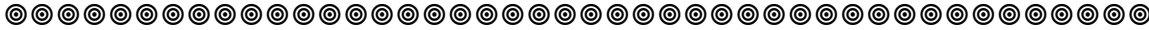


What's New in the Mineral World?



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GUEST COLUMNIST: **Wendell Wilson**

Back in March 2005, Tom Moore posted his first online column about mineral news gleaned from the Internet, and he has been providing such reviews semi-regularly ever since then. So, after all that hard work, I think it's appropriate that Tom gets a break this time, in recognition of the 50th column installment in the series (congratulations, Tom!). Right now Tom is relaxing on his shaded patio and sipping a cold beer while I, as his first-ever Guest Columnist, take this opportunity to share a few of the things that I myself have come across lately on the Internet.

In 1644, John Milton recommended the idea of “promiscuous reading,” by which he meant that people should read all kinds of books and printed matter, not restricting themselves to what they are most familiar with. The Internet is a fabulous environment for such random searches, with its countless websites and postings. Choosing the search words to use when googling is the challenge; I like to start with something simple, like “mineral specimens,” and then click on “images.” Each image yields a whole new line of images to examine, in a never-ending tree of branches upon branches. So here we go, in no particular order; some of these things are for sale but many are just interesting.

Zus Korsten (zuskorsten.com) is a Dutch antiques “picker” who travels throughout Europe buying rare and interesting display objects for collectors and decorators. She is also a trained conservator, so she knows how to preserve and restore old items as necessary. What caught my eye among her recent offerings is an antique model of the “Welcome Nugget,” found at Bakery Hill, Ballarat, Victoria, Australia in 1858.



Full-size replica of the famous “Welcome Nugget,” 49 cm, found at Ballarat, Victoria, Australia in 1858; mounted on a wooden panel 89 cm (35 inches) long. Zus Korsten specimen.

The original Welcome Nugget was the second largest nugget ever found, weighing 2,217 troy ounces (surpassed only by the “Welcome Stranger Nugget” found in 1869). It was melted down at the London mint within 15 months of its discovery, after being displayed at the Crystal Palace, but fortunately a few models were prepared first and most of them today are in museums (Harvard has one). The one shown here, mounted on a board 89 cm long, is a full-size replica. The Welcome Nugget was pictured on a famous tobacco poster of the times, and in 1988 was depicted on a gold bullion coin issued by the Perth Mint. The replica that Zus Korsten is offering is priced at \$4500, and would be a great companion to a collection of gold specimens or gold mining memorabilia. The original affixed plate gives the details, and is the only surviving example I know of. Zus says that the model belonged to a “famous London mineral and fossil trader.”

Rhodochrosite is well-known in very attractive specimens from Uchucchacua, Lima Department, Peru. However, I don’t think I have ever seen what appear to be (or to approximate) tabular crystals like those in a small miniature in the collection of Simone Citon. A check of the 295 Uchucchacua rhodochrosite photos posted on Mindat shows nearly all to be scalenohedral or, to a lesser extent, rhombohedral in habit—though there is a somewhat similar one shown from the collection of Manfred Kampf. Clearly this tabular-like habit is an extreme rarity. Readers might recall that Simone Citon, a collector in Venice, Italy, showed some of his specimens in the *Mineralogical Record’s* 2011 supplement on *Private Mineral Collections in Italy* (copies are still available from the Bookstore section at MineralogicalRecord.com if you subscribed too late to receive one). The Uchucchacua mine was covered in the July-August 1997 issue, devoted entirely to the “Mines and Minerals of Peru” (available from the Back Issues section, vol. 28, no. 4).



Rhodochrosite, 3 cm, showing an unusual flattened habit, from the Uchucchacua mine, Oyon Province, Lima Department, Peru. Simone Citon collection and photo.

Pinterest is a website where anyone can post their favorite photos of anything which they have copied from the Internet, so it contains (among much else) a rich agglomeration of mineral images. But it is infuriating in its poor documentation of said photos – often lacking any data on the original source of the photo, the owner, photographer, locality or specimen size. Finding a photo on Pinterest and trying to track it to its source can be an exasperating, impossible task. Even more frustrating is that commonly a photo posted on Pinterest has already been taken down from its original website (perhaps having been sold), and thus the only remaining place where the image is still preserved is on Pinterest.

Despite these almost guaranteed aggravations, it is tempting to surf through Pinterest posts looking at mineral images, and the effort occasionally yields an interesting contact. Kalahari Classics, for example, is a small mineral dealership in Magaliesburg, South Africa – no currently functioning website but they have a Facebook page, a Mindat page, an eBay page (sometimes), an e-Rocks page and a Pinterest page devoted to Tsumeb minerals. They specialize in “affordable” Tsumeb and Kalahari Manganese Field (N’Chwaning etc.) specimens. Among their interesting Tsumeb specimens I found a white cerussite cluster with little blue azurite crystals all over, a rather rare look for Tsumeb.



