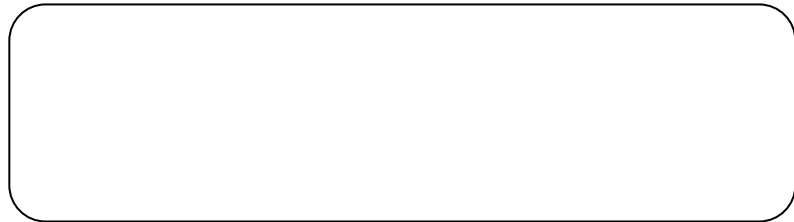


# Drywasher's Gazette

June 2026

Send Exchange Bulletins to:  
Valley Prospectors  
PO Box 2923  
San Bernardino, CA 92406-2923  
valleyprospectors49@gmail.com



Web Site: [www.valleyprospectors.org](http://www.valleyprospectors.org)  
Email: valleyprospectors49@gmail.com  
Next Meeting – Tuesday, June 2<sup>nd</sup> – Details Inside

## Mission and Code of Ethics

Valley Prospectors Inc. is a non-profit educational organization dedicated *To promote Gold Prospecting as a healthy family activity.*

## A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

General Membership Meeting is held the first Tuesday of each month at 6:00 pm at the Elks Lodge in San Bernardino, CA.

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June  
2026

# Drywasher's Gazette



Every gold prospector dreams of an easy way to see if gold is hiding in the ground without ever touching a shovel or picking up a metal detector. Researchers in the gold rich ground of Australia found that Eucalyptus trees in the area contained tiny nanoparticles of gold in their leaves. The source of the gold is speculated to be ground water which contains dissolved gold particles. When the tree takes up water, the gold is drawn up through its vascular system ending up in the leaves. Gold can be toxic to plants, so moving the metal to their leaves may be an attempt by the tree to purge the material. The research was confirmed and taken further by a group looking at Norway spruce needles in northern Finland over a known gold deposit. They found a symbiotic relationship between the trees and microbes. The study proposed that gold ions travel up through the plant in the absorbed water. The microbes consolidate the ions into nanoparticles, basically converting soluble gold into solid particles. The idea is that this partnership helps the plant consolidate the gold to mitigate any negative effects from toxicity. The hope is that testing leaves for nanoparticles will help identify new mineral deposits with minimal impact from exploration drilling. The same process of biomineralization could be used in water treatment systems using different plants like moss or aquatic plants. Don't be too quick to take out your tree trimmers and garden shears to a claim though. The amounts of gold found in the leaves would require material from over 500 trees to make a single gold ring. *By M. O'Brien*



## DO YOU HAVE YOUR 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY NUGGET RAFFLE TICKETS YET? GOLD NUGGET WORTH OVER \$786 AS OF MAY!

# 50<sup>TH</sup>

## Anniversary

5.24 Gram  
Nugget!



Members Only Raffle

**VALLEY PROSPECTORS  
OF SAN BERNARDINO**

2026 represents 50 years of community,  
exploration, and service for the Club.

**SPECIAL NUGGET RAFFLE**

Entries can be bought in person or  
by sending \$ to the Club's Zelle  
valleyprospectors49@gmail.com  
Comment: 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Nugget

\$5.00

Per Ticket

Winning Prospector will be picked at the  
50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Picnic Celebration in July!

DO NOT NEED TO BE PRESENT TO WIN!

# Drywasher's Gazette

1976-2026 50 Years of Community  
Celebrating the Club's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on Sunday July 19<sup>th</sup>  
at the Big Bear Museum



COMING SOON

50th Anniversary Picnic

Sunday July 19

RSVP Today!

BBQ, Raffles, Cake, & a Day at the Big Bear Museum

Reserve your spot by emailing [valleyprospectors49@gmail.com](mailto:valleyprospectors49@gmail.com) and paying \$15 per person with cash or by Zelle for members and \$25 per non-members.

Visiting or Working on a Club Claim or  
on a Claim the Club has Permission to Work?

**\*\*Please Read the Following\*\***

**This Applies to ALL Club Members and Their Guests.**

AS OF THURSDAY,  
MAY 14, 2026

**GOLD IS**  
**\$4,668.93 PER OUNCE**  
**\$150.12 PER GRAM.**

<https://pricegold.net/>

**Hold Harmless Agreement:** Valley Prospectors and its members are not responsible and are not to be held liable for injury, illness or death occurring at any club claim, function, or outing by any member or guest. Each member and their guests are responsible for properly being informed of potential hazards or risks that may occur while engaged in any activities while on club claims.

