

# Tucson Report 2010

## MINERAL OF THE MONTH CLUB

We're writing this report very quickly in the hectic period between the end of the Tucson Show ends and mailing the March minerals, with shows coming up on the first two weekends in March. These are some of our impressions of the Tucson experience as it applies to us--the views are strictly our own and are not meant to offend anyone. Also, please overlook any grammatical errors, we'll try to correct them in later versions. We're including photos of some of the amazing minerals we saw displayed at our hotel during the show.

It must seem strange to Club members who stop by our Mineral of the Month booth in Tucson, because we have very few actual mineral specimens on matrix for sale there. There's a reason for this seeming discrepancy. When we started selling at Inn Suites about 15 years ago, it was a wholesale show, and you weren't allowed into our ballroom without wholesale credentials. So we began lining up items we could sell at competitive wholesale prices--fluorite from China in pendants, points, cups, bowls, and shapes, rare tumbled stones, high quality animal carvings, and the like. A few years later, we found a source for Jet, a form of coal used as a gemstone since Victoria times, that hardly anyone in Tucson had, especially at reasonable prices. We realized that, with over 4000 dealers selling in Tucson in February, it would behoove us greatly to have a stone that hardly anyone else has, and Jet became that stone for us. In the years since, we have sold hundreds and hundreds of pounds of tumble-polished jet and hundreds of strands of jet beads. (Interestingly, a significant portion of our jet is sold to wholesale buyers from England, France, Germany, and Spain.) Lately, we've imported spheres and cubes made from Jet, and these sold well, too, as we were about the only ones who had them, and they were very inexpensive. This year for the first time we imported large polished pieces of jet as well as jet rough for sale at the show. (Inquire with us for prices if you're interested--our line of Jet beads is on our web site at [http://www.mineralofthemothclub.com/jet\\_beads.htm](http://www.mineralofthemothclub.com/jet_beads.htm).)



Setting up at our booth in Tucson

We added a line of unique gemstone beads a few years ago, and since we have a small booth to start out with, we don't have a lot of room to bring many of our minerals from home to sell at wholesale prices there. (Actually, compared to the booth sizes at many of the other shows, we have a decent-size booth, and it's priced extremely reasonably--many booths at other shows are quite costly. We would love to have more space, but it just isn't possible.) Of course, circumstances in our ballroom at Inn Suites have changed in the past 15 years--we were originally in the adjoining ballroom and there were 3 years when we were not in either ballroom--and it's now a retail/wholesale ballroom, with prices all over the place, from low wholesale to high retail, and all the original wholesale dealers we used to share the room with are gone. But since we've done so well with the material we bring, and a number of buyers seek us out every year to buy wholesale for their stores, we have kept bringing the fluorite, rare tumbled stones, animal carvings, beads, and jet. And there's very little room left for the minerals from home we would like to bring!

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The rainstorms and subsequent power outages we told you about in last month's newsletter forced us to leave a day later than usual for Tucson this year. We stopped in Quartzsite briefly, as usual, to see the Australian dealers who have provided us with Club specimens in the past, and did a little shopping with some of the vendors there. It seemed that the major storm that blew down so many trees in Cambria later passed through the California/Arizona border, causing a tornado to briefly touch down near Blythe, California, upending a truck, causing power outages, and forcing Caltrans authorities to briefly close Interstate 10! Storm-driven high winds in Quartzsite, just a few miles east of Blythe, ripped up dealers' tents and coverings, dragging and smashing them into parked vehicles, upending tables and spilling inventory everywhere! Imagine removing a collapsed tent and finding all your valuable material lying broken and damaged on the ground!



Our neighbor's home after severe storm in Cambria in January.

Our late start left us just two and a half days for shopping prior to our set-up day for our show. We made the most of it, and stumbled into a couple of unbelievable bargains: sugilite beads, finished necklaces in both faceted labradorite and faceted peridot, and highest quality Larimar cabs from the Dominican Republic. We immediately picked out the best of each. (Actually, it must not be completely unbelievable, or there would be no point in telling you, as you wouldn't believe us.) We also came upon a supplier of high quality tumbled stones, and loaded up on them. We put them out for sale at Tucson and sold quite a few, but still have an excellent selection to offer at our shows this year. You can find a list of these stones later in this report.