**Cerussite with azurite, 3.4 cm, from Tsumeb, Namibia.
Kalahari Classics specimen and photo.**

One of my favorite photos is a gemmy, pink, twinned dolomite thumbnail with hematite inclusions, from Brazil (the Brumado mine, no doubt). I have seen others with this habit but this is the only pink one I know of. Finding the photo on Pinterest led to its previous posting on a similarly endless reposting site called Tumblr, but I have yet to track down its original source.



**Twinned pink dolomite with hematite inclusions,
2.4 cm, from the Brumado mine, Bahia, Brazil.**



Diaspore crystal, 9 mm, from Mong Hsu, Loilem, Shan State, Burma. Kiyoshi Kiikuni specimen and photo.



Caledonite crystal, 1 cm, from the Rowley mine, Maricopa County, Arizona. Kiyoshi Kiikuni specimen and photo.

Another dealer worth keeping an eye on is Kiyoshi Kiikuni and his *Key's Minerals* website (www.keysminerals.com). Kiyoshi was originally a musician by profession, playing saxophone in Tokyo; but he also loved collecting minerals. In 1995 the Hanshin Earthquake struck his hometown of Ashiya. He decided to go home and repair the house his mother had left him, and start a full-time mineral business there. His website has been online since 1998. The "Key's Minerals" name comes from the nickname his friends know him by, "Key-san."

Kiyoshi doesn't do an extremely high volume of business, but his specimens are very well selected for perfection and aesthetics. Currently on his website is a small crystal of diaspore, just 9 mm, but with a wonderful reddish purple zoning; the locality is new to me (although it is indeed mentioned in Moore's *Compendium*): Mong Hsu, Loilem, Shan State, Burma. It's priced at 12,000 Yen (about \$105). Another of my favorites among Key's specimens is already sold: A single crystal of caledonite from the Rowley mine, Maricopa County, Arizona. This is a real Arizona classic, as the caledonite zone in the mine was very small and long since worked out. Subscribing to his website will get you notices of new postings.



**Tanzanite (zoisite) crystal, 6.4 cm, from the Merelani mine, Tanzania.
Wilensky Minerals specimen; oil painting by Wendell Wilson.**

Stuart Wilensky has been a dealer in high-end minerals for many years, and comes from a family of dealers. I can recall buying old miners' lamps from his father's antique and art business in Wurtsboro, New York, back in the late 1970s. Stuart traveled the world with his parents, visiting art museums and studying art. Shortly after he and his wife, Donna, were married, they stumbled upon a lot of Arkansas quartz at a Long Island flea market, and were completely won over by the beauty of minerals. Since then they have been operating Wilensky Minerals, and recently opened a new showroom on 10th Avenue in New York City. When I visited their website today (which, by the way, pictures only specimens that have already been sold), I came across an old friend: the finest tanzanite crystal I have ever seen, 6.4 cm tall, fat and totally gemmy, with a superb termination. In fact, I made an oil painting of the specimen, shown here. I'm not sure who currently owns the piece, but it is truly stunning in person.



Kunzite (spodumene) crystal, about 15 cm, from the Mawi pegmatite, Nuristan, Afghanistan. Collector's Edge Minerals specimen; Hershel Friedman photo.

Another website to bookmark is Hershel Friedman's Minerals.net site. Hershel doesn't sell minerals himself, but he hosts ads for other dealers, and posts a blog about shows he visits, with plenty of photos of displays and specimens for sale. The picture above shows an interesting, deeply colored Afghan kunzite (spodumene) crystal offered for sale by Collector's Edge Minerals at the 2014 Tucson Show.

And who doesn't like Tsumeb smithsonite? Missouri dealer Dan Weinrich (www.WeinrichMineralsInc.com) has a superb one for sale on his website, and this one is bright pink, with nice, big crystals, and the main crystal is a *killer*. The specimen measures 7 cm overall, and has great luster and perfection. This piece, illustrated in the second edition of Rainer Bode's *Namibia* book on page 560, is ex Marshall Sussman's collection. Marshall likes to stay a bit under the radar, but he has acquired (and later sold) some incredible Tsumeb specimens in the past.

Dan's website also has an "Archive" section where you can search to find photos of specimens he has sold in the past. He has had some wonderful things, not the least of which was the Henckel collection of old European classics.



Smithsonite, 7 cm, from the Tsumeb mine, Namibia. Ex Marshall Sussman collection.