**SILVER IS**  
**\$84.96 PER OUNCE.**

<https://www.apmex.com/silver-price>

**"ENTER CLAIMS AT YOUR OWN RISK"**

By requesting to be a new member or by renewing your Valley Prospector's membership you agree to abide by these terms and conditions.

# Drywasher's Gazette

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## February General Meeting Minutes May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Vice-President Lee Skillings called the meeting to order. The meeting started at 6:06 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Joe Chavez. Approval of Minutes: Vice-President Lee Skillings asked for the approval of the April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2026 general meeting minutes. Steve Schubert made the motion to accept April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2026, general meeting minutes as published in the Drywasher's Gazette. Andrea Frost seconded the motion and the motion carried.

**Treasurer's Report:** Lorraine Frost gave the treasurer's report.

**Outing Report:** Vice-President Lee Skillings gave the report. He spoke about the First Class Miner's outing. The next outing will be held at the Hungryman Claim on May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2026. They will meet at Camp Cajon at 8:00 a.m. Vice-President is checking into setting up an outing.

**Membership Report:** Lorraine Frost gave her report. There are currently 246 family memberships and 7 Lifetime Memberships and 1 Honorary Membership.

**Finds of the Month Report:** Everett Miller gave his report, and he also explained how the Finds of the Month worked.

**Editor Report:** Articles must be submitted to the newsletter by May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2026, according to Michelle O'Brien. Members are requested to submit articles and pictures for the newsletter.

**Gold Sales Report:** Art Fairchild gave his report.

**Refreshments Report:** Vice-President Lee Skillings thanked Steve Schubert for bringing ice cream to the meeting along with the cookies Lee brought.

**50th Anniversary Party:** Lorraine Frost gave the report. The club will hold its 50th Anniversary Party at the Big Bear Historical Museum. The person who owns the chuckwagon was unable to do the outing because his wife is having hip replacement surgery. The 50th Anniversary party is still on.

**Name Badges:** Lorraine Frost gave her report on the new name badges. The name badges have arrived and they are \$10. One badge is included in all new memberships.

**Special Raffle:** Steve Schubert said there was going to be a special raffle for the Valley Prospectors 50th Anniversary Party. The club is going to sell raffle tickets for a gold nugget that will be raffled off at the July 19<sup>th</sup> picnic.

**Courtesy Report:** Mary Schubert said that Bural LaRue is recovering from his stroke.

**Schools Report:** Steve Schubert gave the school's report. The next school outing will be held at Newberry Springs School on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2026, and he's looking for volunteers to help with the gold panning demonstration. In addition, May 27<sup>th</sup> at the Big Bear Historical Society Museum.

**Club Apparel:** Mary Schubert gave her report.

**Guests:** Vice-President Lee Skillings recognized the guests who were attending the meeting. Vice-President Lee Skillings called for the break in the meeting and the time was 6:24 p.m. The meeting resumed at 6:55 p.m.

**Program Report:** Lorraine Frost spoke about Public Lands for the People. Clark Pearson is retiring from PLP.

Old Business: The 50th Anniversary party is still on. New Business: No report was given.

**Door Prize Winner:** Diane Railsback

**Treasure Finds of the Month:** 1st. Fred Borad, 2nd Everett Miller, 3rd Joe Chavez

**Gold Finds of the Month Winners:** 1st. Don Snyder 2nd Brian Teeling, 3rd Joe Dixon

Vice-President Lee Skillings called for the meeting to be adjourned. Andrea Frost made the motion for the meeting to be adjourned. Calvin Shipley seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

Submitted by Coreena Ross, Secretary

## REGIONAL NEWS

*From AFMS Newsletter Vol. 79. No. 4, May 2026*

### **So, Your PR Proved Effective! What Next?**

*By Jim Brace-Thompson, AFMS & CFMS PR Chair*

During a Zoom roundtable I hosted last December on public relations, one participant raised a great point that moved our discussion beyond PR. Johan Maertons (a member of three clubs in Ohio) asked, "What next?" He noted how educational outreach efforts and public relations strategies are all outbound. They raise a club's visibility and stature within the community. If well-advertised and done effectively, such efforts ensure people are aware you exist and, in so doing, hopefully turn traffic inbound, bringing in potential new members with new ideas, new energy, new resources. But again, "What next?"