During the pre-show time, we visited with an Australian opal miner we met last year in Tucson. We had asked him about bringing Boulder Opal for us, and indeed he did. While we looked it over, he informed us that another Australian wholesale dealer had seen this lot in Australia as he was preparing it for shipment, and offered to purchase the whole lot for more than we were paying for it! But our source held firm, and we were thrilled to get our hands on the pieces! Now we can cross Australian Boulder opal off the list of minerals we never thought we'd be able to feature!



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Another supplier brought a great selection of the pyrite balls from China, which we were happy to scoop up (not literally, as they are pretty heavy.) They also brought topaz crystals from the Thomas Range, Utah, which we knew would be small but could have great color--and they did! (See the photo on page 10.) We snapped up that lot, too. They have gorgeous color! Later in the show, we came across a large lot of "Apache Tears"--unaltered black obsidian in an altered gray perlite matrix--and we picked out what we need to feature it in the Club later this year.

Thursday afternoon and Friday found us setting up our booth at the Hotel Tucson, as the Inn Suites is now known, although the changeover must have happened recently as we saw more "Inn Suites" signs around the hotel than we did "Hotel Tucson" signs. We had more than help than usual this year, as our friend Marti Porter worked the whole show with us, and we even hired some local helpers, which worked out great. Unfortunately for us, the owner of the Jet cutting factory in China sent our Jet shipment to our home address in Cambria instead of directly to Tucson as he was supposed to, so we didn't receive it until day 4 or 5 of the show. Blimey! Once it had been sent to our Cambria address, the shipping address could not be changed, due to terrorism concerns and restrictions, so we had to wait until a delivery attempt was made at our home here in Cambria, at which time it could be forwarded to our Tucson hotel. We took it in stride, because delayed/late shipments seem to be the rule rather than the exception in Tucson. The Indian dealer next to us did not receive his shipment until just a couple of days before the 15-day show ended! And we heard that a number of the Chinese minerals dealers had pooled their shipments into one large container shipment, a really good idea, except for one thing--they don't like American food, so they included their favorite Chinese foodstuffs in the container. Big mistake! Evidently it's OK to import Chinese minerals, but Chinese food is another matter, and when their shipment was inspected, it was held up due to the food items! So they were forced to try to sell their leftover minerals from previous years with nothing new to offer!

This brings up another salient point--at the end of each year's show, many of the foreign dealers place their unsold mineral in storage until the following year. This means that this year you may literally be looking at the same minerals you saw the year before! Of course, they bring in new material every year, but if they haven't sold



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much the year before, how much new material can they bring? Last year, we heard that a storage unit belonging to one of the foreign dealers who specialized in gold had been broken into and his choice material stolen! We really felt bad for him.

So, our Jet shipment was late, and on the first day of the show, Richard woke up feeling nauseous (after fighting a cold that started the day we left for Tucson), so Cheryl and Marti soldiered on without him (and without the jet) for the first two days of the show! But he dragged himself in on Monday, and by Wednesday was back to his old self, the Jet order arrived, and the show turned out to be a very good one. The first week is always the busier one, as the store owners and wholesale buyers all want to get first pick of everything, and the second week usually tails off quite a bit, but that didn't happen this year. The second week was lighter than the first, but still quite good. Usually, in the second week, we have a "Dog Day," where we sit there all day and sell almost nothing, but that didn't happen this year! Although we haven't added up all our sales, it seems like this will be one of our best shows in Tucson, way ahead of last year, and almost as good as the best shows we've had there. And why shouldn't it be? We worked really hard to have excellent material at low prices—a combination that is always going to work, unless the economy really goes in the tank . . . Plus, people gave positive comments about our signs informing them we would donate 10% of our Tucson profit to Haiti relief, and maybe bought a little more as a result.

Our experience mirrors what we heard from other dealers who have good material and fair prices, who tended to say that they had a better show than last year, but not as good as usual. Amazingly it did not seem like there were more 50% off signs than last year, but there probably was—there were discount signs everywhere! One dealer we saw at the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show was discounting some of his minerals 89%!!! Get a clue—if you have to discount your minerals by that much in order to sell them, it probably means they were way overpriced to start out with! We still can't understand the mind set of some of our dealer brethren—is it necessary to make a killing on each piece? Why not buy at fair prices and sell at fair prices? Obviously, when you have something truly unique, it should cost more. But we just can't see the justification for many of the mineral prices. Especially in Tucson, where there are often a number of dealers who have similar pieces, and the very collectors who mined it may be selling there too, so how can you in good conscience ask such an unreasonable price? Also, if you do manage to foist off the overpriced mineral on someone, how will they feel about you if they see a similar piece at a tremendously lower price elsewhere?





