



Rockonteur

The Monthly Newsletter of the Santa Lucia Rockhounds

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President's Message

Happy New Year Rockhounds!

Welcome to the 36th Edition of the Santa Lucia Rockhounds club! The new slate of officers was sworn in at the general meeting on December 8th and all of us are dedicated to making our 36th anniversary the best year ever.

I am your new president, and you'll have to suffer with me for 12 months. Most of the regulars are aware that I am primarily a fossil enthusiast rather than a true rockhound. I grew up in Ohio, and my maternal grandparents had a farm in Georgetown, smack-dab in the middle of a geological formation called the Cincinnati Arch, a world-famous locality for beautifully preserved Ordovician marine fossils. The 300 meters of the Cincinnati formation is exposed everywhere on the surface, in creek beds and road cuts in an area larger than San Luis Obispo County. You cannot walk there without stepping on beautifully preserved fossils. That was my start as a fossil guy, and I have been hunting ever since.

Although we have lived in Los Osos since 1984, my lovely wife, Karin, and I are relative "newbs" to the club, having joined only a few years ago after attending the rock show in Paso Robles. After we sold our business and retired (sort of), Karin reinvented herself as a self-taught lapidary artist and silversmith while I took up the hobby of fossil preparation. Enough of me and on to the club business.

The annual Christmas Party was a raging success! If you did not attend, you missed

out on a fabulous feast and the frivolity of the gift exchange. Thousands of calories were consumed, and over 50 gem, mineral, and fossil gifts changed hands!

Our annual Rock Show is only four months away, and much of the "behind the curtains" organizational work is well underway. However, the actual conduct of the show requires a tremendous amount of work. I encourage all members to volunteer to help in the setup, execution, and clean-up of the show. If even half of us (members) volunteer for a half day or so, the show will run like a well-oiled machine. Please put April 24, 25, and 26 in your calendar and tune in for more information on volunteer opportunities as we get closer to the date.

We have another opportunity for club members to volunteer on January 24th as our club storage container needs some attention due to a bounty of donations in the last few years. The contents of the container need to be sorted and prioritized. Volunteers will be rewarded with the promise of PIZZA and potentially some free rocks! Details to come by club e-mail and at the January general meeting.

The entertainment for January's Club meeting will be "Show & Tell." All club members are invited to bring something(s) to share with the rest of the club. Hope to see you there!

Rock it!
Ted Gray
Santa Lucia Rockhounds President



P.O. Box 1672
Paso Robles, CA 93447



2025 Board Members & Committee Chairs

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Upcoming Events

January Board Meeting

Monday, January 12th, Templeton Community Center, 7 p.m.

January Junior Rockhound Meeting

The January Junior Rockhounds Meeting will be held Monday, January 19th at 6 p.m. at the Templeton Community Center.

January General Meeting

The January General Meeting will be held Monday, January 19th at the Templeton Community Center at 7 p.m.

January Field Trips

Details on January field trips to come - watch your email!



Photo of the spread of food and gifts at the December holiday party by Beth Walls

THANK YOU 2025 SLR Board Members and Committee Chairs!



Beth Walls, SLR

Thank you to the board and committee members who served the club in 2025.

Congratulations to the 2026 board and committee members, which were installed during the December Holiday Party.

Installation of the 2026 SLR Board and Committee Chairs - Welcome!



President - Ted Gray

Senior Director - Ken Gagner

Secretary - Adriana Saldana

Treasurer - Jannine Kennedy

VP Education - Mary Beatty

and Megan Cannon

VP Membership - Kathy Berhmann

VP Communications - Bobby Walls

Junior Director - Michelle Gagner

Past President - Nicole Flores-Yarena

Top: 2025 Board and Committee Members

Bottom: 2026 Board and Committee Members

Photos by Beth Walls

December Rockhound Party

Beth Walls, SLR

The December program of SLR's annual Christmas Potluck Party and Gift Exchange was a festive celebration of community and geology!

Members gathered to share delicious dishes, swap stories of their latest rock-hunting adventures, and spread holiday cheer.

The highlight of the evening was the gift exchange, where beautifully wrapped packages revealed treasures like mineral specimens, polished stones, rockhounding tools, and more! Everyone left with something special and a big smile!

The event was a perfect mix of holiday spirit and shared passion for all things rocks and minerals. Until next year, happy holidays and happy rockhounding!

