What's New in the Mineral World?

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by **Thomas P. Moore**
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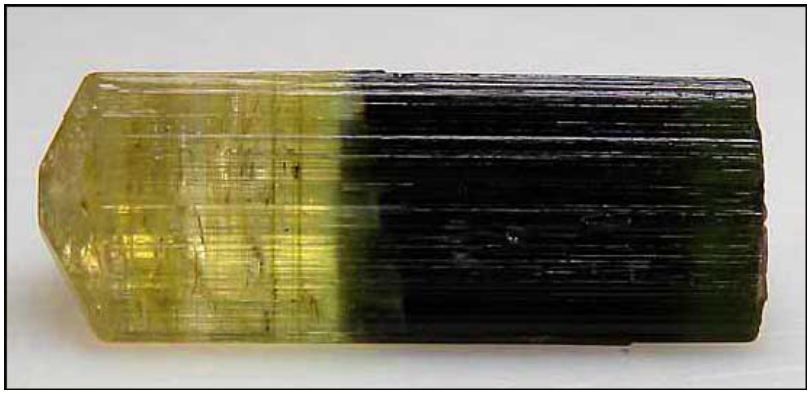
TPMoore1@cox.net

As spring comes on—or, at least, as the top couple of feet of snow disappear in the Northeast and Midwest—some online dealers are already posting for sale some of their acquisitions from the Tucson Show. In this first report of 2011 there are one or two post-Tucson items of that sort, and I shall cast a net for other catches, as well, among the swarming plenty of what's available on the web.



Elbaite, 2 cm, from Stak Nala, Skardu district, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. *Marin Minerals* specimen and photo.

The website of Mike Keim's web-only dealership *Marin Minerals* (www.marinmineral.com) can generally be counted on to show intriguing selections (with excellent photos) of what's new, or at least fairly new, to the market. Mike now offers 12 beautiful **elbaite** crystals from a new find at Stak Nala near Tukla, Skardu district, Gilgit-Baltistan (the former Northern Areas), Pakistan; the crystals range in length from 1.5 to 5 cm. It's been quite a few years since significant numbers of tourmaline specimens have reached the market from this locality. Very characteristically,

color-zoned Stak Nala elbaites have shown pale green, pale blue or pale pink gemmy areas near their tips while being opaque dark green or greenish brown through most of their middles, but each of the new *Marin Minerals* crystals is a rich, gemmy *yellow* in an extensive zone near one end. Also, the loose, doubly terminated crystals lack the jackets of platy white microcrystals of albite which we are used to seeing in Stak Nala specimens; rather, they are without matrix or associations. Stak Nala elbaite has been well-known since the earliest specimens came out in the mid-1980s, and it's nice to see that the locality is not only alive but also trying out new variants on the theme of gem tourmaline.

Datolite, 6.5 cm, from the Russian River, Cloverdale, Sonoma County, California. *Marin Minerals* specimen and photo.

The *Marin Minerals* site also has a February update offering 19 miniature and small-cabinet-size specimens of what is pretty clearly the best **datolite** ever found in California. At last year's San Francisco show, where another dealer was offering a few specimens of this datolite, I learned that the material was originally collected in 1983, from basalt boulders along the Russian River north of Cloverdale, Sonoma County (Mike Keim shows the locality as "Russian River near Cloverdale, California"), and that no more such specimens have been found since then. Glassy white, lustrous, translucent datolite crystals to 2 cm cover the black basalt matrix, and all of these attractive specimens cost less than $100.