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On the subject of low prices, it struck us a few years ago that for each mineral, gemstone, bead, or other item for sale in Tucson, by definition only one dealer in Tucson can have the absolute lowest price on that item. With 46 venues going more or less simultaneously and thousands of individual dealers, how can anyone hope to find that dealer who has their desired stone at the absolute lowest price? Wouldn't it be better to keep your eyes open for reasonable prices as you go along, and make purchases at prices that you feel are fair? There is always the risk one may buy something at what seems a good price, and then see it later at a lower price--but of course for every time that happens, there is the instance where one sees it at a reasonable price, decides to wait hoping to find at a better price, doesn't find it, and then returns to the original dealer to find it has been sold and is gone! We all have stories of the one that got away!



Just like everyone, we are always on the lookout for bargains, and when we find one, we pass the bargain onto our buyers, which seems like the reasonable thing to do. And this was a good year to find bargains. We made a list below of everything we bought in Tucson this year (although we'll probably find out later we overlooked some minerals), and you will find a number of bargains on that list. Since we don't have enough time to unpack, process, sort, and price everything we brought home, let us know if there is something on the list you are particularly interested in purchasing, and we'll get back to you as soon as possible with details on sizes and prices.

Having extra help this year allowed us to visit more of the other shows. We're always on the lookout for minerals to feature in future years of our Club, and to sell at shows and on our Offer sheets. We walked through the Ramada Hotel on the other side of the freeway--the emphasis there is on fossils, and we didn't see too much of interest to us. Were you in the Club when we featured Rainbow pyrite from Russia in July 2007? There's very little of that material around anymore! It has been discovered by the high-end Jewelry Designer's market, and is being cut into drusy cabs for one-of-a-kind jewelry, for which it is eminently suitable. The Russian source of the material was there at the Ramada, embroiled in a chess game and barely able to give us the time of day. And he wanted an awful lot for his material! We passed on it for this year, and decided we will have to make do with what we have left over from the large lot we bought in '07.



But we did find an Indian dealer there with a large lot of clear apophyllite crystal tips (apophyllite has perfect basal cleavage, so it's very easy for the tips to slip off during collecting.) He gave us a great deal and we bought several hundred of them, which will allow us to offer them at a bargain price.

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We also walked through the Executive Inn, now practically a ghost town. We heard several versions of what's been happening there, involving several different owners, bankruptcies, and other fiascos, that have reduced this once great show (when it was managed by Zinn Expositions, who runs the show we are in at the Inn Suites), into the seeming shambles it is now. Still, a couple of German dealers who have been there for years said they were still doing quite well! One of them says he can supply us with a number of European minerals for our Club, which would be wonderful, while the other is bringing a large lot of the manganese oxide dendrites in matrix from Germany for us for next year's show—a couple of very promising prospects for us!



The second German dealer told us of how, as a college student in the 1970's, he visited the Czech Republic, looking for moldavite. At one house he visited, upon hearing his request, the householder instructed his children to bring down the bucket of moldavites from the roof and give it to the nice young man! Hard to imagine, knowing now that the moldavite supply is dwindling and prices are rising, especially for the finest Besednice moldavites! We laughed about how many tens of thousands of dollars that bucket of moldavite might be worth today!

We also visited some of the hotel shows along the Freeway frontage road, what we call "The Strip," for the first time in a number of years. Attendance was way down this year, and parking was actually available—for \$5 per day. But we cheerfully paid it, and walked through the La Quinta, Howard Johnson, Riverside Inn, and the outdoor show next to the Riverside. You will never see as much Brazilian quartz and amethyst as you will at these shows. It's absolutely overwhelming! We made some contacts at the shows hoping to line up minerals for next year—yellow apatite in matrix from Mexico, for one. It's quite an amazing experience—if you never have, you've got to get to Tucson one day! Leave the credit cards at home if you must . . .

As sales were generally slower at all venues we visited than in past years, vendors from overseas were particularly interested in our need to obtain 500 to 600 pieces or more of one mineral from one locality! When we explained the sizes we needed, and what prices we could afford to pay, a couple of South American collectors let us have their material, which typically sells for much more than what we can pay, at the prices we need to have! As a result, we picked out large lots of two more minerals we never thought we would get: Heubnerite from Peru, and Hematite pseudomorphs after Magnetite from Argentina! It didn't save us any money--rather it means you'll be receiving an especially exceptional value in the months we feature them! The Argentinian dealer also gave us a good price on another pseudomorph--Quartz after Aragonite, and we picked up this heavy lot, too.