After your PR efforts, the next big challenge is retention. This man saw your flyer and came to a show. That woman saw your listing under "Ongoing Events" in the local newspaper and showed up at a club meeting. The problem? All- too-often, even if unintentional, such newcomers are treated like strangers rather than welcomed as potential members. I, myself, was hit in the face with that when talking with a person I got to know well over the years. Although she had come to a couple of our club meetings when first getting interested in gems and jewelry, she eventually joined a neighboring club instead. When, during a dinner at a Federation meeting, I asked why she never joined our club, she said, "I got the feeling you were kind of ignoring me, Jim." That really hit home. Maya Angelou observed, "At the end of the day people won't remember what you said or did, they will remember how you made them feel." This woman had not felt welcomed, and she swam away.

Johan compared it to fishing. First, you decide where to fish. Next, you decide what tackle to use (be it social media, your annual show, school visits, etc.). Finally, you have to know what to do once you've hooked someone and reeled them in. Knowing what to do next is the whole point of fishing in the first place. He's been pushing for a buddy system to assign an experienced member to a newcomer to ensure they feel welcomed, not ignored, and to actively provide a host who gently weaves them into the fabric of the club. Does your club take the necessary steps at keeping and welcoming new people in? Or are you letting them swim away? If your club takes a mindful approach to this issue, I welcome hearing your strategies. Email me at [jbraceth@roadrunner.com](mailto:jbraceth@roadrunner.com). Meanwhile, don't let them swim away like I did!

### **WANTED: Amateur Geologist Historical Information**

*By Jennifer Haley, AFMS Historian*

I just received written information with photos from Mary Savage, who read last month's article. A million "thanks" to her. What she sent was absolutely wonderful! It is about the Giant Ground Sloth skeleton from Devil Peak, Nevada. As a reminder, I am looking for information to help me document the members in your clubs who, over the years, have made significant discoveries and contributions to science as amateur geologists. These categories include Mineralogy and Paleontology, in the discovery and documented identification of new minerals and fossils. If you have information about those in the public who were amateur geologists, but not in your clubs, that is fine too.

This information can be found in your past club and federation newsletters, nomination letters submitted to The National Rockhound and Lapidary Hall of Fame and newspapers. There are clubs no longer in existence who were once affiliated with your federations, and who may have had a member who should be remembered, too. XXX The information I would like to have is: • name of the member, • name of their club and federation • name of the mineral or fossil • the year (if possible) when the official discovery was found and documented. This information will greatly help me document our recreational rockhounding history and, in part, possibly assist us in our historical significance to public lands management. I would like to get going on this project right away. Thank you for your help with this. I hope to hear from you soon!

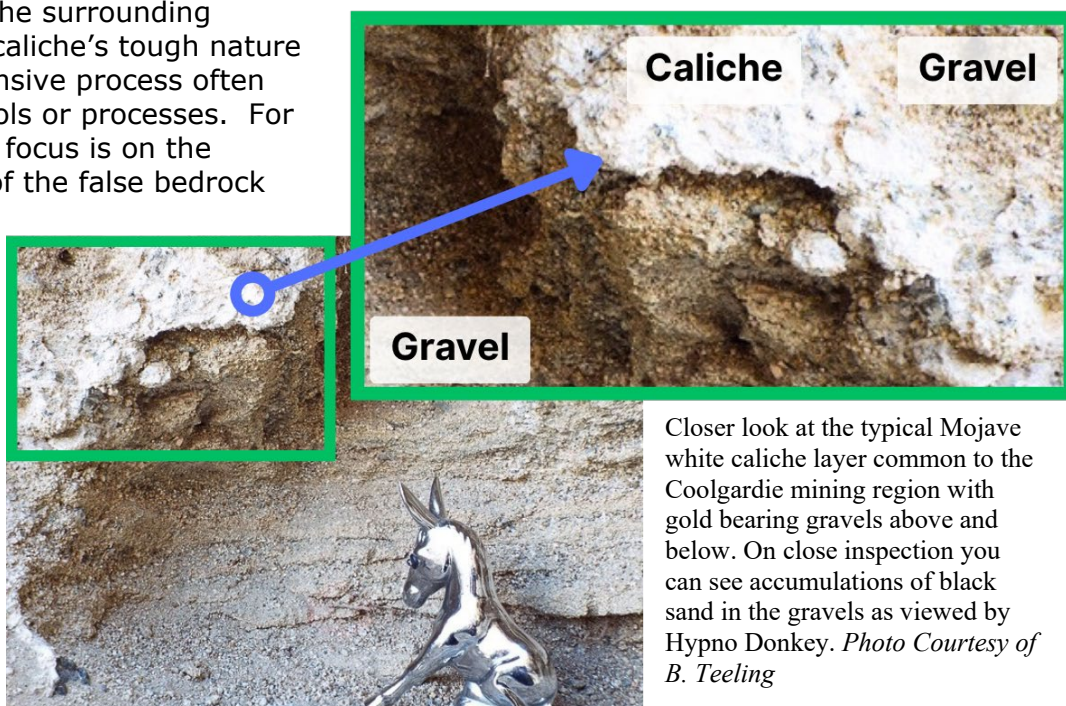
## Caliche, A Duracrust with a Golden Touch

