

Penn Dixie Chronicle

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE HAMBURG NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Summer 2019

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Labor Day (9/2): 9-3
Weekends-only beginning Sept. 7

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Director's Note

Hello again!

In the film *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*, King Théoden leads the men of Rohan against Saruman's massive orc army at the battle at Helm's Deep.

At the start of the battle, it is clear to King Théoden that the odds are long and the fight will be difficult. His men are few in number and not well prepared to fight; the enemy forces vastly outnumber his own and are armed to the teeth. Facing the oncoming host of stomping and screaming orcs, he utters "And so it begins." Arrows fly and an epic battle royale ensues. Eventually, the men of Rohan win the day.

If you strip away the cave trolls, goblins, and wizards, *Lord of the Rings* becomes a story about unlikely heroes – humble hobbits – who team up to complete tasks against almost impossible odds. Through fellowship and persistence, they persevere time after time. Our history unfolds similarly. Penn Dixie's heroes – community volunteers who wanted to preserve the site for future generations – were diligent advocates who fought well-funded developers with letter-writing campaigns and with speeches in public forums. They faced a difficult battle, but persevered.

In our 24th season, I look back with gratitude to Gordon Baird, Jerold Bastedo, Richard Batt, Mark Cavalcoli, Eileen Eich, Liz Gonsiorek, Robert Hoffman, Sheila Kelly, Thomas Kinsey, John McKendry, Jack Quinn, and countless others who battled on behalf of Penn Dixie in the early 1990s. These brave hobbits, err humans, had a vision for Penn Dixie as an educational destination. Through their grit and hard work, they brought that vision to fruition. (Incidentally: Do you have a story to share?)



Today, we are humbled to follow the examples of our founders. This spring, Penn Dixie celebrated its 15 Annual Dig With The Experts with another sold out weekend of fabulous fossil collecting. The event featured prime trilobite hunting, mostly cooperative weather, and excellent opportunities for socializing with new and old friends in the paleontology community. We owe an incredible debt of gratitude to our experts: Diggin' Don Bissett, Corey Hensen, Jessica Laton Heske, Paleo Joe Kchodl, Dan Krisher, John Moffitt, Bob Schacht, Malcolm Thornley, and Jay Wollin. This year's excavations required a substantial amount of behind-the-scenes work and we thank Don Bissett for joining us back in April to help. For those eager to return: our next dig will take place on May 16 and 17, 2020.

Speak of big digs: we happily hosted 825 guests during Hamburg Open House in June! Considering how much we value community support, I felt that an official 'Thank You' card to the Town of Hamburg was long overdue. So, we mailed 27,000 invitations – one to each household! I thank Evenhouse Printing and WGRZ-Channel 2 for sponsoring the event and Main Street Ice Cream for providing tasty snacks to our guests. It was great to meet so many of our neighbors and to show them what Penn Dixie is all about.

So – what will the future bring? On site, we are already in the midst of a busy summer season. But, there's an even bigger challenge on the horizon. Penn Dixie is gearing up for a fundraising campaign to build the visitor center that has eluded us for so many years. Our project goal is substantially greater than anything that we've achieved in the past, but the payoff will be legendary. Want to join our fellowship? We need our unlikely heroes with a passion for science education to step forward once more. I'll recall the words of King Théoden once more. "And so it begins."

Dr. Phil

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DIG INTO MEMBERSHIP!

Benefits include:

1. Enjoy 12 months of FREE and unlimited general admission to the most accessible fossil park in the U.S.
2. FREE admission to monthly stargazing programs
3. After-hours access and fossil collecting even when Penn Dixie is not open to the public
4. Discounted admission to special events and other programs
5. The Penn Dixie Chronicle and monthly eNewsletter
6. A 10% discount in our Prehistoric Gift Shop

Levels:

- **INDIVIDUAL \$40**
Member benefits for one (1) named adult age 18+
- **DUAL \$50**
Member benefits for two (2) named adults age 18+
- **FAMILY \$60**
Member benefits for two (2) named adults age 18+ and up to four children/grandchildren under age 18.
- **Enhance any Level with a PLUS \$20 membership** to add one (1) free, non-member guest per visit with member.
- **\$5 DISCOUNT** with valid ID for seniors (62+), military, students and teachers.

JOIN ONLINE AT penndixie.org

Complete an application at the site, or call 716-627-4560 to request a paper application via mail.

