

# What's New in the Mineral World?



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By the time you see this, you (presuming you are a subscriber) will probably have received your May-June 2011 issue, containing my report on the 2011 Tucson Show, and Bryan Swoboda's excellent DVD covering the 2010 Munich Show. We owe Bryan a vote of thanks for generously giving a free copy of that DVD to all of our subscribers. Now, as summer comes on—here in Tucson we think of this as a descent of angry Thor's hammer—the mineral world has quieted down a bit, as it routinely does in late spring. On the web, some last bits of Tucson Show fallout may still be noted, and of course there are a few interesting new items as well. And, as has been happening quite a lot lately, some older collections are being recycled through expert dealers. Here, then, are some web discoveries which perhaps you'll be able to say you first learned of RIGHT HERE...

At the Tucson Show, Rob Lavinsky of *The Arkenstone* came up with 20 or so superb cabinet-size **prehnite** specimens from a late 2010 find in the famous Prospect Park quarry, Passaic County, New Jersey. Since showtime, at least some of the prehnites have migrated to Brian and Brett Kosnar's *Mineral Classics* dealership, and there's a fine selection of them available now on that site ([www.minclassics.com](http://www.minclassics.com)). It's appropriate that the Kosnars should have taken over the Prospect Park treasures, as their late father Richard, although he later moved on to Colorado, was a New Jersey native and showed the boys, early in life, how to dig for zeolites, prehnite, apophyllite, amethyst etc. in the classic basalt traprock quarries of the northern part of the state. Of those quarries, only the Millington and the very long-lived Prospect Park have yielded significant numbers of specimens in recent decades, but now, Brian writes on the site, "[this] will more than likely be the last major production of specimens from Prospect Park. The quarry is currently in the process of being filled in for a housing development..." Well, if that's true, the 2010 discovery made a great swansong: the prehnite specimens came from a series of large pockets in a dome-shaped diapir (i.e. a structure formed of squeezed-up



basaltic magma) in the quarry's center, measuring about 12 × 12 × 12 meters. The surfaces of the lustrous, very pale to medium apple-green prehnite "fingers" distinctly show faces of individual prehnite crystals, and sharp, milky white calcite scalenohedrons to 1 cm are sprinkled on some of the pieces. The "fingers" themselves have hollow tubes down their middles, the prehnite having coated now-gone anhydrite crystals; in other words these are specimens of prehnite epimorphs after anhydrite. Such epimorphic prehnites are actually fairly common in the basalts of New Jersey and Connecticut—but you would be hard put to find more impressive examples than these.



**Prehnite epimorphs after anhydrite, 8.3 cm, from the Prospect Park quarry, Passaic County, New Jersey. *Mineral Classics* specimen and photo.**

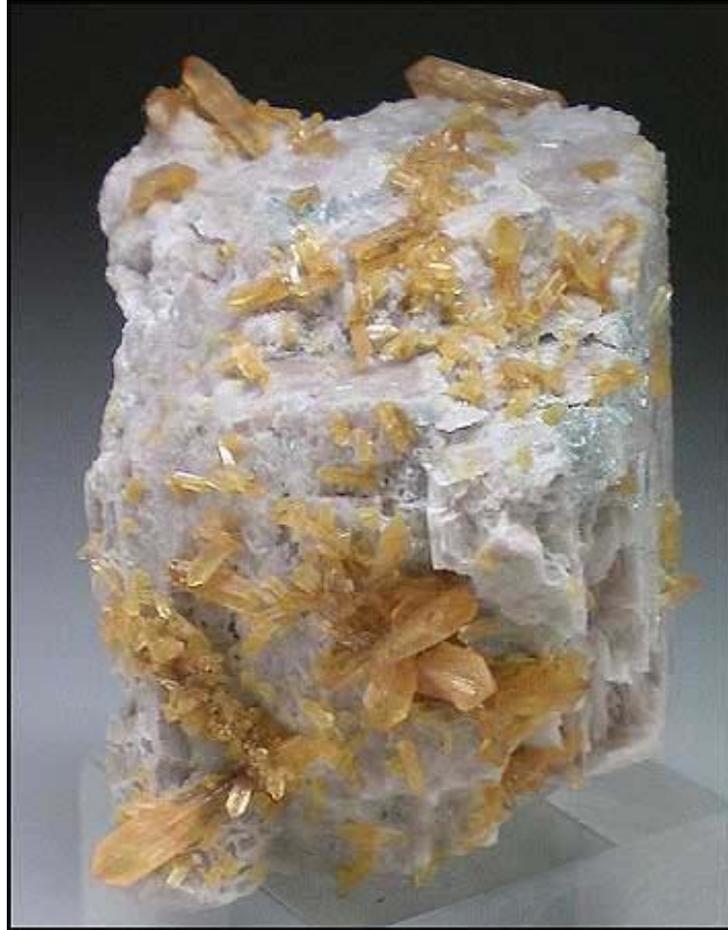
At the Tucson Show the Kosnars also had a flat of thumbnail and small-miniature specimens of **diopase** from a recent find at Kimbedi, Pool Region, Republic of the Congo. The Kimbedi diopase specimens now on view at the *Mineral Classics* site are not quite as "competitive" as the ones in the flat I ogled in February, but they do run very-good-to-excellent, and they are being marketed in the site's *wholesale* section, at