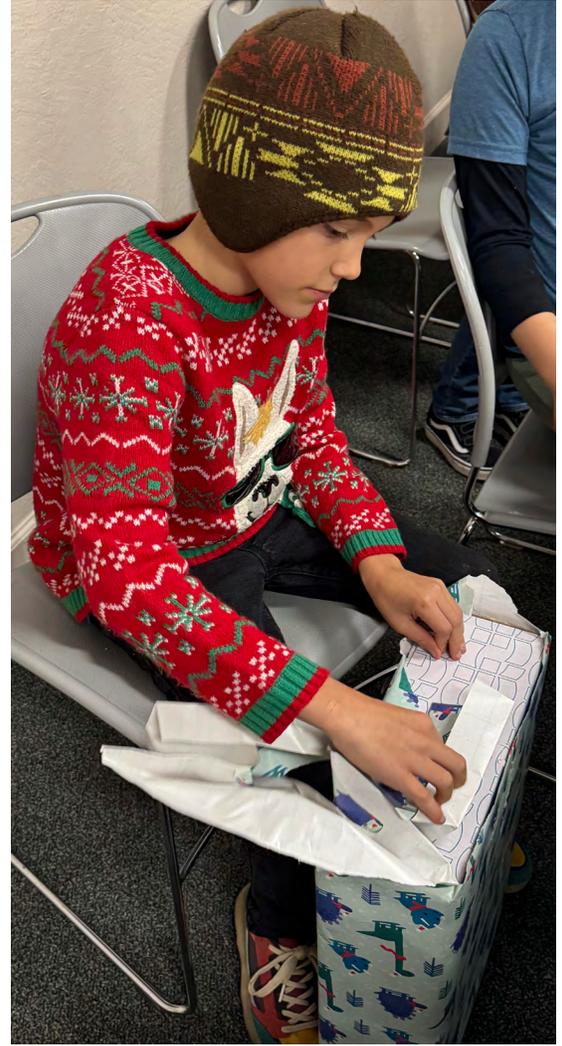


December Rockhound Party (continued)



Photos by Kim Noyes and Beth Walls

December Rockhound Party (continued)



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December Rockhound Party (continued)



Photos by Kim Noyes
and Beth Walls

December Rockhound Party (continued)



Photos by Kim Noyes
and Beth Walls

December Rockhound Party (continued)



Photos by Kim Noyes and Beth Walls



2026 Rock and Gem Shows

Mark your calendars!

January 17-18, 2026

Exeter, CA

Tule Gem and Mineral Society

Exeter Mineral Building, 324 N. Kaweah Ave., Exeter, CA

Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM

2026 Gemboree-0 Rock and Mineral Show. Food and snacks. Free admission and parking.

Contact: ebcalpoly@aol.com

Website: <http://tulegem.com>

February 28-March 1, 2026

Vallejo, CA

Vallejo Gem and Mineral Society

McCormic Hall, 900 Fairgrounds Drive (Solano County Fairgrounds), Vallejo, CA 94590

Hours: Saturday and Sunday 10 AM – 5 PM

Contact: (707) 644-9764, vgms01@yahoo.com

Website: <http://vjgems.com>

February 28 & March 1, 2026

Newark, CA

East Bay Mineral and Lapidary Club

The Newark Pavilion, 6430 Thorton Ave., Newark, CA 94569

Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 6 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 5 PM

Exhibits, Educational Presentations, Demonstrations, Gem ID, Kids' Spinning Wheel, Door Prizes, Geode Splitting, Live Auction. \$8 Admission, Kids 12 and under Free, Seniors 65+ free on Sunday, March 1

Contact: (510)j 353-3787, info@ebml.club

Website: <http://ebml.club>

February 12 – March 1, 2025

(13 days)

Indio, CA

San Gorgonio Mineral and Gem Society

Riverside County Fairgrounds, 46350 Arabia St., Indio, CA 92201

Hours are Thursday-Friday (12-13th, 19-20th, 26-27th) 3 pm-10 pm.

Saturday-Monday (14th-16th) 10 am-10 pm and Saturday-Sunday (21-22nd, 28th-March 1) 10 am-10 pm.

2026 Riverside Co. Fair and National Date Festival has a Gem & Mineral Building. For vendor space see datefest.org or call 760-863-8247.

San Gorgonio Mineral and Gem Society helps with management of the building. Indoor space 10 feet x 10 feet is \$1000.00 and all space applications are available through the fair website.

SGMGS has been involved in managing the Gem & Mineral building at this fair since the 1940's and it is a fun crowd and busy show. We hope you can join us in February 2026.