A February 22 posting on Rob Lavinsky's *The Arkenstone* site (www.irocks.com) shows 16 loose crystals of the rare, always-popular aluminum borate-fluoride **jeremejevite**, from a pocket opened late in 2010. For the locality Rob gives only "Erongo Mountains, Namibia" but on the *Marin Minerals* website (cited above), Mike Keim, who has a few more of the specimens, attributes them to the "Ameib Ranch, Arandis, Erongo

Region, Namibia." This sounds familiar, for jeremejevite crystals resembling these hit the market in 2001 and 2008, having then been attributed to the Ameib 60 Farm (I am told that a Namibian "farm" is essentially what we would call a "ranch"). The new crystals are lustrous, entirely gemmy and of a beautiful medium-blue; they reach 5 cm long (most are around 3 cm), with complexly grooved, pitted, heavily etched surfaces and raggedy terminations. Clinging to a few of their sides are patches and nests of gray-green acicular crystals which may represent a new tourmaline-group species: apparently the jeremejevite crystals were found as floaters in pocket fillings of the acicular tourmaline. These are splendid thumbnail-size specimens, and one tries not to think of how many might be slaughtered in order to turn the rich blueness within into faceted gems.

Jeremejevite, 3.7 cm, from the Erongo Mountains, Namibia.
***The Arkenstone* specimen; Joe Budd photo.**

Calcite, 5.5 cm, from the Conco mine, North Aurora, Kane County, Illinois. *Hummingbird Minerals* specimen and photo.

Though reluctant to crib from my own 2011 Tucson Show report (to appear in the May-June 2011 issue), I can't resist pointing to the impressive crystal groups of lustrous, limpid gray-green **calcite** from the Conco mine, North Aurora, Kane County, Illinois, which are appearing now on the site of Jim Brown's *Hummingbird Minerals*

(www.hummingbirdminerals.com). At the show I learned about this brand-new occurrence from Jared T. Freiburg (Saga.Minerals@gmail.com), who had filled a whole room at the InnSuites with hundreds of specimens which emerged in October 2010 from a big pocket system in the underground limestone mine 20 miles west of downtown Chicago. The forms of the calcite crystals vary, and complex combinations exist, but the scalenohedron predominates; the crystals, reaching 6 cm, are wholly transparent and full of phantoms outlined by tiny, glittering pyrite and marcasite crystals. The *Hummingbird Minerals* specimens are handsome groups, some with limestone matrix, from miniature to large-cabinet size, selling for $50 to $250.

Kunzite spodumene, 5 cm, from the Oceanview mine, Pala district, San Diego County, California. *Trinity Minerals* specimen; John Veevaert photo.

There was much buzz at the Show concerning the first-rate **kunzite spodumene** crystals now being extracted from the pegmatite at the Oceanview mine, Pala district, San Diego County, California—and Mark Mauthner put in a case of magnificent, gemmy, dichroic, pale lilac and/or pale green crystals to 30 cm. The Oceanview mine, which is on the same claim as the older Elizabeth R mine, was acquired in 2000 by Jeff Swanger, who spent the next six years in largely unsuccessful specimen-collecting efforts there. But in 2007 many kilograms of aquamarine and morganite beryl specimens and gem rough were collected, and in December 2009 the mine began also to yield large, etched but wholly gemmy, pale to medium purplish pink kunzite crystals from 3 to 10 cm long.

In late spring 2010 a major pocket which was named the "Big Kahuna Zone" produced abundant kunzite crystals, some to very large sizes, and in December 2010 a downdip extension of the same zone, named the "Big Kahuna II Zone," yielded more crystals, with the result that Oceanview mine kunzite specimens are now available here and there on the market. For instance, John Veevaert's *Trinity Minerals* site (www.trinityminerals.com) has a page with seven gorgeous crystals, 4.4 to 8.6 cm long, some of which, in the photos, look pale lilac, others of which look pale green (John warns that, to prevent the green color from turning lilac, one should keep specimens in the dark). Gem-quality kunzite this good has come in recent decades only from Brazil, Afghanistan and (to a much lesser extent) Nigeria; it's good to see it come once again from California, as in our forefathers' times.

Sincosite, crystals to 1 mm, from near Soda Springs, Caribou County, Idaho. *Dakota Matrix* specimen and photo.

