

What's New in the Mineral World?



Report #32
August 4, 2012

by **Thomas P. Moore**
The Mineralogical
Record
TPMoore1@cox.net



In this midsummer “what’s-new” report I won’t try your patience by complaining about Tucson’s heat, since I know that “Tucson” heat levels have been prevailing—and with major humidity too—in most of the Midwestern and Eastern U.S. So let’s bag the idle weather-talk, make sure our air-conditioner filters are clean, and concentrate simply on what has been showing up on the web, these panting-dog days.



**Durangite, 2.7 cm, from the Barranca mine,
Coneto de Comonfort, Durango, Mexico.
Arkenstone specimen; Joe Budd photo.**



**Durangite, 1.7 cm, from the Barranca mine,
Coneto de Comonfort, Durango, Mexico.
Arkenstone specimen; Joe Budd photo.**

In September you’ll see in the *Mineralogical Record* a brief report of mine from the new New York City Metro Show, which happened in May in Secaucus, New Jersey (and

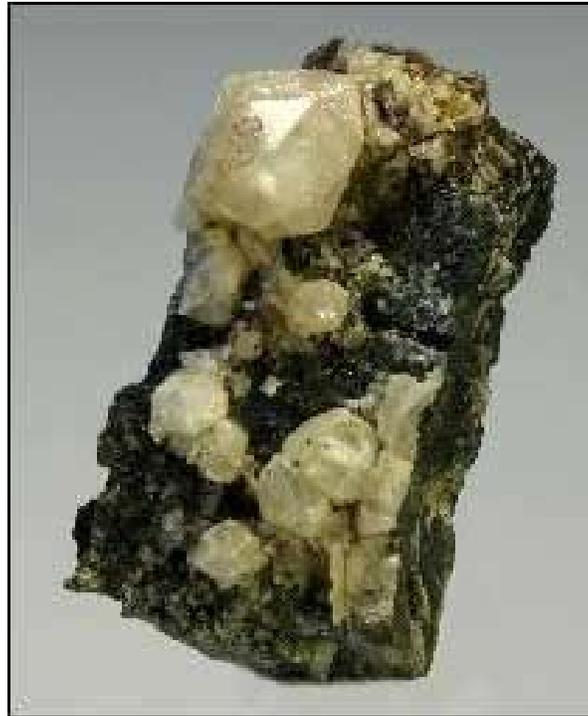


will have a new name and a new New Jersey address next spring). In the report you will read about something intriguing that Arizona dealer Mike Shannon brought to the show: about 50 loose, thumbnail-size single crystals of the rare Na-Al fluorarsenate **durangite**. Before the official opening day of the Metro Show I was accosted by Rob Lavinsky, who had already scouted Mike's durangites and wanted to make sure I saw them, and who had bought up some of the best. Now these beautiful little crystals have gone up for all to see on the site of Rob's *The Arkenstone* (www.irocks.com). Durangite is bright orange-red, and its monoclinic crystals are blocky to elongated and quite complex (some in the lot are incomplete crystal, and some may be twinned: all are nightmares to try to orient). Heretofore the best known specimens of durangite were those which came in the 1980s from a small site in the Thomas Mountains of Utah, but this new lot is from the *type* locality for the species, the Barranca mine, Conete de Comonfort, Durango, Mexico. At this point I'll quote from my own NYC Metro report: "These durangites from Durango are antiques: the story is that a boy who knew nothing of mineral specimens took them to the proprietor of a rock shop in Montana, saying that his, the boy's, grandfather had collected the little red stones somewhere in Mexico in the early 1940s"—and now, after long wanderings, the best of them are with Rob. The larger of the two crystals shown here tops the price list at \$3,500. But it's very doubtful that we'll ever again have a chance to pick up a durangite specimen from Durango, and these are very colorful and probably represent the pinnacle of development for this species.



Barite, 4.7 cm, from the Muzo mine, Vasquez-Yacobi district, Boyaca Department, Colombia. Andy Seibel Minerals specimen and photo.

