34 Levine Road, Poland, Maine. Entry and on-site parking at the Tailgate are free to all.

Want a field trip/outing with hands-on experiences for all ages, especially for kids/teens? With the help of our amazing volunteers we are able to bring fun and free mineral education to all who attend. Bring the kids (through high school ages) so they can enjoy sifting in a sluice pool for minerals from mine tailings, tour our tent with glow-in-the dark minerals and scenes. Look through a microscope at the crystals that make up minerals. Learn about fossils and dinosaurs. Crack a geode that you can take home, as well as a gift of a free mineral specimen provided by our donors for each child/teen that attends the event. A touchable piece of the moon and of Mars from collections of the Maine Mineral Gem Museum in Bethel will be on hand, too! More than 25 vendors who specialize in minerals of the Northeast are expected to be at the sale. Food will be available for purchase, as will NEMA merchandise (t-shirts @ \$25 and patches @ \$10), and Fred Wilda note cards. Non-collecting tours of the Havey Quarry will be held on the hour from 10am through 3pm. (Rain date of September 13th; watch NEMA's Facebook page for weather updates.) Come and meet miners, collectors, dealers, geologists, and others that just love rocks and minerals. Talk with local mineral club members about club activities.

Anyone who wants to share their mineral love with kids can ask to volunteer for this event by contacting Jan at nemineralinfo@gmail.com to volunteer in the kid's area or other parts of the Tailgate event. We have places where chaperoned older kids and youth can volunteer, too! Volunteers donating a minimum of four hours will be invited to one of NEMA's 'Dine & Dig Volunteer Thank You' events.

Want to be a Vendor? We have spaces available! You must contact Jeff at 207.232.4973 or email him at jmorris7@maine.rr.com to discuss vending at NEMA events and to reserve a space!

Come and join us! We are looking forward to seeing you on September 12th!

Jan Morrison



Jan Morrison, Executive Director
New England Mineral Association

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Mission statement: To foster interest in the earth and geological sciences, minerals, fossils, meteorites and the lapidary arts. To encourage the spread of the mineral, lapidary, and earth science hobbies with the general public, schools, and other organized groups.

Organized in 1972, the Bristol Gem and Mineral Club, Inc is a non-sectarian, non-partisan, and non-profit 501(c)(3) group dedicated to the promotion, study, and encouragement of interest in rocks, minerals, fossils, and lapidary arts through lecture, discussions, and field trips. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in gems, minerals, and fossils. The Club meets monthly (usually) on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, 7:00 PM, in the cafeteria at Beals Senior/Community Center, 240 Stafford Ave., Bristol, CT The public is welcome.

Annual Dues: \$15 single, \$20 family/household.

----> **Submissions** for the Down-In-the-Dumps bulletin are encouraged! This is **YOUR** newsletter. Printed or emailed articles and/or photos, stories and links are accepted by the editor at any time and in any form. But Ads for items are not accepted. Reprinted articles must give credit to the article author and to the original printed source, if applicable.

Dean, Editor --- pyroartist@sbcglobal.net