On the *Dakota Matrix* site (www.dakotamatrix.com), Tom Loomis is advertising specimens of **sincosite** from a new find in the southeastern corner of Idaho. The rare Ca-V phosphate has heretofore been known in good specimens only from the Ross Hannibal mine in the Black Hills of South Dakota, where Tom and a partner found the occurrence after a blast in the mine in March 1996 (see his article in the May-June 1999 issue). At both localities, sincosite forms bright green, thin-tabular crystals, resembling torbernite, which line narrow seams, together with crystals of other phosphates (e.g. minyulite in South Dakota and minyulite, fluellite, cacoxenite and wavellite in Idaho). The new locality is a prospect near Soda Springs, Caribou County, Idaho, in the black shales of the Phosphoria Formation. The sincosite crystals do not exceed 1 mm individually (in the Ross Hannibal mine they reach 3 mm), but they are scattered thickly on matrix plates of the dark shale, and Tom's specimens are plates to 5 cm, peppered all over with green and promising much joy to the micromounter.

Fluorite, 8 cm, from Chi Feng, Inner Mongolia, China. *China Ruff* specimen and photo.

A new find of **fluorite** specimens purportedly from a place called Dongjiang in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China debuted at the 2006 Munich Show. The writers of the report on that show in *Mineralien-Welt* described matrix specimens to large-cabinet size which show spheres and hemispheres of translucent gray-blue to greenish fluorite with a waxy luster, the spheres reaching 10 in diameter, with individual crystal faces visible on their bumpy surfaces. That description matches the pictures now seen on the site of *China Ruff* (www.chinaruff.com), where 10 fluorite specimens, large-miniature to small-cabinet size, are being offered; however, according to John Chen (nickname) of *China Ruff*, the specimens are from a place called Chi Feng, in Inner Mongolia. Probably we will get consistent locality data in due course, but meanwhile these are distinctive and fairly attractive Chinese fluorite specimens—check them out.

Hydroboracite, 3.8 cm, from the Kohnstein quarry, Wolfleben, Harz Mountains, Germany. *Wendel Minerals* specimen and photo.

The Kohnstein anhydrite quarry at Wolfleben, Harz Mountains, Germany, is commercially active at present, and lately it has been producing well-crystallized borates and other evaporite minerals; for example, Wendell Wilson reported from last year's Munich Show on some world-class priceite specimens recently found in the quarry (see the January-February 2011 issue). Comparably excellent specimens of **hydroboracite** from the Kohnstein quarry are being offered now on the website of Wolfgang Wendel's *Wendel Minerals* (www.wendel-minerals.com). These delicate specimens show lustrous, colorless, transparent, long-prismatic hydroboracite crystals to 2 cm, both in loose groups and rising from matrix of white massive anhydrite. They are at least the equals of the hydroboracite specimens found decades ago in Death Valley, California, which have been considered to be the world's finest representatives of the species.

The magnesite mines at Brumado, Bahia, Brazil have recently turned out some fine uvite specimens which display "new" habits and colors for that species, and other Brumado specimens showing sharp, ice-clear rhombohedral crystals of magnesite still trickle out as well. By contrast, it has seemed that Brumado **hematite** specimens, with brilliant black, platy crystals in subparallel groups, belong to the past…but have you seen the late January posting of Brumado hematite specimens on Felix Garcia Garcia's *Edelweiss Minerals* (www.edelweissminerals.com) site? Felix has several superb thumbnails and small miniatures which are stacks and rosettes of black, platy hematite crystals displaying triangular, tooled-looking growth features on many of their broad, mirror-smooth surfaces. In the same posting, Felix has a small selection of very good miniature-size specimens of **descloizite pseudomorphous after wulfenite**, from Los Lamentos, Chihuahua, Mexico. You can have one of the pseudomorphs for only around 75 Euros (about $100), whereas the (smaller) Brumado hematite specimens run around 45 Euros (about $60).

Hematite, 2.8 cm, from Brumado, Bahia, Brazil. *Edelweiss Minerals* specimen and photo.