At the 2012 Tucson Show there was an appearance of specimens of an attractive, gemmy yellow **barite** from the emerald mines of the Vasquez-Yacobi district, Boyaca Department, Colombia. In an April 2012 update, Andy Seibel (www.andyseibel.com) put up six miniatures from this occurrence, the first I have seen on the web. The specimens which came to Tucson were dug in 2011 in the La Pava mine (a first for that mine, the dealer told me), while the ones on Andy's site, though they *look* the same as the "La Pava" specimens, are said to have come from the famous Muzo mine. The barite crystals, reaching 4 cm, are tabular, lustrous, orange-yellow, and gemmy; they rise from a dark gray, carbonaceous matrix material which also, in some cases, hosts small, white calcite crystals and the odd tiny emerald. Bill Dameron's very useful website on barite localities, www.baritespecimenlocalities.org, mentions similar specimens of yellow barite from the La Marina mine, in the same district, and so we may be safe in saying that barite of this type is widely distributed in the emerald mines around Muzo—the only surprise is that the material is only now reaching the international market.



Scheelite on 3-cm matrix, from Kimmeria, Xanthi, Thrace, Greece. *Greekrocks* specimen; Christos Spiromitros photo.

Christos Spiromitros of *Greek Rocks* (www.greekrocks.com) checks in with an interesting what's-new: white **scheelite** crystals recently found at Kimmeria, Xanthi, Thrace, northern Greece. Intermittently since the early 1970s an outcrop of skarn rocks near the village of Kimmeria has produced good epidote and quartz specimens, but this is the first known discovery of scheelite. The crystals are sharp, fairly lustrous, translucent, and milky white, and they reach 1 cm. Christos offers loose, single crystals from the occurrence, plus a few thumbnail and small-miniature-size matrix pieces.



Orthoclase, 4.5 cm, from the Montnegre massif, Sant Celoni, Barcelona Province, Spain. *Edelweiss Minerals* specimen and photo.

Collecting sites in the Guadarrama Granite in Madrid Province, Spain, have produced good specimens of **orthoclase** for decades. Important collecting sites are found between the towns of Bustarviejo and Zarzalejo. And (as I've just learned on the web) another Spanish region of granitic rocks near a major city, the Montnegre massif in Barcelona Province, also produces excellent orthoclase crystals. Orthoclase specimens from Spain are seldom seen outside their homeland, but leave it to Felix Garcia Garcia of *Edelweiss Minerals* (www.edelweissminerals.com) to publicize them more widely: on the *Edelweiss* site right now are some excellent loose crystals to almost 5 cm from both the Madrid and the Barcelona regions, just recently acquired by Felix from Lluís Daunís, a Barcelona collector. The most handsome pieces are those from Sant Celoni in the Montnegre massif near Barcelona: pale pinkish tan, smooth-faced, blocky orthoclase crystals twinned on the Baveno law, some with patches of epitactic white albite.



Fluorapatite, 5.1 cm, from Mt. Mica, Paris, Oxford County, Maine. *Trinity Minerals* specimen; John Veevaert photo.

In mid-May John Veevaert of *Trinity Minerals* (www.trinityminerals.com) went prowling about the West Coast (Santa Ana, California) Show, and picked up **fluorapatite** specimens from two new finds; selections from both lots are now to be seen on his site. A digging at Itarana, Espirito Santo, Brazil has yielded loose, complete, mostly gemmy, short-prismatic fluorapatite crystals of thumbnail size and of a pleasing pale yellow-green color, many crystals containing fine-grained inclusions which impart a silky luster and “cat’s-eye” effect. Still more interesting (arguably) are miniature to small-cabinet-size fluorapatite specimens newly found at the venerable locality of Mt. Mica, Paris, Oxford County, Maine, which Leonard Himes latched onto and carried out to California. The Maine specimens show sharp, gemmy, palest blue, short-prismatic to tabular, fluorapatite crystals to more than 1 cm lightly implanted on matrix with white albite crystals—a significant “what’s new” item for Mt. Mica, which has been much better known historically for its elbaite crystals.



Galena pseudomorphous after pyromorphite, 5.5 cm, from Wheal Hope, Perranzabuloe, Cornwall, England. *Trinity Minerals* specimen; John Veevaert photo.

Furthermore, there is just no telling what old classic one-of-a-kinders John Veevaert will find, then offer, quite often for surprisingly low prices, on his site. Exhibit A this time is a cluster of pseudocrystals of **galena after pyromorphite**, no, not from the Kautenbach mine in the Mosel Valley of Germany but rather from a small lead mine called Wheal Hope, at Perranzabuloe, Cornwall, England, where galena pseudomorphs after pyromorphite were found in the mid-19th century, when the Kautenbach specimens also were coming out. But the Cornwall pseudomorphs are of a different habit from the German ones—prismatic, not blocky—and they are probably even rarer. Here is John’s 5.5-cm specimen from Wheal Hope, for which he asks just \$250.