what are extremely low prices for good diopside, e.g. the thumbnail-size specimen pictured here is priced at \$75. (However, I must add that many of the most seductive-looking of the small specimens are already marked “sold.”) The diopside forms prismatic, rhombohedrally terminated, brilliant green crystals to 3 cm, loosely attached in jumbled or subparallel groups, most specimens without matrix.



**Diopside, 2.4 cm, from Kimbedi, Pool Region, Republic of the Congo. *Mineral Classics* specimen and photo.**

So much for Tucson Show fallout—unless you count the fact that the **childrenite/feldspar** specimens now on John Veevaert’s *Trinity Minerals* site ([www.trinityminerals.com](http://www.trinityminerals.com)) are items which John picked up at the show and is only now starting to market online. I didn’t see any of this material myself at the show—which explains why my published report fails to mention it—but it’s certainly worth our attention, as good childrenite from pegmatites is generally quite rare. Prismatic, lustrous, pale orange childrenite crystals to 1 cm are sprinkled all over white, blocky single crystals of microcline or sparkling crests of albite (variety *cleavelandite*) crystals from the Shigar Valley, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. Colorless, transparent topaz crystals of modest dimensions are also sprinkled on some of the feldspars. John’s specimens range in size from miniature to small-cabinet, and are attractive in direct proportion to how many sharp, well-individualized orange childrenite crystals are visible on the plain white backgrounds. John also has a single specimen which is a pretty 4-cm cluster of (partially corroded) childrenite crystals, lacking feldspar or any other associated species.



**Childrenite crystals on microcline, 5.5 cm, from the Shigar Valley, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. *Trinity Minerals* specimen and photo.**

Brad and Star van Scriver of *Heliodor* ([www.heliodor1.jodoshared.com](http://www.heliodor1.jodoshared.com)) made a big hit at the 2005 Denver Show when they brought in a few hundred distinctive and top-notch **acanthite** specimens from a great find in the Imiter mine, Ouarzazate, Morocco in the first half of that year. Acanthite from Imiter has since become fairly familiar (see our Imiter article in March-April 2011), and specimens have been distributed widely around the market. But the van Scriveres would like us to know that they retain exactly 233 specimens from the discovery which was exploited between January and June 2005, and even these leftovers are quite fine for the most part: about 25, mostly miniatures, are offered currently on the *Heliodor* site. Typically wavy-faced octahedral acanthite crystals with sharp points, most of them dull gray but a few medium-lustrous, form groups without matrix or associated species, with individual, thorny-looking acanthite crystals reaching 1.5 cm on edge. There has not been a comparably large strike of good acanthite specimens at Imiter these past six years (though small numbers of more highly lustrous, dendritic, “Christmas tree” specimens have appeared), and so it might now be judicious to pick up a piece from the original lode.