Jordi Fabre of *Fabre Minerals* (www.fabreminerals.com) has scored a handful of peculiar-looking, but quite attractive, cabinet-size specimens of **limonite-coated quartz** from Banská Štiavnica, Banská Bystrica, Slovak Republic (labels from earlier eras will name this classic locality either in German as "Schemnitz" or in Hungarian as "Selmecbánya"). Terminated prismatic quartz crystals to more than 1 cm cover matrix, and covering *them* uniformly is an iridescent, brightly bronze-colored coating of mixed iron and manganese oxides. Jordi says that the specimens were dug in 2009 from somewhere in or around the ancient ore workings. According to the excellent 2002 book *Minerals of the Carpathians*, edited by Sándor Szakáll and written by him and five others, Banská Štiavnica is one of the largest polymetallic deposits in Europe, and mining there went on for a thousand years; the mineralization occurs in veins to 200 meters thick, in the central zone of a stratovolcano. About 190 minerals are known from Banská Štiavnica, and splendid specimens of quartz, sphalerite, galena, barite and various carbonates are among its prizes of yesteryear.

Quartz coated by iron and manganese oxides, 11.5 cm, from Banská Štiavnica, Banská Bystrica, Slovak Republic. *Fabre Minerals* specimen and photo.

Detail of specimen shown above.

Carrollite on calcite, 5 cm, from the Kambove mine, Shaba Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo. *Wright's Rock Shop* specimen and photo.

We will now briefly review the late 20th/early 21st-century chronology of major finds of **carrollite** in the "Shaba crescent" mining region, Katanga (formerly Shaba) Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo: Hardly known at all in earlier times as euhedral macrocrystals, the Cu-Co sulfide was first found in the Kambove mine in the late 1970s as sharp, silvery gray, lustrous crystals to 1.5 cm. Around 1990, equally brilliant crystals to larger sizes were found in the Kamoto Fond mine, and the best of these were for a while the world's ultimate carrollites. But then, in early 2001, the Kamoya II surface prospect near the town of Kambove (also called the "Kamfundwa mine") produced carrollite crystals of practically unbelievable size and quality: sharp, mirror-faced, equant singles to almost the size of baseballs, possessed of blindingly high metallic luster, resting on cleavage planes in masses of coarse white calcite. None of these three localities remains productive today, and so if you don't have a carrollite specimen from one of them, well, you'd better get busy. It pleased me to see that Chris Wright of *Wright's Rock Shop* (www.wrightsrockshop.com) has posted a new, generous page of carrollite specimens from an old stock held until now by Brice and Christophe Gobin; the specimens were recovered from open-pit mining in 1998 at the Kambove mine, and Chris's prices for them are, he writes, "discounted from the Gobins' wholesale price." The specimens are not the equals of high-end carrollites from the later finds at Kamoto

Fond and Kamoya II, but they do show sharp, predominantly octahedral, silvery crystals to an impressive 4 cm lying on massive calcite, and they are still superb representatives of the species. The specimen shown in the picture above is priced at $575.

Sodalite, 6.8 cm, from St.-Hilaire, Quebec. *David K. Joyce Minerals* specimen and photo. Specimen shown in natural light.

Same specimen in long-wave ultraviolet light

On his lately remodeled, greatly spiffed-up website, David K. Joyce (www.davidkjoyceminerals.com) has many pages of newly acquired specimens from St.-Hilaire, Quebec. My favorite among these are miniature and small-cabinet-size clusters of sharp, dodecahedral **sodalite ("hackmanite")** crystals, with individuals reaching 2.5

cm. Drusy albite coatings on the sodalite crystals only enhance their attractiveness, and do not seem even to dampen too much their brilliant peach-pink fluorescence. Also offered are very good specimens of St.-Hilaire specialties like leifite, catapleiite, elpidite, narsarsukite, epididymite, and several odd pseudomorphs (how about catapleiite after sodalite, natrolite after cancrinite, rhodochrosite after serandite…?). We should never lose touch with what's new from St.-Hilaire.

Tetrahedrite (chalcopyrite-coated), 7 cm, from the Herodsfoot mine, Lanreath, Cornwall, England. *Cornwall and Devon Minerals* specimen and photo.

