

Fossil Collecting Jive and Terminology

By Marc Behrendt (and several dozen terminology donators)

I have compiled a list of terms used by fossil collectors around the country and Europe, terms that may not be in every (or any) textbook. Beware - the use of the terms is authentic, however unknowledgeable friends and family members may think you have been out in the sun too long, if you try to use too many of these terms in one sentence.

A bit of a hybrid - similar to Moroccan special

A popping - an ammonite or other fossil that bursts in two to give a pos and neg.

AEPU (Automated Environmental Preparation Unit) - the back yard deck

Argillaceous - (*warning: gratuitous educational content*) description of rock, simply stated, means a rock that contains clay sized particles

Beauty - I found it (See "Junk")

Bessie path - cow trail

Bite - trilobite

Blown - an ammonite where the body chamber has a hole in it where the gas build up caused a blow out

Boffo - a super find, the best of the day/trip/year

Boulder - it was too big to break up or take home

Brach - brachiopod

Bucket brigade - a scout troop at a fossil site

Bug - either a trilobite or something crawling from under an overturned rock

Butter layer - trilobite bed

Calcareous - (*warning: gratuitous educational content*) simply stated, a rock that contains carbonate. Hard shale is probably Calcareous.

Carcrapodon - the shark tooth equivalent of a yechinoid

Cops - Phacops

Crier - broken beyond repair

Cry-babies - ruined specimens

Ditto - Ditomopyge

Euk - Eucalyptocrinites

Euk top - Eucalyptocrinites cup

Flaky - description of shale that breaks up into small fragments

Flexie - Flexicalymene

Flipp'n Stones - turning over large slabs of sedimentary rock

Fubar - fouled up beyond all recognition

Gastropod - snail

Gem - a perfect or spectacular specimen

Gigantabite - A monster-size representative for any species trilobite

Gnarly - large, 3 dimensional

Grott ball - very poor specimen

Gumbo mud - what Morrison and Chinle Formation bentonite clay turns into if you get it wet.

Has potential - probable junk, but worth taking home to check out.

Hash - storm deposits

Horror ball - see grott ball, only worse

Implement of death - Estwing tool

Invite - fellow fossil hunter allows you to help with a dig, usually means you provide money, food, tools, and other supplies, and the unique chance to watch someone else work a fossil site.

Junk - you found it (See "Beauty")

Junkasters - (aka Halfasters) - echinoids and sea stars that are not flawless in the field

Leaverite - junk, fossil better left in the field, as leave 'er right where you found it.

Lens - specific layer of shale or rock bearing fossils

Leo - Leonaspis

Machine-gun Kelly - poorly air-abraded prepared specimen

Major score I - the float that really did lead to mother load and you got some dug out to take home.
(See "Surface Float")

Major score II - "I bought a flat/box/carload/estate at a great price."

Maniac - any fossil collector except for me

Missing a piece... - a range from a fleck of shell missing to most of the shell missing, depending whom the description is intended

Moroccan Special - trilobite "slightly" augmented

Nacked - broken fossil

Napp - trim away unwanted matrix

Nody buster - a large hammer

Noid - crinoid

Packy - Paciphacops

Paleorapist - a collector with no regard for technique or fences

Pig - another word for gnarly

Pod - cephalopod

Pop - to split a nodule into 2 halves

Private stash - a collecting site you don't even tell your friends about.

Pseudo - Pseudogygites

Robust - large 3-dimensional fossil or description of potent post-collecting drink

Screamer - a really big bug (See "Bug")

Snail - gastropod

Spotted - your excavation site has been discovered by other collectors

Stash - hide bags of unsplit nodules for later attention in better weather

Sticky - hard to prep matrix

Surface float - the little chips that weather out on the surface and lead you to the mother load (sometimes) such as a petrified log (See Major Load)

Survey mode - walking an area rapidly to see what's there, while trying hard not to pick anything up or get too intent on one area, because if you do, you just know you'll miss out on better stuff in the next gully

Trilobutts - pygidia

Triloparts - disarticulated trilobite remains

Tutt - a box of or a single fossil that you do not bother to buy or pick up in the field.

Vacuuming - picking up every fossil there is at a site and leaving none behind

Yechinoids - echinoids that should have been collected 5 years ago

"&%ow" - I dropped my rock hammer on my foot.

"&*\$@" - I smashed my rock hammer onto my thumb

"&*\$%#@#" - I smashed the fossil instead of my thumb