We went to Tucson hoping to feature Staurolite from the Kola Peninsula, Russia, in May this year, as we did 10 years ago, in May 2000. Success! The Russian collectors had just what we needed, and now we're looking forward to a special month in May! Earlier in the show, we had come upon an excellent lot of another of our favorite minerals, Vesuvianite from the Jeffrey mine, Quebec, Canada, which, coincidentally, we had featured in March 2000. We bought that lot, too, getting excellent but small specimens, which we are looking forward to sending you in the future. Prior to the show, we had picked up about 300 pounds of lovely polished Carnelian from Madagascar, and as soon as we have time to unpack it all, we're going to see if there are enough beautiful pieces so we could feature it, too! This is going to be an excellent year of minerals, small to large, shiny metallic to colorful, with twins and pseudomorphs to boot! The economic meltdown has had at least one beneficial side-effect!

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As usual, we were utterly exhausted by the time our show ended, on Saturday, February 13. Sales were good even on that day, and when the ballroom doors closed at 5:00 PM, a couple seeking a specimen of cyanotrichite had to be turned away! Fifteen days, forty-six venues, thousands and thousands of dealers, and on closing time on the last time, they were looking for an extremely rare mineral! Fortunately for them, the 4-day Tucson Gem & Mineral Show had one day left, and we can only hope they got over to it and found what they were looking for! We can certainly say that we found what we were looking for! This was one of our most successful Tucson shows ever, both in selling and in buying, and we hope it's the start of an exceptional year! Here's a list of minerals we've brought back from Tucson:

## **MINERAL SPECIMENS**

Tigereye from Australia and from South Africa, as polished slices  
Spessartine garnet on matrix, China  
Clinochlore (Seraphinite) from Russia, as polished slices  
Celestine from Turkmenistan  
Natrolite from Russia, as polished cabochons  
Coral from Spain  
Charoite Sphere from Russia  
Apatite Points from Canada  
Biotite from Canada  
Labradorite from Madagascar  
Large Apatite in Matrix Sphere from Canada  
Quartz from Brazil, clear, polished crystals, medium to large  
Amethyst as polished discs  
Amethyst specimens from Brazil, large drusy crystals with great color, medium to large (350 lbs. total)  
Apophyllite from India—clear crystal tips  
Apophyllite from India—green crystals on matrix  
Cavansite from India  
Carnelian from Madagascar, polished pieces, small to medium to large  
Blue Coral from China, as 28mm cut and polished cubes  
Eudialyte from Canada  
Fibrous Malachite from Zaire  
Prehnite from Mali, Africa  
Fluorite Carvings from China: Ducks, Buffalos, Rats, Frogs  
Fluorite polished discs, hearts, ovals, and cups, from China  
Fluorite—highly fluorescent specimens from Wearsdale, England  
Coprolites (Fossilized turtle droppings) from Madagascar  
Fossil Bivalves from Madagascar  
Fossil Ammonites from Madagascar—cut and polished pairs  
Jet from Mongolia—large polished pieces, spheres in 20mm, 30mm, and 40mm, and cutting rough  
Lapis Lazuli from Afghanistan, exquisite large polished pieces  
Larimar from Dominican Republic, as highest quality polished cabochons  
LED Rotating Light Stands  
Moldavite from Czech Republic—specimens, and in incense, bath salts, and oil; a couple of rare Besednice moldavites, the rarest and most beautiful type of Moldavite  
Opal from Oregon  
Phenakite from Myanmar (Burma), as excellent small crystals  
Hematite from Morocco

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Pyrite from Spain—the amazing near-perfect cubes, in all sizes, on and off matrix, and as twins  
Quartz with Tourmaline, Smoky Quartz, Citrine, and Elestials, from Cruziero Mine, Brazil  
Rhodochrosite from Peru—Crystals on Matrix  
Rhodonite from Australia—polished spheres  
Ruby from India—polished hearts  
Specularite (Specular Hematite), Upper Peninsula, Michigan, as polished slabs in all sizes, small to large  
Sphalerite from Spain, as polished and cut crystals and as faceted gemstones of great beauty  
Star Mica from Brazil  
Sugilite from South Africa, as rough pieces suitable for cutting  
Topaz from Myanmar (Burma), as nice crystals  
Tourmaline from Cruziero Mine, Brazil  
Copper Balls—Man-made, almost completely pure copper, in 3 diameters: 1.25", 1.5", and 2"  
Galena from Missouri  
Copper from Upper Peninsula, Michigan, polished nuggets  
Sulfur from Texas, unusual form and color  
Oco Agate from Brazil, as polished slices for jewelry use  
Animal Carvings: high quality, dozens of styles in tigereye, rose quartz, hematite, mahogany obsidian, howlite, and many other stones