Michael Merry is an enthusiastic British collector/dealer whose *Cornwall & Devon Mineral Specimens* dealership made its first online appearance in 2003. His newly redesigned site (www.cornwalldevonmineralspecimens.co.uk) offers many old specimens and a few new ones from (as the man says) Cornwall and Devon, England, and it is worth an extended visit, for there is much instruction here in old English classics, and there are bargain sleepers as well. Mike is now showing a generous number of one-of-a-kind specimens of copper, siderite, bornite, arsenopyrite, chalcocite, native arsenic, olivenite, botallackite, "blister ore" chalcopyrite, and plenty more. His 7-cm specimen of **chalcopyrite-coated tetrahedrite** crystals on matrix from the Herodsfoot mine, Lanreath, Cornwall, shown here, has sharp tetrahedrite crystals to 1.5 cm and costs 110 £ (about $175).

Fluorite, 8.5 cm, from Frohnau, Annaberg district, Obersachsen, Germany. *Margraf Minerals* specimen and photo.

It's always nice to come upon promising *new* online dealerships: one that I noticed this time is *Margraf Minerals* (www.margrafminerals.com), based in Mittenwald, Bavaria. It has miscellaneous minerals, including some very fine European items such as the 8.5-cm specimen, shown here, of **"black" fluorite** in crisp cubic crystals. Such specimens come—to this day—from Frohnau, in the Annaberg district of the central Erzgebirge, Obersachsen, Germany; the fluorite is not, of course, really black, but very deep purple in its outer zones and yellow inwardly. The Margraf Minerals specimen is among the best I have ever seen.

Not new, but always enticing, is the website of Rudolph and Anton Watzl's *Watzl Minerals* (www.watzlminerals.com), which offers such luscious specimen photos that I'm in the habit of browsing the site thoroughly even when it contains nothing *really* new for this report. This time I spent a while levitating (as it seemed) in the bouyant brightness of those pictures, especially the ones on a "Tourmaline" page which the Watzl brothers first posted on December 8, 2010. Outstanding **elbaite** specimens from many major localities are offered here, the most dramatic being a few pieces from the great pocket that Ailton Barbosa opened in 1978 in the Jonas mine, Rio Doce Valley, Minas Gerais, Brazil. The 5.3-cm Jonas mine rubellite specimen shown below features a dominant, doubly terminated crystal plus three other crystals which (says the caption) are repaired at their contacts—but who cares about well-executed repair when the result is such a stunner as this?

Elbaite, 5.3 cm, from the Jonas mine, Rio Doce Valley, Minas Gerais, Brazil. *Watzl Minerals* specimen and photo.

Finally, since early December 2010 Jim McEwen of *Lehigh Minerals* (www.lehighminerals.com) has added four extensive new pages to his already-extensive site. The pages show (1) many good cabinet specimens of the new, world's-finest **coquimbite** from the Javier mine in Peru; (2) a large selection of **pyromorphite** specimens from the Les Farges mine, Ussel, France, in several crystal habits and in colors ranging from bright yellow-green through woody brown; (3) German specimens from the H. Deisinger collection, especially fine **fluorite** and **barite** from the mines in the Schwarzwald (Black Forest) and from the Wölsendorf district of now-extinct fluorite mines in eastern Bavaria; and (4) miscellaneous low-priced specimens, including some superb ones, from the Bill Williams collection. The two pieces shown below are American classics once in the Williams collection: the 5-cm Glove mine wulfenite is priced at $150 and the 5-cm Butte rhodochrosite—see the partially gemmy, unusually sharp (for Butte), pink crystals?—is priced at $175.

Wulfenite, 5 cm, from the Glove mine, Santa Cruz County, Arizona. *Lehigh Minerals* specimen and photo.

Rhodochrosite, 5 cm, from Butte, Montana. *Lehigh Minerals* specimen and photo.

I hope you like the new Abode Reader (pdf) format for these reports, allowing higher resolution photos. Have a great spring, all.