**Acanthite, 3.7 cm, from the Imiter mine, Ouarzazate, Morocco. *Heliodor* specimen and photo.**



**Cinnabar, 1 cm, from the Red Bird mine, Lovelock, Pershing County, Nevada. *John Betts Fine Minerals* specimen and photo.**

In 1978 a new, at first “secret,” locality for sharp **cinnabar** crystals was discovered at a place near Lovelock, Pershing County, Nevada, and a very few top specimens were recovered and marketed. A few years later, one dealership, offering some specimens which had been held back from the first find, gave the specific locality as the Red Bird mine, about 15 miles northeast of Lovelock. This mine was worked for mercury until

1969, and has produced lustrous, brilliant red, twinned rhombohedral crystals of cinnabar, resembling classic Chinese crystals, ranging from a few millimeters to more than 2 cm. No fresh specimens have appeared on the market since the 1980s—until now, that is. John Betts (*John Betts Fine Minerals*, [www.johnbetts-fineminerals.com](http://www.johnbetts-fineminerals.com)) affirms that, although he can't say more, the specimens presently on view on his site are indeed recently dug. Some are simply loose penetration-twinned cinnabar crystals which have been liberated by dissolving away enclosing calcite; these do not exceed 1 cm. But there are also a few miniature-size specimens showing cinnabar crystals and twins (most of them incomplete) on pale brown matrix material.



**Cinnabar on matrix, 5 cm, from the Red Bird mine, Lovelock, Pershing County, Nevada. *John Betts Fine Minerals* specimen and photo.**

Jack Lowell of *Colorado Gem & Mineral Company* ([www.ColoradoGem.com](http://www.ColoradoGem.com)) has a busy website specializing in quartz varieties, Pakistan/Afghanistan minerals, and some jewelry on the side. One page offers **amethyst** specimens from worldwide localities, including some from the brand-new Baobab mine near the village of Zombe, near the larger town of Kitui, south-central Kenya. Jack says on the site that Baobab mine amethyst was first marketed at the 2010 Tucson Show, but actually a major lot of it was brought to the 2009 Denver Show by Thomas Nagin, who, with a Kenyan partner, had just then begun to develop the deposit (see my Denver report in the January-February 2010 issue). But I must say that I've noticed little more Baobab mine amethyst "around," and some of Jack's specimens are excellent: witness the one shown here, a 6-cm parallel group of color-zoned, doubly terminated crystals. There are also sceptered and skeletal amethyst crystals, and some showing smoky zones.



**Amethyst, 6 cm, from the Baobab mine, Zombe, Kenya. *Colorado Gem & Mineral Company* specimen and photo.**



**Quartz, 8 cm, from Waziristan, Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Pakistan. *Colorado Gem & Mineral Company* specimen and photo.**



**Epidote, 6.25 cm, from near Quetta, Baluchistan, Pakistan.  
*Colorado Gem & Mineral Company specimen and photo.***

Jack Lowell has also been scoring good things from Pakistan—having for instance just picked up about 5,000 specimens of the well known **faden quartz** from somewhere in scary, Taliban-ridden Waziristan. This lot includes *matrix* pieces to 8 cm wherein tabular, transparent, colorless fadens swarm thickly on plates of quartzite, a few of them rising vertically from the fray as if to enhance our aesthetic pleasure. Some of the faden quartz specimens are already shown on Jack’s site, but his **epidote** specimens from somewhere near Quetta, Baluchistan haven’t made it there yet, so you may take the specimen shown here (in a photo provided by Jack) as a sneak preview. These epidote crystals are tabular, dark blackish green, and occur in loose jumbled groups to 15 cm, with individuals to nearly 10 cm. Jack writes to me that “Quetta is the closest city [to the locality], but we think it is more near to the border where [the epidote is] mined, but no one tells exactly where; you don’t take cameras into the area because the Taliban are very defensive there, as in Waziristan...No one knows if the epidotes are a vein replacement of calcic amphiboles or pyroxenes, or calcite. For sure the thickness of the vein is up to 6 inches because some of the pieces are that thick...” This is, then, a brand-new occurrence of epidote which it would be wrong to confuse either with the one in the Kharan Mountains of Baluchistan or the one at Wadd, Baluchistan—both of these being Alpine-type cleft environments where epidote forms fan-sprays of crystals resembling those of the Rosario Mabel claim in Peru. If Jack’s informants are right, the new “Quetta” epidotes seem to come from a vein-dike and/or a skarn environment.