Contact: (951) 963-6751, peggyrichard@yahoo.com

Website: <http://sgmgs.org>

March 7-8, 2026

Ventura, CA

Ventura Gem & Mineral Society

Ventura County Fairgrounds, 10 W. Harbor Blvd., Ventura, CA 93001

Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM

Ventura Gem, Mineral, Fossil & Jewelry Show. Exhibits of gems, minerals, fossils & lapidary arts; jewelry-making demos; gold panning; raffle prizes & silent auctions; rummage sale & plant sale; 15+ dealers; kids' activities. A SoCal tradition for 6 decades & counting!

Contact: (805) 312-8467, info@vgms.org

Website: <http://www.vgms.org>

March 13-15, 2026

Apple Valley, CA

Victor Valley Gem and Mineral Club

7 Miles down Stoddard Wells Rd., Apple Valley CA

Hours: 9 AM – 5 PM daily

Stoddard Well Rockhound Tailgate

Contact: (760) 490-8401

March 15, 2026

Fallbrook, CA

Fallbrook Gem and Mineral Society

123 W. Alvarado St., Fallbrook, CA 92028

Hours: 12 Noon – 3 PM

Rough and Cut – This is a kind of clearance sale for miscellaneous minerals. Includes some fine minerals flats of lower end minerals, and lapidary rough. For the kids, there is a rock pile. \$5.00 for a bucket to be filled as many times as they want. Also, larger very nice garden rock. Good family event and open to the public.

Contact: (760) 728-1130, info@fgms.org

Website: <http://www.fgms.org>

March 28-29, 2026

Lancaster, CA

Antelope Valley Gem and Mineral Club

Location: Antelope Valley Fairgrounds, 2551 W Ave H, Lancaster, CA 93534

Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 20 AM – 4 PM

Parking will cost \$10. Show will be in the Van Dam building.

Contact: marylandoriele@gmail.com

Website: <http://AVGem.weebly.com>

March 28-29, 2026

Lemoore, CA

Lemoore Gem and Mineral Club

470 Champion St., Lemoore, CA 93245

Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 6 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM

We have vendors from California and several other States selling jewelry, fossils, lapidary rough rocks, carvings, and rock-related

kids' activities. An excellent show for anyone interested in rocks and jewelry.
Contact: lemooregemandmineralclub@gmail.com
Website: <https://www.facebook.com/AndLemoore/>

April 11-12, 2026
Mariposa, CA
Mariposa Gem and Mineral Club
Mariposa County Fairgrounds, 5007 Fairgrounds Road, Mariposa, CA 95338
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4 PM
Mountains of Minerals Gem Show
Contact: mgmc@sti.net
Website: <http://mariposagemclub.org>

April 11-12, 2026
Placerville, CA
El Dorado County Mineral and Gem Society
Placerville Fairgrounds, 100 Placerville Drive, Placerville, CA
El Dorado County Mineral and Gem Society's Annual Show
Contact: (530) 676-2472, office@edcmgs.org
Website: <http://edcmgs.org>

April 25-26, 2026
Anaheim
Searchers Gem and Mineral Society
Brookhurst Community Center, 2271 W. Crescent Ave., Anaheim, CA 92801
Hours: Saturday 10 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 10 AM – 4:30 PM
Free entry, free parking. Gems, minerals, fossils, crystals, beads, rough, slabs, vendors, gold panning, extensive silent auction every half hour, door prizes every half hour, grab bags, tools, equipment and exhibits. Lapidary supplies. Faceting, wire wrapping and cabochon making demonstrations. Snacks and drinks are available. Make a polished stone ring for free, crack a dino egg, treasure hunt activities for kids!

Rain or shine, show is on. Please, no pets. Service animals only.
Contact: anaheimsearchers@gmail.com
Website: <http://www.searchersrocks.org>

April 24-26, 2026
Paradise, CA
Paradise Gem & Mineral Club
Mechoopda Event Center, 149 Openshaw Rd., Butte Valley, CA 95965
Hours: Friday & Saturday 9 AM – 5 PM, Sunday 9 AM – 4 PM
Paradise Gem & Mineral Clubs 71st Anniversary Show. "Tumbling is Easy-Give it a Spin". New show location, Mechoopda Event Center.