Grossular variety tsavorite, 1.6 cm, from Arusha Region, Tanzania. *Pala Minerals* specimen and photo.

The Tsavo Plain stretches between the towns of Voi, Kenya, on the east, and Moshi, Tanzania, on the west; to the northwest lies Mt. Kilimanjaro, and beyond that lies the East African Rift Valley. In the late 1960s, rich gem fields around Moshi, east of Arusha, became known for (among other things) a lush deep green vanadium-rich **grossular** then new to the gem trade, which ultimately was given the gemological name “tsavorite.” Lately, some superb gem tsavorite crystals from the Arusha Region have been visible around the market, and they are gorgeous, and any good crystals which have eluded the cutters’ blades are to be cherished just on principle. Bill Larson of *Pala International* knows all this, of course, and on his recently established website for *mineral specimens only* called *Pala Minerals* (www.palaminerals.com) he has posted four tsavorite crystals of small size and large price, but topmost in quality: the crystal here is priced at \$13,000, but even if you can’t buy it you can at least admire it. Gem-crystal collectors are well advised now to be on special watch for Tanzanian tsavorite crystals, as they do seem to be showing up sparingly at major shows and on the web.

The Linwood mine at Buffalo, Scott County, Iowa was opened initially as a limestone quarry in 1918 but is now an underground mine for high-quality limestone; it is best known in mineral collecting circles for its fine calcite crystals. However, in summer 2008, abundant **barite** specimens from the Linwood mine made the scene, and now a still more recent barite strike is in evidence: about 25 excellent Linwood mine barite specimens, miniature to large-cabinet size, may be seen on the site of *Khyber Minerals* (www.khyberminerals.com). Thick, wedge-terminated (on both ends), elongated crystals of barite reaching 12 cm display a range of colors from gray-brown to very pale yellow-brown to cognac-colored; all are lustrous, most are translucent and a few are transparent. Some of the *Khyber* specimens are loose single crystals but most are clusters showing from two to eight sharp individuals. If this barite is like the last batch from Linwood, it is fluorescent bright white in longwave ultraviolet light.



Barite, 15 cm, from the Linwood mine, Buffalo, Scott County, Iowa. *Khyber Minerals* specimen and photo.



Sphalerite, 2.6 cm, from the Standard Slag quarry, Adams County, Ohio. *Christopher J. Stefano Minerals* specimen and photo.

Another new item from limestony lands of the Midwestern U.S. is a group of about 20 miniatures (and a few thumbnails) of **sphalerite** from the Standard Slag and Plum Run quarries, Adams County, Ohio. Chris Stefano, on his *Stefano Minerals* site (www.stefanmineralstore.com), says that these two quarries are in a zone of highly fractured limestone in southern Ohio called the Serpent Mound Disturbance, perhaps a meteorite-impact site. The sphalerite specimens (Chris goes on) date back “a number of years” but this hoard has just recently been released to the market—and the locality names are both new to me. The crystals, to 1 cm and very sharp at their best, show a resinous luster and orange-brown translucency, and some sport strong surficial iridescence. Loose groups as well as matrix pieces were recovered, the latter with sphalerite crystals swarming thickly on buff-colored limestone.



Rhodochrosite, 9.7 cm, from the Hedgehog Pocket, Sweet Home mine, Alma, Colorado.
Hummingbird Minerals specimen and photo.

At the aforementioned NYC Metro Show Jim Brown of *Hummingbird Minerals* (www.hummingbirdminerals.com) had an impressive array of wall cases displaying various special suites of Jim’s favorite species, with **rhodochrosite** a major entry among them. The *Hummingbird Minerals* website confirms that Jim *really likes* to deal in fine specimens of this mineral, mostly cabinet to large-cabinet size. It is a pleasure to scroll one’s way through the site’s rhodochrosite page, where one can find *big* specimens from, among others, Santa Eulalia, Mexico; Cavnic, Romania; the Sunnyside, Sweet Home and other mines, Colorado; the Wuton mine, China; the N’Chwaning mine, South Africa; the Moanda mine, Gabon; Kounrad, Kazakhstan; and the Santa Rita and Uchucchacua mines,

Peru. Shown here are a giant matrix specimen of Jim's from Cavnica, and a beautiful 9.7-cm piece from the Hedgehog Pocket of the Sweet Home mine, the latter priced at \$8,000—not bad, considering how fast the prices for Sweet Home rhodochrosite have risen, and are still rising, since the mine's final closure (and the sealing up of its lone entrance with concrete) in 2002.