Educator's Note



Summer has finally arrived at Penn Dixie! After a cold and wet spring, we are happy to have the warm sun back at Penn Dixie. Field trip season brought a few thousand students to Penn Dixie over the course of the spring. For the first time this year -- and thanks to our generous donors

-- Penn Dixie was able to supply all essential fossil-hunting materials for field trips. If you are interested in donating to Penn Dixie, you can find information here: <https://penndixie.org/donate/>. Thank you to all the staff and volunteers that helped during the busy school trip season!

Summer day camps and workshops are ready for another great year. Our popular Space Camp will be back again this year. Campers will learn about

astronomy, rocketry, meteorites, and many other "out-of-this-world" things. In addition to Space Camp, we have summer day camps for all interests, including Nature Expedition and Dinosaurs, Fossils, and Nature. For more information visit <https://penndixie.org/camps-workshops/>.

This summer our educators are also preparing for some new and exciting outreach events. Look for Penn Dixie -- with our new outreach activity "The Sea of Life" -- at Outer Harbor, Explore and More The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Children's Museum, Burgerfest, and the Taste of Buffalo.

We still have availability for summer and fall field trips and on-site programs. It is a beautiful time to come to Penn Dixie and embark on a fossil hunting adventure! For more information on site visits, to book your group visits, or anything else please call me at (716) 627-4560 or email at holly@penndixie.org.

Holly
Director of Education

Celebrating 15 Years of Dig With the Experts



Summer 2019 Calendar

UPDATED
7/11/19

FRIDAY IN JULY

Each (Fossil) Friday in July, Penn Dixie offers a special discount admission rate of \$5 to all guests. This discount is only available for on-site ticket purchases and includes an introductory fossil tour plus unlimited fossil collecting. On Fossil Friday we'll add two more hours of fossil collecting. Penn Dixie will be open 9 am to 7 pm, rain or shine. All ages welcome and no reservations are needed. Tool rental is available. Bring a bucket, bag, or box for your fossils. Penn Dixie members attend for FREE.

SATURDAY, JULY 27, 8:15 PM JULY STARGAZING

Join us for an out-of-this-world experience! Our astronomers will map the night sky, including stars, planets, constellations, and deep space objects, for you using a variety of telescopes and specialized equipment. Guests are encouraged to bring lawn chairs, warm clothing, blankets, and food/beverages. We'll have plenty of telescopes, but you can bring yours along, too, if you'd like some expert advice. Admission (cash or credit) is \$4. There is no charge for Penn Dixie members. Registration not required. Due to the uncertainty of weather, we will not offer advance ticketing for these programs. Stay tuned to our social media for updates.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 31, 7 PM

LEARNING FROM THE DEAD: GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN ANCIENT ANIMALS

Dr. Melanie Hopkins, Associate Curator of Invertebrate Paleontology at the American Museum of Natural History and noted trilobite expert, joins us for a special science talk this summer! Dr. Hopkins' talk will be held in the Gateway Building Auditorium, 3556 Lakeshore Road in Blasdell, NY. Thanks to a grant from the National Science Foundation, this talk is FREE to the public and our members. No reservations needed. Full info: penndixie.org/learning-from-the-dead/

SUNDAY, AUGUST 11, 10 AM TO 12 PM FOSSIL HUNTING FOR BEGINNERS

New to fossil hunting? Learn the tricks of the trade from paleontologist Dr. Holly Schreiber. Tour the site and learn all the best spots to hunt for fossils. Dr. Schreiber will teach you how to find, dig, and preserve all the fossil treasures you find. No experience necessary. All ages welcome. Bring your own tools or borrow from our limited supply. Included with admission or FREE for members.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 24, 10 AM SEARCH FOR THE GOLDEN FOSSIL – SCAVENGER HUNT

Did you make history as part of the World's Largest Fossil Dig last summer at Penn Dixie Fossil Park and Nature Reserve? Don't miss this summer's historic Search for the Golden Fossil Scavenger Hunt!

On Saturday August 24th, teams will cross fossil pits, forests, and wetlands in the Search for the Golden Fossil at Penn Dixie Fossil Park and Nature Reserve. Hundreds of Western New Yorkers will discover local flora and fauna, past and present, while competing for exciting prizes.

Full info: penndixie.org/scavenger-hunt/

AUGUST 31, 7:30 PM AUGUST STARGAZING

MON. SEPT. 3 (LABOR DAY), 9 AM TO 3 PM PENN DIXIE OPEN FOR LABOR DAY HOLIDAY! COME AND DIG FOR FOSSILS!