**Pectolite, 5 cm, from the Millington quarry, Somerset County, New Jersey. *Rocko Minerals & Jewelry, Inc.* specimen and photo.**

Rob (“Rocko”) Rosenblatt of Margaretville, New York has long been coming to the Denver and Tucson shows with nice things from the northeastern U.S. (and from South Africa), but now his *Rocko Minerals & Jewelry, Inc.* has a website to show off his wares as well ([www.rockominerals.com](http://www.rockominerals.com)). The site, off to a good cyber-start, is now highlighting some fine cabinet-size **prehnite** specimens from the O & G quarry, Southbury, Connecticut, as well as miniature-size **pectolite** specimens from the Millington quarry, Bernardsville, Somerset County, New Jersey. As in other occurrences in New Jersey and elsewhere, pectolite at Millington forms tightly packed aggregates of radiating acicular crystals, the aggregates having smooth mammillary surfaces, some of impressive dimensions. According to Kent and Butkowski’s article on the Millington quarry in September-October 2000, about 80% of the Millington pectolite specimens of this description are white, the remainder being pale pink to red from trace iron oxides. But some specimens collected in the mid-2000s show mammillary pectolite in colors ranging through white, cream, pink, salmon, purple and green—and the specimens now on Rocko’s site are basalt matrix pieces with open cavities lined by smooth *pale green* pectolite botryoids, some intact, some broken through to show their radial structures. Rocko says that as of the turn of 2007-2008 the quarry was abandoned and already partially flooded, so (you know the rest...) you’d be best advised to acquire a Millington quarry pectolite specimen *now*.



**Stephanite (or is it pyrargyrite?), 2.8 cm, from Banská Štiavnica, Slovakia. Wendel Minerals specimen and photo.**

In print reports from Munich I have extolled the old European (especially German) classics of which Wolfgang Wendel of *Wendel Minerals* ([www.wendel-minerals.com](http://www.wendel-minerals.com)) always seems to have extraordinarily deep reserves—and now I'm happy to say that in 2011 Herr Wendel made his first appearance at the Tucson Show. His website now features generous pages called “German Classics” and “European Classics.” The photos are very good, the prices are okay considering the quality of the material, and I recommend that you pay this display of old-classic-type one-of-a-kind a respectful visit. Shown here is a dynamite thumbnail of **stephanite** from the ancient Banská Štiavnica (German: “Schemnitz”) locality in what is now Slovakia (priced at \$850). The crystal morphology and some hints of redness lead me to wonder whether this might be pyrargyrite rather than stephanite...but how often do we see either species in for-sale specimens this superb? (I'm reminded to mention that the major show theme in Munich this coming October will be “European Classics”—consider how well the Munich Show always works up its themes, and then *tell* me you're not interested in attending.)

The Italian web dealership called *Your Mineral Collection* (web address: [www.yourmineralcollection.com](http://www.yourmineralcollection.com)) also makes the scene with a fine European Classic: a May 8 update displays 5 small-miniature-size crystal groups of **vesuvianite** from Bellecombe, Aosta Valley, northeasternmost Italy. The sharp, lustrous, sometimes gemmy, prismatic crystals of brown and dark green vesuvianite from Bellecombe have always ranked among the world's top representatives of the species, and although its rodingite veins are probably not yet exhausted the locality now lies within a protected nature park, and all mineral-collecting activities are forbidden. The specimens with *Your*

*Mineral Collection* show blocky to short-prismatic, mirror-faced, undamaged-looking crystals to 3 cm, and some of the photos clearly show rich green-brown internal highlights bespeaking gemminess within. The same website also offers some good matrix specimens of **andradite variety demantoid**—bright green crystals to 1 cm—from another classic Italian locality: the Sferlun mine, Malenco Valley, Sondria, Lombardy.



**Vesuvianite, 3 cm, from Bellecombe, Aosta, Italy.**  
***Your Mineral Collection specimen and photo.***

As mentioned in an earlier online report, the website of the *Jin-Ming Mineral Company* ([www.jmineral.com](http://www.jmineral.com)) almost entirely lacks text but displays many pictures of its big showroom in Guangzhou, full of “decorator” specimens. But wait, don’t touch that dial: on an April 20 update the site pictures three specimens of **euclase** from the Piaotang mine, Dayu orefield, Dayuling Mountains, Jiangxi Province, which are sharp, lustrous and gemmy but not colorless (as are all other euclase crystals from the locality that one has seen), but rather a lovely pale yellow. The yellow thumbnail-size crystal shown here is off matrix; the other two of the *Jin-Ming* specimens are matrixes measuring 3 and 6.5 cm respectively, both strewn with shiny euclase crystals of which some are yellow, some colorless, still others color-zoned in yellow and milky white; tiny quartz and pyrite crystals are associated. This recent euclase locality has been publicized fairly widely as the Piaotang mine, but according to Berthold Ottens (in his big book on Chinese minerals) the euclase crystals come from small prospect pits and outcrops in the Dayuling Mountains, not from the underground mines. Has anyone seen *yellow* euclase crystals from the Dayu orefield before?