By M. O'Brien

While poking around the claims in the Coolgardie region and around much of the Mojave Desert you probably have encountered the odd layers of duracrust, called caliche. Duracrust is just a fancy term used by geologists to describe hard layers beneath a soil surface formed by the evaporation of mineral rich water into the surrounding soil. This pale, almost white layer falls under the broader category of hardpan. It is both a miner's curse and blessing as it is a stubborn substance that both locks gold bearing gravel into its substrate and acts as a false bedrock for accumulating placer gold. Many tools have been worn down attempting to tackle these incredibly hard layers. Builders in the Barstow region even have "caliche clauses" in landscaping contracts to account for the extra cost to break through caliche layers if they are found.

In California deserts, most caliche formed during the Pleistocene era which spanned a huge chronological range from 2.6 million to 11,700 years ago. The term caliche is more of a description than any specific material composition, but all types of caliches are formed with calcium carbonate. The key is in how it is formed. Regions with low annual rainfalls, wide seasonal temperature variations, and a calcium rich landscape cause a unique series of interactions that lead to liquid calcium bicarbonate converting to solid calcium carbonate binding the soil's host materials of sands, gravel, or clay into a solid cement like non-permeable layer. Most caliche in the Mojave Desert is found 12-48 inches deep and can range from six inches to over two feet in thickness for each layer.

Coolgardie's mining area features repeated layers of caliche of varying thickness throughout the gravel formations. Few prospectors realize that the caliche itself can also hide gold and other precious materials. Opals, quartzite, bauxite, kaolinite, laterite, chalcedony, and soda niter are all of interest to mining companies. The famous opal bearing areas of Coober Pedy and Andamooka in South Australia sits on vast beds of caliche, aka calcrete, that contains the prized gems. Caliche is also often used in industrial applications such as Portland Cement, sugar refinement, soil stabilization for roads and construction in arid zones, and as a component in fertilizers. The word itself comes from Spanish and is based on the Latin word calx, meaning lime. However, limestone and caliche are not the same. Limestone is made up of dense, ancient sedimentary rock composed mainly of marine skeletal fragments. They both will react to vinegar or any other acidic solution releasing carbon dioxide fizz on contact, just like it's cousin sodium bicarbonate (baking soda.) Some will use a trommel to crush the caliche or acids to help release any trapped gold pieces in addition to processing the surrounding materials. Regardless, caliche's tough nature makes this a labor-intensive process often requiring specialized tools or processes. For most casual miners the focus is on the material laying on top of the false bedrock layer looking for heavy particle accumulation in placer deposits. Understanding the physical properties of caliche helps a miner zero in on high value gravels and zones with the best potential for gold production.



Closer look at the typical Mojave white caliche layer common to the Coolgardie mining region with gold bearing gravels above and below. On close inspection you can see accumulations of black sand in the gravels as viewed by Hypno Donkey. Photo Courtesy of B. Teeling



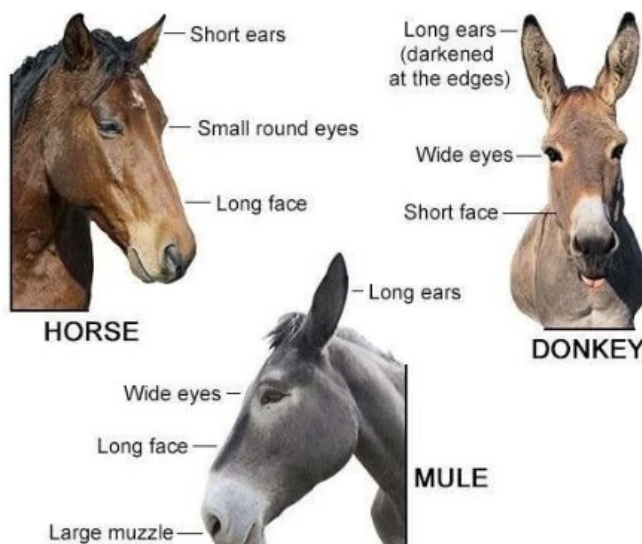
## Ask the Mascot....