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 10 AM TO 4 PM GRANDPARENT'S DAY

In recognition of Grandparent's day, all grandparents accompanied by grandchildren are admitted for free. Our experts will also be on site to help identify your fossils, rocks and minerals. Our telescopes for viewing sunspots and solar flares will be available as well. Adults: \$10, Children 3-12: \$7, Children 2 and Under & Penn Dixie Members: FREE
No pre-registrations required

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 9 AM TO 4 PM SCOUTING ROCKS!

Penn Dixie is excited to offer a FREE day of fossil collecting, sunspot viewing, nature walks, and other hands-on science activities for ANY scout in uniform. More info to follow on our website.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 10 AM TO 1 PM HOMESCHOOL DAY AT PENN DIXIE

Learn about the geological history of Western New York at Penn Dixie. This special tour for homeschoolers includes a complete educational tour of Penn Dixie led by our trained educators. Students can take home all the fossils they find! Admission is \$5 per student. Students must be accompanied by an adult. No experience necessary. Program is for grades 1-12. Pre-registration is required. To register email Holly at holly@penndixie.org. Register by September 16 and receive \$1 off admission. Rain date: September 26.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 6:30 PM SEPTEMBER STARGAZING

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5, 9 AM TO 4 PM 22ND ANNUAL ERIE COUNTY EARTH SCIENCE DAY

Come talk to earth scientists and watch as they exhibit and demonstrate various aspects of their professions. Learn about drill rigs and watch a demonstration on rock coring and drilling operations. Sunspots and solar flares will also be visible through our telescopes along with fossil collecting and a wide variety of other activities. FREE to the public. No pre-registrations required.



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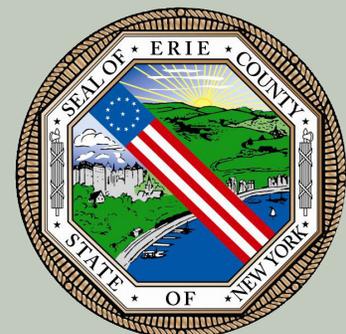
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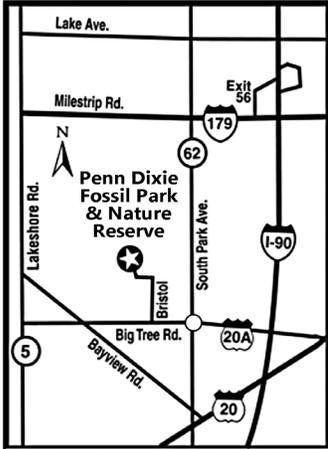
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The programs of Penn Dixie are supported by public funds from the County of Erie, the Town of Hamburg and Hamburg Gaming and by our members and friends.



Looking south towards the constellation Serpens. Approximately 11 pm, early July.

CONSTELLATION: Serpens/Serpens Caput (neck) & Serpens Cauda (tail)

By Rich Switzer

WHAT TO VIEW: This constellation is in two parts which are separated by Ophiuchus the Serpent Bearer. The serpent's head is on one side of Ophiuchus and its tail is on the other side. The brightest stars are only about magnitude 3 – three of which make a faint triangle that represents the serpent's head. The star Unukalhai in Arabic means 'The serpent's neck' and lies 85 light years away. The globular star cluster M5 is also located around this area and lies 26,000 light years away. The star Alya in Arabic means 'Tail' and marks the tip of Serpens tail some 100 light years away. This star is actually a pair of stars, one of magnitude 5 and the other of magnitude 4.

Building Update

Thank you everyone who provided feedback and insight about the future Science and Outdoor Education Center on the site at last November's Hops n' Rocks Dinner and through this spring's Future of Penn Dixie Survey. Attached are concept drawings from our amazing architect Michael Anderson. We're excited to announce the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Legacy Funds continue to support the planning stages for the project. After contributing \$15,500 towards the architect and site evaluations in 2018, the Legacy Funds have additionally contributed \$35,000 to safely remove buried industrial materials on the site this year. We look forward to sharing additional updates with all of you as we complete the planning phases of the project and appreciate your ongoing support.

Membership Update

Thank you for your feedback over the years about our membership model. We appreciate your support of science and outdoor education and want signing up for, using, and renewing your membership to be as easy as possible.

Starting on July 15, we are moving from a calendar year membership model to a twelve months from the time of purchase membership model for all new memberships. We are also moving to a smaller number of membership categories. If you are eligible for a discounted membership, please be prepared with the relevant ID card, during visits. If you are interested in additionally supporting Penn Dixie, please visit the donation and volunteer pages on our website to learn more.

We appreciate your patience during this transition and will honor the terms of all previously purchased memberships. Questions, comments, and concerns can be directed to Development Manager Elizabeth Schiavoni, MSC, elizabeth@penndixie.org.