



Finding fossils was important, but with the sun beating down, finding some shade was as important. Jennifer Hernandez, Nichole Rutherford and Mila Bell made the most of both as they searched the chalk cliffs for signs of ancient fish.



Three shark teeth were found on this hilltop, along with some plesiosaur paddle bones. Gordon Rutherford (left) walked around the side as Chase Sawatzky (top center) checked out the top. Chelsey Hachmeister (seated) paused in her search and Robert Cowan (top looking right) and Nichole Rutherford (right) looked for shark teeth.

# Weather delays North's yearly ocean fishing trip

By Tom Betz  
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A cold snap at the end of April delayed the annual outdoor trip for North School fifth graders, but Friday the sun came up on a clear day as about 58 kids and 20 adults headed south to scour chalk cliffs near Russell Springs for fossils.

The field trip has become a favorite of the fifth graders, who spend several weeks studying about fossils and the history of the ancient oceans of Kansas.

This year, Myron Tedford was in charge. With the help of the other fifth grade teachers Deanne Burkett and Jona Neufeld, he recruited parents and adults to accompany the kids on the day-long trip.

For the third year, the group had the help of Greg Sweatt, an expert paleontologist and high school art teacher from Parker, Colo. Sweatt, who grew up searching for fossils along the Brazos River in southwest Texas, has been searching for fossils in the Smoky Hill chalk of Kansas for years. Last year, Sweatt traveled to the white Cliffs of Dover in England to hunt for fossils.

He talked to the kids and adults about what they were going to see before they piled on to the buses about 8:30 a.m.

The buses headed south, where they made a stop at the Wallace Museum to give the kids a first-hand look at some of the fossils that have been found in northwest Kansas. The second stop was the site of the German family massacre, north of Russell Springs. In 1874, a band of Southern Cheyenne killed John German, his wife and three children. Four daughters were taken captive. This was the start of what was known as the Red River War.

For the volunteer experts, waiting at the digs, it was a welcome sight to see the yellow buses climb into view, followed by a series of vans, suburban and pickups.

While waiting for the kids to arrive, Sweatt, along with Larry Harper of Lincare and his wife Judy, head cook at North, and Sherman County Sheriff Doug Whitson had looked the area over to see where some of the best places were for the kids to find evidence of the ancient oceans.

The landowner, Larry Haverfield, who lives south of Russell Springs, gave permission for the field trip, and has given permission to other people to search in the canyons on his land. He rode his motorcycle out in the morning to say hello to the volunteers and see what they had found.

When the buses parked, the kids and adults poured out with their sack lunches and found a convenient rock or spot to eat lunch. While the kids ate, Sweatt talked about the surrounding canyons and reminded the kids to watch out for wildlife, but not to bother any.

With lunch out of the way the kids swarmed over the canyons, searching for fossilized bones, and Sweatt, Whitson and the Harpers were consulted frequently to see if the kid had found a prized piece of history.

With the warm sun, the kids consumed several gallons of water. Some poured water on their bandannas to keep cool.

After about two hours of fossil hunting, the kids gathered around to show what they had found. Everyone found something from sea shells, clam shell pieces, fish jaw bones with the teeth, shark teeth and Halley Varga found pieces of a paddle bone from a plesiosaur. Sweatt said the plesiosaur bones are a rare find, and that very few of the fish have been found in the Niobra chalk of the Smoky Hill area.

They shared special cheers and handshakes they had invented to go with the individual Indian names given to each group of six kids and two adults.



Helen Dobbs watched from a shady spot while Greg Sweatt talked to Jade Herl and Bryan Guyer about a fossil they had found.



Tim Lee and son Sheldon work on a site where they found a small fish jaw complete with teeth, clam shells, oyster shells and crystals.

# Ocean fishermen

North Elementary students on the fossil field trip:

**Deanne Burkett's class:** Mila Bell, Stephen Buller, Chris Bustillos, Bigvai Carrillo, Robert Cowan, Victor Diaz, Tanar Fairchild, Samantha Goalden, Jennifer Hernandez, Thomas McCurry, Caitlyn McGinley, Seth Miller, Cristina Olave, Kendra Promise, Maria Rodriguez-Moreno, Jimmy Roeder, Chase Sawatzky, Halley Varga, Nick Thomas and Steven Zupko.

**Myron Tedford's class:** Amanda Bodfield, Sawyer Burkett, Hazen Deeds, Billy DeHoyas, Lee Entwistle, Brendan Flodin, Erika Fyfe, Bryan Guyer, Chelsey Hachmeister, Jade Herl, Kaitlyn Lammers, Dalton Lange, Sheldon Lee, Ashley Martell, Christopher Millam, Cory Millam, David Murray, Nichole Rutherford, Andrew Shores, Dillon Sjoerdsma, Bryan Smith, Katlyn Topliff and Mary Williams.

**Jona Neufeld's class:** Ashley Archer, Joseph Eddleman, Ryan Fisher, Dane Frazier, Devon Garrett, Tyler Jones, Codee Larson, Eric Linnell,

Dylan McBride, Jeremy Mills, Tayne Perdew, Michael Pettibone, LeRoy Prine, Andrea Roeder, Blaine Sapp, Christy Studer, Jake Terry, Cappi Thomas, Dillon Trachel, Dayelle Waugh, Brock Wilkens, Kirsten Topliff and Jason Weber.

**Parents:** Dennis Fyfe, John Murray, Carol Deeds, Cathy Eddleman, Tim Lee, Carlene Hachmeister, Sandy Trachsel, Jeff Deeds, Kenny Studer, Mark Fairchild, Gregg Terry, Steve McGinley, Jackie Buller, Nancy Shores, Patty Mills, Michelle Todd, Scott Varga, Marilyn Pruitt, Gordon Pettibone, Gordon Rutherford, Travis Jones and Helen Dobbs.

**Other adults:** Beth Rutz, Bill and Mary Frazier and Principal Jerry Burkett.

When the buses and suburbans arrived at the site, the first order of business was to find a spot to sit down and eat lunch before searching for fossils.

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