### **TUMBLER STONES—COMMON STONES**

Red Jasper, Howlite, Hematite, Moss Agate, Obsidian, Mahogany Obsidian, Snowflake Obsidian

### **TUMBLER STONES—HIGHEST QUALITY--SOME SUITABLE FOR JEWELRY USE**

Ametrine  
Scapolite (Yellow)  
Pietersite  
Charoite  
Ruby Zoisite  
Ruby Fuchsite  
Emerald  
Lepidolite  
Blue Chalcedony  
Rose Quartz  
Shattuckite/Chrysocolla  
Silver Topaz  
Siberian Jade  
Aquamarine  
Seraphinite  
Peridot  
Pink Opal  
Turquoise—Stabilized, from Mexico  
Lithium Quartz

### **FACETED GEMSTONES**

Faceted Ametrine from Bolivia  
Faceted Sphalerite from Spain



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## **CRYSTAL PENDANTS--POINTS SET IN STERLING SILVER**

Lovely pendants made from Fluorite, Lapis, Kyanite, Clear Quartz, Prehnite, Smoky Quartz, Aquamarine, Carnelian, Hematite, Amethyst, Tigereye, Blue Lace Agate

**MESSAGE POINTS** in Fluorite, Clear Quartz, Selenite (Satin Spar) with fluorite caps

## **GEMSTONE NECKLACES--READY TO WEAR**

Labradorite--Faceted Rondells (Ready to wear)  
Peridot--Faceted Rondells (Ready to wear)  
Moldavite--Faceted Rondells (Ready to wear)  
Sugilite--Highest Quality (Ready to wear)

## **GEMSTONE BEADS on TEMPORARY STRINGS**

Tigereye-- 6mm, 8mm Rounds, Rectangles  
Multicolor Tigereye Beads--Red, Blue, and Golden  
Ametrine--Faceted Nuggets  
Blue Lace Agate--Top Drilled Pears  
Citrine--Faceted Nuggets  
Chinese Chrysoprase Ovals  
Prehnite--Faceted Nuggets  
Prehnite--Faceted Rondells  
Garnets--4mm Rounds, 6mm Rounds  
Rain Forest Jasper--Faceted Nuggets  
Pearls--Biwa  
Pearls--Rice  
Pink Opal--12mm Rondelles  
Pink Opal--15mm x 20mm Nuggets  
Rose Quartz--a number of assorted shapes  
Seraphinite--18mm x 13mm Ovals  
Clear Quartz--20mm Rounds  
Clear Quartz--Faceted Small Nuggets  
Clear Quartz--Faceted Large Nuggets  
Clear Quartz--Drilled Points  
Lapis Lazuli--4mm Rounds  
Blue Coral--10mm to 11mm Rounds  
Blue Coral--15mm to 34mm Graduated Rounds  
Black-Gold Coral--14mm Rounds  
Jet beads--Graduated Potatoes, and all our full line of rounds, faceted rounds, rondells, etc.  
Endless Chip Beads, in British Columbian Jade, Chinese Turquoise, Lapis Lazuli, Amethyst, Carnelian, Clear Quartz, and others

## **UPCOMING MINERAL OF THE MONTH FEATURED MINERALS**

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Staurolite from the Kola Peninsula, Russia  
"Apache Tears" (Obsidian) in matrix from Arizona  
Pyrite from China, as ball-shaped cluster  
Topaz from Utah  
Boulder Opal from Australia  
Huebnerite from Peru  
Hematite after Magnetite from Argentina  
Quartz after Aragonite from Argentina  
Vesuvianite from Canada

## **POTENTIAL MINERAL OF THE MONTH MINERALS**

Carnelian from Madagascar  
Petoskey Stone from Michigan  
Amethyst from India  
Smoky Quartz from San Diego County, California



Topaz on matrix, Thomas Range, Utah

And finally, here we are at home after Tucson, having unloaded our Van and the two pallets of minerals we sent home by truck from Tucson--like last year, well over 1 ton of specimens! The MOTM team looks up to the challenge! Just think--only another eleven months and we get to do it all again!



The MOTM team, left to right: Diana, Richard, Cheryl, Cheyenne, and new team member Heather

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