30,000 sf of indoor space with a cafe and bar. Significant space is dedicated to earth science education, information, and displays. Door prizes, silent and live auctions. Kid Zone with 8 activities and games. Unique demonstrations, speaker topics, and activities every day. Camping on site and nearby. \$5 one-day admission or \$10 for all three days. Free jumbo tumbled rock of your choice with admission. Dealers: 8 foot tables are only \$150. A free table to earth science education and information providers.
Contact: paradisegemmineral@gmail.com
Website: <http://www.paradisegemmineral.com>

VENTURA GEM & MINERAL SOCIETY
Presents

VENTURA GEM SHOW
GEMS • MINERALS • JEWELRY • FOSSILS

MARCH 7-8 2026
VISIT: VGMS.ORG

VENTURA FAIRGROUNDS
VENTURA, CA
SAT. (10AM TO 5PM) • SUN. (10AM TO 4PM)
FREE ADMISSION
Gems, Minerals, Rocks, Fossils, Jewelry, Exhibits
Dealers, Demonstrations, Raffles, Silent Auctions
Country Store, Plant Sales, Kids Activities

In Memory of Mark Nelson

Directly From [Dignity Memorial](#):

Mark A. Nelson – September 22, 1950
– November 8, 2025



Mark Allen Nelson, 75, passed away unexpectedly but peacefully on November 8, 2025, while on vacation in Churchill, Manitoba, Canada. True to his adventurous spirit, he was vacationing in Canada because he wanted to pet the polar bears.

Mark was born in September 22, 1950, in Huntington Park, California, the oldest of 9 children. He graduated from Bishop Amat Memorial High School in La Puente, California, and graduated from The College of Santa Fe, Santa Fe, New Mexico, with a Bachelor of Business Administration.

Mark was predeceased in death by his parents, Jack and Lorraine Nelson, and his brothers David and John. He is survived by his son, Travis P. Nelson, and grandchildren, Jack, Alexis, Ryan, and Matthew, as well as several siblings. He is also survived by his girlfriend, Cynthia Weiss, and his former spouse and friend, Linda Nelson.

Mark lived a life of adventure, was dedicated to his family, friends, and had a variety of interests. While at The College of Santa Fe, he was a

proud member of Delta Sigma Phi Fraternity, served as the Fraternity's treasurer, and was a photographer for the school's yearbook. Mark spent a year working at a local Santa Fe radio station, KVSF, as disc jockey, as well as a radio advertising salesman.

After his father started Nelson Air Conditioning in Southern California, Mark returned to the Golden State, enrolled at LA Trade-Tech to become an HVAC journeyman, and joined his father in the family business. Mark would continue to work in the air conditioning industry until 2005, when he retired.

Community service was always a passion of Mark's. This was epitomized by his decades-long service to the San Dimas Mountain Rescue Team, where he would eventually serve as the team's captain. There were many times when the pager would go off, sometimes during family dinner, sometimes during Sunday Mass, and Mark would spring into action, and race into the mountains to rescue a stranded hiker, or injured motorist. Beyond the rescue team, Mark also served as president of the San Dimas Chamber of Commerce, and was even named the Chamber of Commerce's Citizen of the Year for 2010.

Following retirement, Mark emerged himself in hobbies, with two of his favorites being gemology and studying the historical role of barbed wire as "the wire that tamed the west." He would frequently pack his car full of barbed wire materials, and drive long distances to showcase his proud collection. Mark was active in both the California Barbed Wire Collectors Association and the National Antique Barbed Wire Society.

Perhaps Mark's greatest hobby was traveling and exploring the world. Long ago his father gave him the advice: "See the world while you can still walk around." Mark lived up to this advice, and then some! From the ruins of Machu Pichu and the natural simplicity of the Galapagos Islands, to castles in Europe, to island-hopping in the Pacific, to safaris in Africa, to riding a camel in Petra, Jordan, to exploring the pyramids of Egypt, to camping out at the Bridge to Nowhere in the San Gabriel Mountains with his son, and much, much more, Mark saw the world.

Mark was a great repository of his family's genealogy, and traveled the country and the world to find sites that were relevant to his family's history. Just months before his passing, he took his

son through Colorado to see graves of Mark's grandparents and other ancestors. Passing on the family history was always important to Mark.

Mark was a family man. He followed his father into the family business, and helped his father build it into a successful Southern California company. He was loved and admired by his son and grandchildren, and countless others. His younger grandsons would frequently find a random piece of rock, and ask to send a photo of it to grandpa to find out what it was.

Mark lived an active life, a life well-lived. He made his community a better place, and enriched the lives of others through his generous spirit, and selfless attitude. He will be very deeply missed.

In Memory of Mark Nelson (continued)

[Directly From the San Dimas Mountain Rescue Team Facebook Page:](#)

With heavy hearts, we share the passing of Reserve Deputy Sheriff Mark Nelson, who devoted an extraordinary 52 years to the San Dimas Mountain Rescue Team.