**Euclase, 2.1 cm, from the Dayu orefield, Jiangxi Province, China. *Jin-Ming Mineral Company* specimen and photo.**

I said at the beginning that the number of older collections being redistributed through dealers seems high at present—and here are three examples of the phenomenon which may be seen on the web right now. An end-of-March posting on Rob Lavinsky’s *The Arkenstone* site ([www.irocks.com](http://www.irocks.com)) offers specimens from the collection of Robert Nowakowski, a Michigan native who has decided to specialize in minerals from the Michigan Copper Country and from Canada, and so is selling off most of his former collection, which was “general” though with specialties in rare-earths minerals, Russian minerals, amethyst and zircon. To represent the overall quality of this material, here’s a wonderful **zircon** crystal—one of two very large such crystals on view—from the Cherry Mountain deposit, Vishnovogorsk, Chelyabinsk Oblast, southern Urals, Russia. This niobium mine, best known for producing the world’s finest pyrochlore specimens for a very brief time in the early 1990s, closed in mid-1993 and is now flooded. Its zircon crystals, though overshadowed by the pyrochlores, are very distinctive, with mirror-smooth surfaces, soft tan hues with subtle reddish mottlings, and in general a kind of delicately silky look to them—in my opinion these are among the world’s very best zircon specimens, and now “contemporary classics” withal.



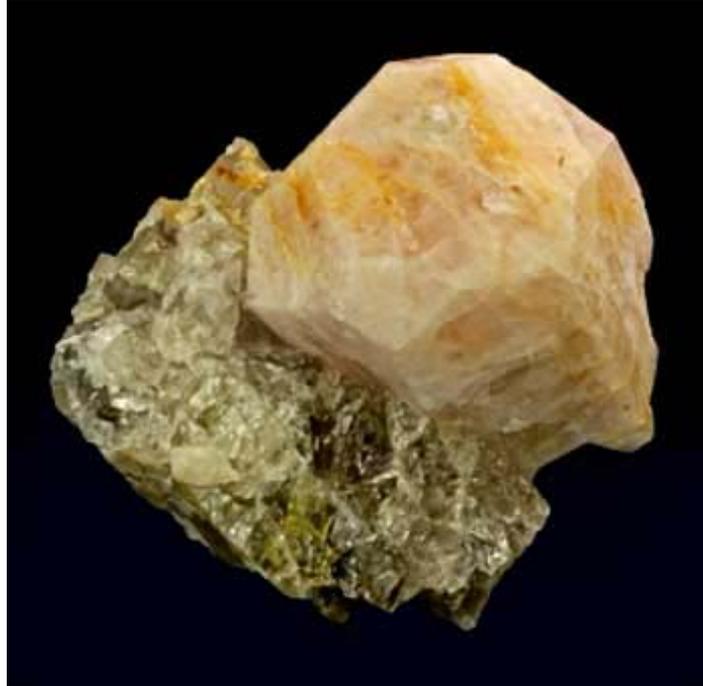
**Zircon, 6 cm, from Cherry Mountain, Vishnovogorsk, southern Urals, Russia. *The Arkenstone* specimen; Joe Budd photo.**

Then there's *Hummingbird Minerals*, with a website (web address: [www.hummingbirdminerals.com](http://www.hummingbirdminerals.com)) where you can see miscellaneous excellent cabinet-size specimens from the Ed David collection. Dr. Edward E. David was science advisor to President Nixon and Director of the White House Office of Science and Technology from 1970 to 1973, and after that he held many prestigious positions in industry. In 1993 he sold a large part of his "first collection" to the Houston Museum of Natural History, then started building the "second collection" which Jim Brown of *Hummingbird Minerals*—and other dealers—is now selling off for him. Ed David is now in his 80s and working on a "third collection." Among the prizes from the second collection is the terrific **stibnite** specimen, shown here, from the White Caps mine, Manhattan, Nye County, Nevada—a gold mine which flourished in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and produced, during that time, what are clearly North America's best stibnites.



