

# Arizona Doubleheader Field Trip Report

By Nathan C. Martin

## Day 1, Sat., 4 February, 2012 – Red Cloud Mine, Trigo Mountains, La Paz Co., Arizona

Eight adventurous BMC members made the trip out to the Red Cloud Mine, north-east of Yuma, AZ on Saturday, 4 February for a day of dump digging for wulfenite, fluorite, various lead-accessory micro-minerals and 3-color fluorescent mineral specimens.

Our group was international in character as we were joined by 2 new BMC members from Vancouver, Canada: Hilmar Krocke and Heide Anders. They joined the club specifically for this trip. We also welcomed back Marge Regel from Colorado who had rejoined the club as soon as she learned that we were going back to the Red Cloud as she enjoyed our last trip there in 2010.

BMC members from New England included Nathan and Barbara Martin, Bill and Rita Schaare and Paul Bodmer.

It was a good group.

We met at 7 AM at a Chevron gas station on US95 in Yuma and were treated to a sunrise over the mountains as our 5-car caravan drove up US95 to the US Army's Yuma proving grounds, turned west onto Lake Martinez road and then began the slow 16-mile trek on Red Cloud Mine road out to the famous Red Cloud mine. Road conditions were good and our drive was both uneventful and enjoyable as we got to survey landscapes and plants very different from those back home. We were met at the gate by the mine caretaker, Mike McBride, and I was glad to find him there as the mine owner had forgotten to send him a letter saying we were coming.

Fortunately I had a note from the owner saying it was OK to collect on the dumps and Mike remembered me from my two previous visits. The dumps at the Red Cloud are large and we scattered to start the search for that unmistakable red-orange wulfenite that made the Red Cloud famous (see Figure 1). The caretaker had a hand specimen featuring a very nice gemmy single crystal that I bought for \$30 just to make sure that I would not go away empty-handed (See Figure 2). I also have learned that a little extra money in the pocket helps a caretaker to remember you and welcome you back on subsequent visits. Figure 3 shows the specimen after I

trimmed off most of the excess matrix. The crystal measures 1.1 cm.

It was cool in the morning (low 40s) with a stiff breeze that led to most of us donning sweatshirts or light jackets but the desert warms quickly and most of the day was perfect collecting weather in the high 60s with not a cloud to be seen. The wind continued strong and made fluorescent identification more difficult than I had hoped. If you are wondering why that matters, I'll try to explain. If you have ever tried to pull a 55 gal contractor's black trash bag over your head and work it down around your shoulders in a stiff breeze, you will understand. I had placed one bag inside another to make it really dark inside but the outer bag kept getting caught by the wind and blown away so that I only ended up with one bag to block out the strong Arizona sun (I just hope no one was taking pictures). Next time I'll tape the bags together!

Much of the calcite at the Red Cloud apparently contains enough manganese to fluoresce a bright red orange color under SW UV light and the fluorite fluoresces a bright purple as well. Add in some cerussite and some willemite and you've got a lot of color possibilities for good fluorescent specimens (see Figure 4). The trick is getting them all on the same rock! I only ended up with one specimen that appears to contain a significant amount of willemite and I wish I had looked for more as its phosphorescence is remarkable. I think everyone who wanted some fluorescent specimens got some good ones. Some very nice wulfenites were found as well with sharp, lustrous crystals to 3/8" or perhaps slightly larger. I also found some good micro specimens and I was especially pleased to find some good micro fluorite specimens – now all I need to do is to figure out what the other associated minerals are!

Since we had a long drive to Wickenburg for day 2 of our collecting trip, most of us stopped our collecting at the Red Cloud around 4 PM and drove back out to US95 together.

## Day 2, Sunday, 5 February, 2012 – Purple Passion Mine, Wickenburg, Arizona

On Sunday, we were joined by Barbara Wagner and Joe Adamski for our trip to the Purple Passion Mine near Wickenburg, AZ (see Figure 5). Bill Gardner met us at the Best Western in Wickenburg at 7 AM (yes we got to see another sunrise!) and led us the relatively short distance (~8 miles) to the mine. We made one stop along the way for some small quartz geodes weathering out of a hillside but did not spend a lot of time there.

We made a second stop to go inside one of the old mine adits on the Purple Passion claim to see the vividly fluorescing vein in place in the sides and ceiling of a tunnel. Then we continued on to the mine area.