Mark wasn't just a teammate—he was a mentor, a protector, and a constant source of calm in the moments when others needed it most.

For more than five decades, he answered the call—day or night, rain or shine—with humility and a deep sense of purpose.

The mountains changed, the team grew, the years passed... but Mark's dedication never wavered. His presence was a steady anchor for generations of rescuers.

We will miss his wisdom, his quiet humor, and the way he made every mission feel a little safer just by being there.

Thank you, Mark, for a lifetime of service and heart. We'll carry your legacy with us on every trail. Rest easy, brother. We'll take it from here.



Photos from the San Dimas Mountain Rescue Team's Facebook Page

January Birthstone: Garnet

Beth Walls, SLR

If you were born in January, you're lucky to call the garnet your birthstone. This stunning gem has been cherished for centuries for its vibrant beauty, symbolic meaning, and rich history. Garnets are more than just gorgeous stones; they hold powerful significance and are steeped in lore.



COURTESY: NOMADS LTD, HONG KONG (FAR RIGHT)

<https://www.gia.edu/birthstones/january-birthstones>

The Beauty of Garnet

The name "garnet" comes from the Latin word "granatus", meaning "seed," because garnets resemble the deep red seeds of a pomegranate. While the most common garnets are red, these gemstones also occur in a variety of colors, including orange, green, yellow, and even rare blue. Their incredible range makes them versatile and unique for jewelry lovers.

Symbolism and Meaning

Garnet is often associated with:

- Passion and Love: Its fiery red color symbolizes intense emotions, making it a token of deep affection and romance.
- Protection: Garnet has long been considered a talisman for safety, often carried by travelers to guard against danger.
- Strength and Vitality: In ancient times, garnets were thought to boost energy, courage, and confidence.

Historical Significance

Garnet's history is as rich as its hues:

- Ancient Egypt: Pharaohs adorned themselves with garnet jewelry, considering it a symbol of life.
- Medieval Europe: Knights wore garnet for protection and to bring victory in battle.
- Asia: Garnets were believed to bring good fortune and prosperity.

Healing Properties

Crystal enthusiasts prize garnet for its metaphysical benefits, claiming it:

- Enhances creativity and motivation.
- Promotes emotional balance and self-confidence.
- Stimulates circulation and boosts overall energy.

Caring for Garnet Jewelry

Garnets are relatively durable, with a rating of 6.5 to 7.5 on the Mohs hardness scale. To keep them looking their best:

- Clean with warm, soapy water and a soft brush.
- Avoid harsh chemicals or ultrasonic cleaners.
- Store separately to prevent scratches.

Garnet in Modern Jewelry

Whether you're drawn to a classic deep red garnet or a rare green tsavorite, garnet jewelry is a timeless choice. From delicate pendants to bold rings, garnets are perfect for expressing passion and individuality.

Celebrate January with Garnet

As January's birthstone, garnet is the perfect way to start the year with warmth and vibrancy. Whether you're wearing it for its beauty, symbolism, or personal connection, this gemstone truly shines as a meaningful and stunning treasure.



Left: New Year's Resolution
Photo from [Carlson's Rock World](#)
[World](#) on Facebook

The Santa Lucia Rockhounds (SLR)

is a non-profit public benefit corporation with the specific purpose to promote the study of mineralogy, including (but not limited to) the fields of lapidary, metal working, jewelry design and fabrication, geology and conducts field trips for collecting and education.

We encourage learning and good citizenship in a congenial atmosphere. We respect both private and public property, and we strive to protect natural resources.

The Junior Rockhound meeting is held on the third Monday of each month at 6 p.m. with the general club meeting starting at 7p.m. All meetings are at the Templeton Community Center.

We are a member of the California Federation of Mineralogical Societies (CFMS) and affiliated with the American Federation on Mineralogical Societies (AFMS). Santa Lucia Rockhounds, Inc. is also a member of the American Lands Access Association (ALAA).

Annual dues are \$30 for the first adult plus \$10 per additional member of the same household. Annual dues are payable between August 1 and the third Monday of December, in person at club meetings or by mail to P.O. Box 1672, Paso Robles, CA 93447.

The Rockonteur is the official monthly newsletter of the SLR and an independent publication containing news and information consistent with the mission of SLR and of interests to its members.

Circulation is approximately 120 copies per issue.

Member submissions are encouraged and may be sent to the editor. We reserve the right to accept or refuse submissions inconsistent with the objectives and purpose of the SLR.

Submissions may be edited as needed without consent. The deadline is the 20th of the month to be included in the next month's publication. Early submissions are highly appreciated and strongly encouraged.

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