### H. Donkey Answers Your Beginner Prospecting Questions

Ever had a burning question that you were afraid to ask about prospecting? The pack burro on the club logo is a symbol of the adventure and hard work of a small miner. This loyal companion has seen many claims over dozens of landscapes as he has faithfully accompanied intrepid prospectors over the years. During his travels, he has learned a few things he is willing to share.

#### Dear Mr. Donkey, Aren't you supposed to be a burro and not a donkey?

*Great Question! Actually, Donkey and Burro mean the same thing with donkey being the English term and Burro coming from the Spanish language. Often Burro is used to refer to my cousins who have gone feral in the countryside in common usage. My kind are often used to transport goods through tricky terrain because we are incredibly resilient, sure-footed and calm. We can carry 27% to 40% of our body weight. The offspring of a female horse and a male donkey is called a mule, as in the 20 Mule Team Road. Mules are a bit bigger and often used to pull heavy loads through rough terrain, but for the lone prospector a donkey is known to be a better companion and requires less feed. Many wild burros in the American West are descendants of prospectors' companions.*



Source: <https://muletrainevents.com/education/differences-between-horses-donkeys-and-mules>

#### Hello H. Donkey, Where the Heck do I start being a small miner?

*Here's the Good News. If you are reading this, you have already taken the first big step by joining a prospecting club. Now you have access to several claims and can meet potential mining buddies through Club events and meetings. We always advocate going out to the claims in groups for safety and fun. You can find directions to the claims in the members only section of the Club website. (Have the password ready that was provided in your new member material to access the information.) The Club even has some equipment you can borrow to test what works best for you before spending any money buying new stuff. Take a look at the upcoming event calendar at the end of this newsletter to check for the next meet ups. When you get there, say hi and let us know you are new. You might be surprised how friendly everyone is and how much knowledge they are ready to share with a newbie miner. Don't be shy.*

*If you have a question for H. Donkey, feel free to email them to [MOBrien3232@gmail.com](mailto:MOBrien3232@gmail.com) and put "VP H Donkey Question" in the subject line.*

Article by M. O'Brien

# Drywasher's Gazette

## Calendar of Events

DATE	DESCRIPTION	NOTES
MAY 27	May 27 -School Program - Big Bear Museum	Contact Steve Schubert
JUN 6-7	Randsburg – 2 Burros Claim Outing - Sat-Sun	Meet at claim – See Members Only section of website for claim directions
JUL 11	July 11 – Mountaineer Days – Wrightwood – Sat only	Setup at 8 am Saturday
JUL 17-19	Miners Folly Area Camping 50th Anniversary Membership Appreciation Picnic on the 19 <sup>th</sup>	Picnic on Sunday, July 19 <sup>th</sup> Held at Big Bear Historical Museum – <b>\$15 RSVP by June 30, 2026</b> <b>Nonmembers \$25</b>
AUG 7-9	Invite from FCM to Ranger Steve Outing at Big Bear Special Event - Metal Detecting Hunt on Saturday, Aug 8 <sup>th</sup> Fri-Sun	Camp Miners Folly
AUG 15-23	Pickett III and Gold Venture – Union Flats	Northern Claims Event
SEP 12-13	Indian Gulch/Jackass 1 – Camp at Miners Folly – Sat-Sun	Meet at Miners Folly
OCT 23-25	VP Rendezvous 2026 – Ord Mtn	Campsite TBD
NOV 14	Coolgardie – Oro Rico	Meet at Starlight Donuts 8am
DEC 5	Holiday Party & Awards Event	Pinon Hills Community Center 10 am – 3 pm

\*\* As always events are subject to last-minute change due to weather or availability. Please make sure to check the Facebook group for any last-minute updates. If you are not on Facebook, please e-mail or text another member who has access.

### \*\*\*GENERAL MEETING REMINDER\*\*\*

You're invited to be our guest at the General membership meetings that are held on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:00 pm at the Elks Lodge at 2055 Elks Dr, San Bernardino, CA. **Can't make it in person? Join in via Zoom meeting.**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83026668634?pwd=ZUlyUlplLk1ZOQ1R1aTJmVndJQ0tNdz09>

**Meeting ID: 830 2666 8634      Passcode: 661754**

#### One Tap Mobile

+16694449171,,83026668634#,,,,\*661754#

US+16699006833,,83026668634#,,,,\*661754# US (San Jose)By Audio Only: • +1 669 444 9171 US

**Want to Contact the Newsletter Crew or any other Committee Member?** Check out the Directory on the Club website or e-mail [valleyprospectors49@gmail.com](mailto:valleyprospectors49@gmail.com)