Rhodochrosite, 19 cm, from Cavnica, Maramures, Romania.
Hummingbird Minerals specimen and photo.

Next—well, sure, it's only **calcite**, but the large, gleaming snow-white, calcite “trees” from caves in the karst terrain of Wenshan Autonomous Prefecture, southern Yunnan Province, China, might be thought of as something special. According to Bert Ottens in his *China: Mineralien-Fundstellen-Lagerstätten* (2008), the calcite “trees” were originally stalactites, but calcite crystals were later deposited symmetrically, perpendicular to the stalactites' long axes; such specimens sell briskly as “decorator” items in China. Currently Brian Kosnar of *Mineral Classics* (www.minclassics.com) is offering ten such specimens, ranging from 3.2 to 16.2 cm, which were collected about a year ago. And Brian has slashed their prices by half, he says, from what they had been when offered a bit earlier on the site. (But I must niggle that it's incorrect, strictly speaking, to cite their locality, as Brian does, as the “Wenshan mine”—these are almost certainly cave formations.)

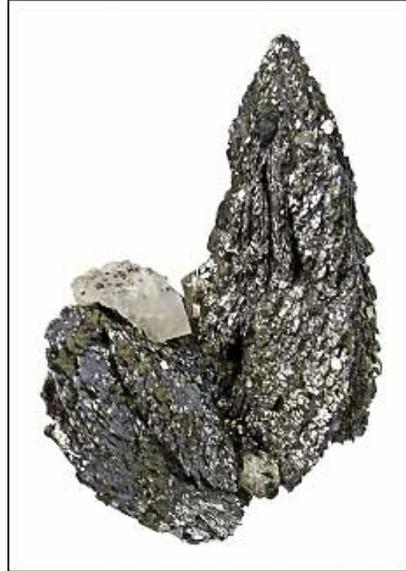


Calcite, 7 cm, from Wenshan Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan, China. *Mineral Classics* specimen and photo.

So it seems I have worked my way around—again—to China. For a tempting sampling of some *very* new Chinese material, let's go again to Rob Lavinsky's *The Arkenstone* site, where many Chinese specimens were posted on June 29 (at the same time as the Mexican durangites). From the Piaotang mine near Ganzhou, Dayu mining district, Jiangxi Province, good **fluorite** of several colors and habits is now available, as is a fine **chalcopyrite** group measuring 5.7 cm, with a sharp 3-cm crystal for its centerpiece. According to Bert Ottens in his book (cited above), China's biggest chalcopyrite crystals are those which come from the skarn-hosted copper deposit at Dayu/Fengjiashan.



Chalcopyrite, 5.7 cm, from No. 359 vein, 268 area, Piaotang mine, Ganzhou city, Dayu district, Jiangxi, China. *Arkenstone* specimen; Joe Budd photo.



Löllingite, 8.4 cm, from the Huanggang mine, Chifeng Prefecture, Inner Mongolia, China. *Arkenstone* specimen; Joe Budd photo.

Just now I won't rave any more about the diversity and the promise of the Huanggang mine in Inner Mongolia (that will all be covered in a major article in the forthcoming September-October issue of the *Mineralogical Record*)—but within the past year I have seen some remarkable **löllingite** specimens from that locality, with highly lustrous, metallic gray, lozenge-shaped crystals to more than 8 cm—as in the *Arkenstone* piece shown here. The big löllingite crystals typically are somewhat rough-surfaced from overgrowths of arsenopyrite, and some of the specimens found in spring 2012 (as was this *Arkenstone* example) show associated nests of small fluorite, calcite and dolomite crystals. Also in Rob's selection are several fine ilvaite, quartz and scheelite (!) specimens newly taken from the Huanggang mine.



Gibbsite, 3.9 cm, from Wenshan, Yunnan, China. *Arkenstone* specimen; Joe Budd photo.

At an April 2012 show in Shanghai which he attended, Rob acquired some brand-new, botryoidal baby-blue specimens of the aluminum hydroxide **gibbsite**, small-miniature to small-cabinet size. The stated locality is “Wenshan, Yunnan Province,” and yes, we would like this to be more specific, but at least it’s a fair bet that the new gibbsite specimens are not to be confused with the glossier, greener ones which appeared late in 2007, attributed to “Baoshan, Hunan Province.” Ottens, in the 2008 book mentioned above, writes that Chinese gibbsite specimens (some of which may be doyleite, its polymorph) come only from the Baoshan locality: the “Wenshan” specimens therefore are quite new, and are (in their botryoidal way) quite pretty.