**Stibnite, 13.5 cm, from the White Caps mine, Manhattan, Nye County, Nevada. *Hummingbird Minerals* specimen and photo.**

Finally, the fine collection of the University of Arizona is presently being prepared to become even finer via a careful program of de-accessioning older specimens to raise money to set up a permanent curation fund (see remarks on this in my 2011 Tucson Show report in May-June 2011). Dan Weinrich ([www.danweinrich.com](http://www.danweinrich.com)) has acquired a few ex-U of A specimens, including old classics, some from faraway and exotic places such as Connecticut: shown here is an 8-cm matrix of quartz with a sharp, opaque pale pink, 5.5-cm crystal of **morganite beryl** clinging to it, from the famous Gillette quarry near Haddam Neck, Middlesex County (see Jeff Scovil's article on this gem-bearing pegmatite in January-February 1992).



**Morganite beryl on quartz, 8 cm, from the Gillette quarry, Haddam Neck, Middlesex County, Connecticut.  
Dan Weinrich Minerals specimen and photo.**

### **Now at the University of Arizona...**

Speaking of the U of A, another stunning mineral exhibit, fully the equal of the Bisbee exhibit I described earlier in this space, went up at the Flandrau Planetarium last February 4, while the Tucson Show was in progress; depending on attendance and other factors the exhibit may be taken down either as early as June or as late as December. Go in through the Flandrau's main door, look immediately to your right, and you'll see the beginning of a wide aisle along which are placed six recessed wall cases, two floor cases, and generous numbers of professional-looking placards, all in explication of "Dangerous Beauty: Minerals of the Hindu Kush." Herb Obodda, Gene Meieran and Rob Lavinsky have furnished the specimen-wherewithal to help curator Mark Candee mount this very spectacular, very well labeled and illuminated, creatively organized presentation of minerals from northern Pakistan and northeastern Afghanistan. All of the recessed wall cases and one of the circular floor cases hold drop-dead-gorgeous gem crystals of aquamarine, topaz, elbaite, kunzite, etc. to wow the general public (and no less to wow us *cognoscenti*, who like two-foot-tall, terminated, totally gemmy kunzite crystals as much as anyone), while the other floor case contains thumbnail and miniature-size rarities from the Herb Obodda collection. The "mixed" titles of the wall cases are Badakhshan Province; Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan; Lithium (here's where those giant gem kunzites come in); Beryllium; Pakistan Gems & Minerals; and Afghanistan Gem & Minerals. A video wherein Gary Bowersox furnishes voice-over to a dramatic series of pictures from his expeditions to the Sar-e-Sang, Afghanistan lazurite ("lapis lazuli") mines plays continuously in the background.



**Looking down the exhibit of “Dangerous Beauty: Minerals of the Hindu Kush,” in the Flandrau Planetarium building on the campus of the University of Arizona, Tucson. Tom Moore photo.**

It would be silly, of course, to try to describe a lot of the individual killer specimens here, but let me just mention the enormous matrix plate of blue lazurite crystals from Sar-e-Sang; a super-sharp, translucent pink morganite beryl crystal, 30 cm across, which came out only weeks before the exhibit opened (as Herb Obodda, its owner, told Mark Candee); a couple of aquamarine crystals on feldspar matrix which show you exactly what, when the man coined the term “waterclear,” he was thinking or dreaming of; and an amazing deep orange, totally gemmy topaz crystal, about  $10 \times 10$  cm, contributed by Gene Meieran. In that second floor case are many of the same thumbnail-size screamers that Herb Obodda put into his memorable Pakistan-Afghanistan case at the 2007 Tucson Show (see the report in May-June 2007). These include the completely gemmy bastnäsite and väyrynenite crystals mentioned in the 2007 report, and the bright yellow stibiotantalite and bright orange childrenite too, and they include a beautiful red-orange gem triplite crystal, the world’s best crystal of baotite (from Zagi Mountain, Pakistan), a magnificent 4-cm compound crystal of allanite and a fine genthelvite (both of these from somewhere in the Shigar Valley), and a superb purple “hackmannite” sodalite thumbnail—though *not* the astonishing “hackmannite” which appeared, drawing eyes from all else, in the 2007 case and took a curtain call on the cover of our July-August 2008 issue. To look at that cover again might still be, though, to pick up the flavor of how this latest exhibit at the Flandrau amazes, delights and instructs.



**The “Lithium” case in the exhibit. Each of the two kunzite spodumene crystals is more than 60 cm tall. Tom Moore photo.**

Stay cool this summer!