Colorado dealer Dave Bunk always has lots of fine specimens available on his website, DaveBunkMinerals.com. Currently there is quite a spread of excellent sulfur specimens from the Cozzodici mine, Casteltermino, Agrigento Province, Sicily. The noteworthy fact about these specimens is that they contain traces and small inclusions of petroleum—proving that they are *not* among the many fine home-grown fakes produced in Italy years ago by Dr. Sergio Martinat. The unrepentant doctor’s specimens, grown on authentic Sicilian matrix by slowly evaporating barrels of solvent saturated with dissolved sulfur, are virtually indistinguishable from natural specimens. Aside from the petroleum association, the quality of the fakes is so high that only an isotopic analysis can distinguish them. It turned out that Martinat had bought Frasch-process bulk Texas sulfur to use in making his fakes, and the sulfur isotope profile of Texas sulfur does not match that of Sicilian sulfur. Had he used Sicilian sulfur, there would truly be no way to positively distinguish his beautiful fakes from natural specimens. (See the full story in Renato Pagano’s article “Artificial Sicilian sulfurs” in the March-April 2002 *Mineralogical Record*, and “Sulfur isotope analysis for the identification of sulfur sources” January-February 2003.)



Copper, 4 cm, from the Franklin mine, Franklin, New Jersey. Dave Bunk specimen and photo.

Dave has a couple of other interesting classics on his website: The first is a native copper crystal group (4 cm) from the Franklin mine, Franklin, New Jersey (price: \$1500). One does not normally associate Franklin with native copper, as the famous fluorescent minerals and rare species get all of the press. But this copper stands up well beside specimens from other localities, and would make a fun “guess-the-locality” piece to have in your home showcase.

The other old classic is a metatorbernite crystal cluster (5 cm) from the Old Gunnislake mine in Cornwall, England (price: \$7500). Most people have always called these specimens “torbernite,” perhaps because they show no trace of the milkiness that results when torbernite dehydrates to become metatorbernite. However, it is pretty much impossible for a torbernite to survive long exposure in a surface environment without eventually altering to metatorbernite. It turns out that Old Gunnislake specimens originally crystallized as metatorbernite, and consequently never had to undergo dehydration, so the crystals are still glassy and clear. Following publication of the *Mineralogical Record’s* article on the Old Gunnislake mine (July-August 2017), the occurrence was officially declared to be the type locality for metatorbernite. Specimens like this one are all really old, probably dating to just a short period between 1811 and 1812 when a bonanza of specimens was encountered deep in the mine, in an area now completely flooded with *radioactive* water.



**Metatorbernite, 5 cm, from the Old Gunnislake mine, Cornwall, England.
Dave Bunk specimen and photo.**

And now here is something you don't see every day: A major bastnäsite-(Ce) crystal cluster on matrix, 4.6 cm, from Zagi Mountain in Pakistan. The *Mineralogical Record* published an article on this locality back in May-June 2004. Good matrix specimens are fairly rare, as are clusters like this, with some crystals doubly terminated. The coal-black metallic mineral needs identification but is probably ilmenite. It's a Rudolf Watzl (SaphiraMinerals.com) specimen, priced at 4,000 Euros.



Bastnäsite-(Ce) crystal cluster on microcline with ilmenite (?), 4.6 cm, from Zagi Mountain, Peshawar, Pakistan. Rudolf Watzl specimen and photo.



**Wulfenite, 4.4 cm, from Los Lamentos, Chihuahua, Mexico.
Heritage Auctions specimen and photo.**

It's always a good idea to keep abreast of the auction scene, and that is easily done by subscribing to the catalogs for mineral auctions, and by checking the auction house websites periodically. Heritage Auctions, for example, held a mineral specimen auction in Dallas on May 5. And it's likewise a good idea to check their website *after* an auction to see what didn't sell. Lot owners will often set their reserve price too high, and the piece will fail to find a buyer. In that case it is possible to make the owner a lower offer via the website. The Los Lamentos wulfenite pictured above is such a specimen, having failed to reach its reserve. Feel free to sign up with Heritage and make an offer!

Another interesting feature of the Heritage process comes available when you fail to make a bid on something you want, and the item is sold to someone else. Perhaps you were just too busy on the day of the auction and forgot to place your bid, or perhaps you didn't even know about the auction until it was too late, or perhaps you are suffering remorse that you didn't bid higher when you had the chance. In such cases, Heritage will allow you to make an offer to the buyer through their website (without telling you who the buyer was), and will even tell you what other offers have thus far been rejected by the new owner or are currently pending.



Clinozoisite, 3.5 cm, from Cerro San Cristobal, San Vincente de Cañete, Cañete Province, Lima Department, Peru. McDougall Minerals specimen and photo.