Valentinite, 9.3 cm, from Lengshui Jieng, Hunan, China.
Arkenstone specimen; Joe Budd photo.

The last Chinese item of note on the *Arkenstone* site is a handful of very good specimens of **valentinite** from a small find in April and early May, 2012 in a metallic deposit near the famous Xikuangshan stibnite mine. According to Rob’s source the name of the place is Lengshui Jieng (not mentioned in the Ottens book), Hunan Province. Valentinite appears as pale yellow radial spheres of acicular crystals to 1 cm on surfaces of a dark gray matrix rock.

I’ll conclude with notices of two websites which, with their miscellaneous very fine, aesthetic specimens and superb photos of these, make for purely delightful browsing—with major temptations to buy *something*, at least, from the big spreads of beautiful, sometimes unusual, mineral specimens. I’ve mentioned one of these sites fairly often before in online reports: Kiyoshi Kiikuni’s *Key’s Minerals*, in Japanese and English (whew) versions. Kiyoshi’s last update (June 18) features two new, lavish pages devoted respectively to African and Asian minerals. Among the former there is a wonderful thumbnail-size **braunite** from the N’Chwaning III mine, South Africa, and, less familiarly, there is a 5.7-cm cluster of totally colorless and transparent, cubic **fluorite** crystals from the Hammam-Zriba mine, Zriba village, Zaghuan Governorate, Tunisia. During the 1990s a few small lots of very good celestine specimens (sometimes

misabeled barite) from this mine reached the market, and fluorite specimens also appeared sparingly—but this is the first of the fluorites I’ve seen, and I must say I’m impressed.



Braunite, 2.8 cm, from the N’Chwaning III mine, Kuruman manganese district, Northern Cape Province, South Africa. *Key’s Minerals* specimen and photo.



Fluorite, 5.7 cm, from the Hammam-Zriba mine, Zriba village, Zaghouan Governorate, Tunisia. *Key’s Minerals* specimen and photo.

The second website with plenty of good aesthetic specimens is one I have *not* mentioned in earlier reports: Mike and Diana Hopkins' *Mad Minerals* (www.madmineralz.com). Mike and Diana offer seven galleries loaded with big, spectacular screen-presentations of spectacular specimens of many kinds, of which I show my two personal favorites here: a **libethenite** from the Rokana mine, Kitwe, Zambia and a **mimetite after wulfenite** from the San Francisco mine, Sonora, Mexico. The libethenite crystals are *not* dark pine-green and blocky like most from the Rokana mine, but are thin-prismatic and paler green and form a weed-like clump on lustrous green reniform malachite: this is a thumbnail from the former Minette collection. The mimetite pseudomorph specimen is a bright orange-yellow reef-like affair with ridges and dips and protuberances, all this action going on over vanished tabular wulfenite crystals. In 1983 Bill and Millie Schupp donated this specimen to the University of Arizona collection, and it is now being recycled back onto the market to help raise funds for the museum; it is a 5-cm color-scream costing just \$300 on the *Mad Minerals* site.



Libethenite on malachite, 2.5 cm, from the Rokana mine, Kitwe, Zambia (ex Minette Collection). *Mad Minerals* specimen and photo.



Mimetite pseudomorphous after wulfenite, 5 cm, from the San Francisco mine, Sonora, Mexico. *Mad Minerals* specimen and photo.

Other News

This being the summer lull in the mineral-collecting world, there is not much “other” news kicking around now, in point of fact. But I can at least pass on word of a fun-sounding show which will take place in Stamford, Connecticut on Saturday November 3 and Sunday November 4: the Stamford Mineralogical Society’s 25th annual gem, mineral, jewelry and fossil show, to be held at the Eastern Greenwich Civic Center, 90 Harding Road, Greenwich, Connecticut. There will be plenty of dealers, plus earth-science displays, geode-cracking for kids, and hourly door prizes. The admission price is \$6 for adults, \$1 for children under twelve. For more information, contact Nancy Mattson (ngm11@msn.com; phone 914-935-8893), or go to <http://stamfordmineralsociety.org>.

Please excuse me now while I go to check on my air conditioner.