

John Bergamo

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Geosciences

UMass Amherst

“My Story” A Report on My Alumni Award Funded Field Work

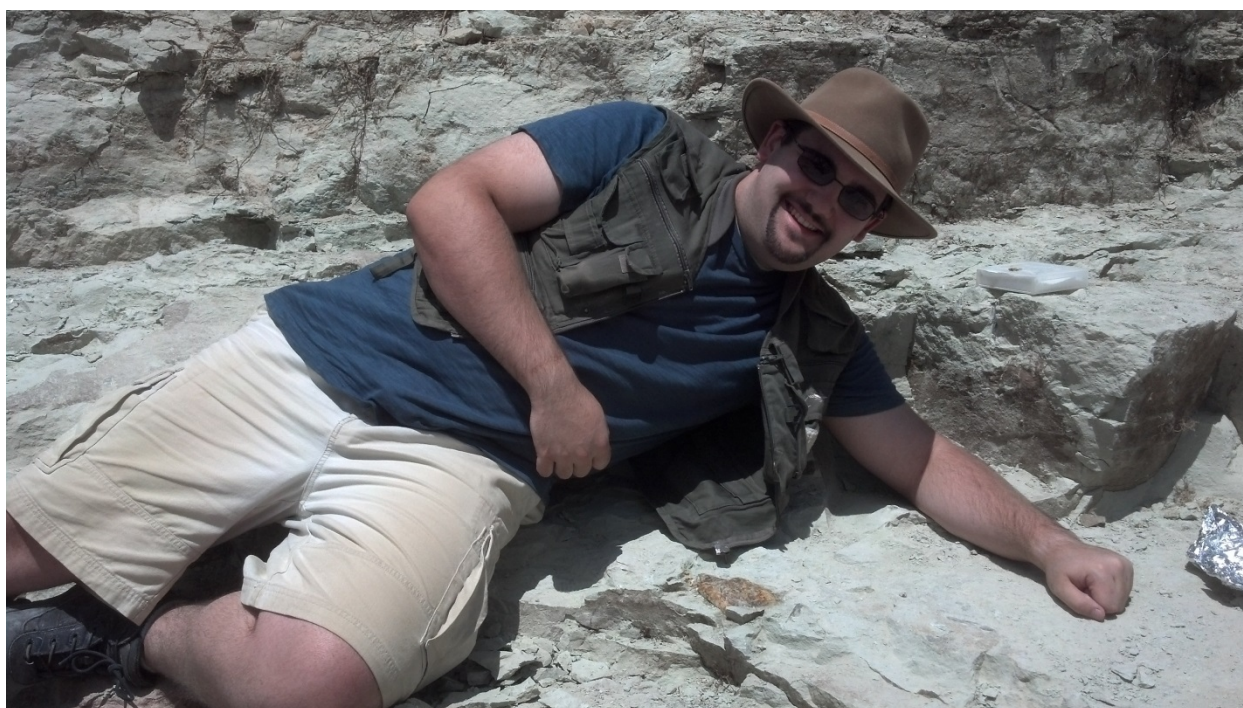
My Name is John Bergamo, and I am a senior majoring in Geology. This May I was awarded the H.T.U. Smith and the Andrew Wise memorial prize for a total of \$500 to help fund my field work in the Redonda Formation in Tucumcari, New Mexico excavating fossils from the Triassic during the “Dawn of the Age of Dinosaurs”.

Tucumcari is about a two hour drive east from Albuquerque heading towards the Texas border. Our field work was done in the Redonda Formation dating back 200 million years in the late Triassic period of the Mesozoic about 25 miles from Tucumcari. The Redonda Formation lies within the Chinle Group and is composed mostly of sedimentary rock such as sandstone, mudstone, and limestone. Working with Dr. Axel Hungerbuehler, each morning, our team would travel to the dig site at six in the morning. Our purpose was to find vertebrate fossils from the Late Triassic within the layers of sandstone and mudstone, excavate the finds from the rock, record all data of the find, and prepare the find for transport back to the lab. This site has yielded many finds such as skull fragments of the crocodile-like phytosaur Redondasaurus, armor plates from aetosaurs, remains of rauisuchians, and some limb bones of early dinosaurs.

Once it reached the early afternoon and the sun reached its peak in the day, our team loaded the finds into our truck and brought them back to the lab inside the Dinosaur Museum. In the lab, we took our yield from the day and began examining, cleaning, and assembling our fossils. During the length of my field work in New Mexico I found

several pieces of teeth, armor plates, bones fragments, and two jaw bones of the phytosaur Redondasaurus. One jaw bone was slightly fragmented, but the second jaw bone found was in one solid piece. I also found a mold of a large bivalve, fish fragments, and some other remains. As someone who has dreamt of becoming a paleontologist, this trip gave me a great look at the work one would need to do in the field. It was truly an amazing experience for me

(Me at the site with one of the phytosaur jaw bones found in the sandstone)



(Dr. Axel Hungerbuehler at the dig site)