Ray McDougall (www.McDougallMinerals.com) has acquired a number of brownish gray, twinned clinozoisite crystal groups from Cerro San Cristobal, San Vincente de Cañete, Cañete Province, Lima Department, Peru. The crystals are well-formed and fairly lustrous. The 3.5-cm piece shown here, a small miniature, is priced at just \$75. According to Ray, these clinozoisite specimens were found in 2017 (and were available at the 2017 Munich Show), in some workings that are only operational on a sporadic basis. The specific zone from which these specimens were recovered is apparently exhausted, and the miners are now encountering a bit of epidote as the work has advanced beyond the clinozoisite zone.

Ray is also offering a sweet little miniature of pale lavender sodalite (variety hackmannite), 4.4 cm, from Mont Saint-Hilaire, Quebec. The sodalite crystal is covered by a druse of pretty, delicate pale pink albite crystals. Although sodalite is a relatively common mineral at Mont Saint-Hilaire, well-formed crystals are quite rare. This specimen is from a pocket collected by Gilles Haineault in 1994.



Sodalite crystal covered by a druse of albite crystals, 4.4 cm, from Mont Saint-Hilaire, Quebec. Ray McDougall collection (since 1994) and photo.

Marcus Budil is a dealer who specializes in nothing but specimens that will take your breath away. At the Tucson and Munich Shows every year his booth is filled with the most elegant, elite, refined and yet gorgeous minerals. And he is particularly fond of colorful, lustrous and sharp minerals. So when you see among his offerings a specimen like the Kongsberg wire silver shown here, you know that it must be something special, because it has no color, and it has no sharp crystal edges, and it has no mirror luster. What it has is superb aesthetics in a compact miniature size (6 cm).

But what really makes me love this specimen is, oddly enough, the wear on the edges. Of course, there is no such thing as a stream-worn Kongsberg silver, so how did the outermost edges get softly rounded? By being handled and carried in someone's pocket and shown to friends, perhaps for hundreds of years. It has the perfect size and shape for such an object—not too big or small, no spiky projections, very robust and interestingly shaped. This is a specimen that has been loved and cherished and handled by human hands for a very long time, and carries its own built-in pedigree of historicity. You can see the same phenomenon on an old silver coin or on some antique furniture, a soft and slight rounding of the outer edge that is evidence of centuries of loving human touch—it

can't be duplicated artificially. Unlike most delicate and perfect mineral specimens, this Kongsberg silver is one you can enjoy holding and passing around, sharing a rare tactile pleasure with your friends.



Wire silver, 6 cm, from Kongsberg, Norway. Marcus Budil specimen; Malte Sickinger photo.

Perusing the CollectorsEdge.com website, I came across the beautiful ruby crystal on white marble matrix shown below. The specimen measures 2.1 cm across, and comes from the famous Jegdalek ruby deposit, Surobi District, Kabul Province, Afghanistan. It's a fine crystal with a good termination, ex Keith Proctor collection.

The Jegdalek deposit is hosted in a calcite-dolomite marble, which is up to 2,000 meters thick. At least 20 crude mines have been dug into the marble, along with more than 2,000 open pits and trenches. The area includes muscovite-bearing pegmatites and skarns as well. It is located in the western part of the Surkh-Rod pegmatite field. Unfortunately we have never had an article on this well-known locality in the *Mineralogical Record*, but that gives us something to work on in the future.

In any case, I show the specimen here because it brings up a story



Ruby corundum crystal in calcite marble matrix, 2.1 cm, from Jegdalek, Surobi District, Kabul Province, Afghanistan. Collector's Edge Minerals specimen; Richard Jackson photo.

Around 2005 or so, investigators from the Central Intelligence Agency were asking to meet with various people in the mineral and gem world in order to ask them a few questions. A researcher would arrive, wearing the typical white dress shirt, dark tie and slacks, and carrying a big briefcase. Sitting down, he would pull out 8 x 10 photos taken from a recent propaganda video of Osama bin Laden sitting on a Persian rug in front of a rock wall in a cave or mine. The question was put: In your opinion, looking at the rock wall behind bin Laden, can you venture a guess as to where the video might have been taken? Obviously it was impossible for anyone to be certain from such a photo. However, the rock was jagged (as in a mine) rather than softly rounded (as in a cave); it was light colored and it did appear to have dark specks interspersed through it. Was it Jegdalek? There was no way to be certain.

The investigator would ask for any referrals to someone else who might know, would leave a business card with just his name and phone number in case any other thoughts came to mind, and would pack up his briefcase and leave. Did all of this investigation lead to any useful pursuit of the terrorist? Who knows? But in all propaganda videos thereafter, a Persian rug or blanket covered the wall behind bin Laden.

Well, have an exciting, mineral-filled summer! Your usual commentator will be returning for the next installment of this column, relaxed and refreshed from his time off.