Bill was a wonderful host! he described the geology of the mine (originally worked for silver), showed us where to look for either fluorescent minerals or micro wulfenites and then helped us set up a large black tent with one of his 18 watt WAY TOO COOL triple wavelength lights suspended from the centerpole so that we could check the numerous calcite, fluorite and willemite laden rocks for their fluorescence. We all found a number of great fluorescent specimens and some will show up in next January's BMC auction as I will be shipping home a flat rate box full of them (see Figure 6).

The wulfenite crystals from the Purple Passion Mine are yellow and rather small but I did find some good micro wulfenites on fluorite to add to my fluorite association collection. Bill also led us up to the Monarch mine over a very rough and steep 4WD road. One rented SUV turned out to be a 2WD car (never trust a rental car company!) and could not make the climb but we were able to back it down a few hundred feet and move it over so that the rest could get by. Once we got to the top we were disappointed to find a large part of the dump area fenced off with warning signs posted (the BLM strikes again). Thus we did not spend a lot of time there but went back to complete our collecting at the Purple Passion Mine. It was another perfect weather day with highs in the 60s and not a cloud in the sky.

**Summary.** Having an opportunity to go field collecting in February is always a treat and southern Arizona is the perfect place to do it. Everyone on the trip seemed to both have a good time and find specimens that interested

them. I hope that the next time we schedule one of these adventures more of you will find a way to participate.

You will not regret it.



Marge Regel Photograph

Figure 1. Starting out at the top of the Red Cloud dump.



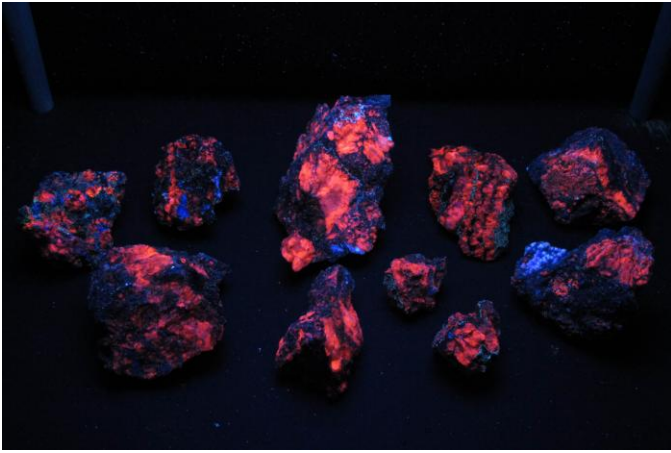
Marge Regel Photograph

Figure 2. Caretaker Mike McBride showing a specimen he collected



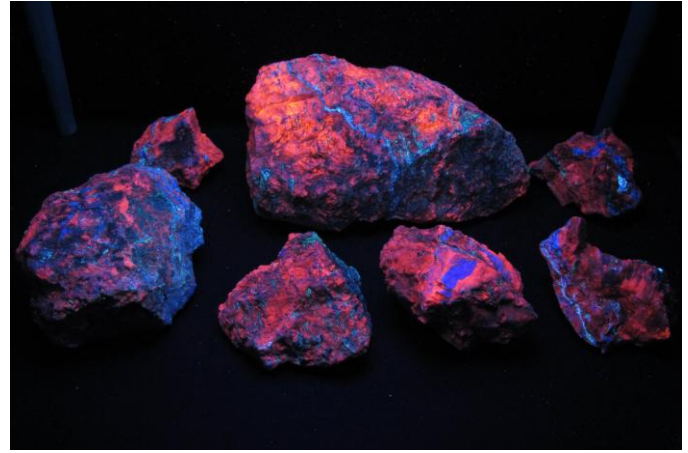
Nathan Martin Photograph

Figure 3. The 1.1 cm gemmy wulfenite specimen after trimming.



Nathan Martin Photograph

Figure 4. Fluorescent specimens from the Red Cloud mine



Nathan Martin Photograph

Figure 7. Fluorescent specimens from the Purple Passion Mine (the biggest piece is 12" long)



Nathan Martin Photograph

Figure 5. BMC members at the Purple Passion Mine: from left to right – Joe Adamski, Barbara Wagner, Bill Schaare, Paul Bodmer, Hilmar Krocke, Rita Schaare, Hiedi Anders, Marge Regel, Barbara Martin and Nathan Martin.



Nathan Martin Photograph

Figure 6. Our host, Bill Gardner, describing the geology of the Purple Passion Claim.