

Kartikeya Krishna - Blog 3

I thoroughly enjoyed my time at Buluk. For starters, finding fossils is extremely difficult. It really makes you appreciate the people who found the artifacts that are now housed in museums. Professor Nengo had told us that it would take us at least a few days to be able to identify the difference between bones and rock and it took me at least three days before I could stop asking our guides whether something was bone or rock. That itself made looking for fossils extremely difficult, not withholding the fact that Professor Nengo holds his fossil collectors to the highest standards meaning that nothing other than a perfectly preserved fossil gets collected. What that meant for the better majority of us was that 98% (and I'm being conservative) of the fossils we found were rejected.

I also think it's amazing just how well you're able to train your eye to look for tiny details. When it comes to searching for fossils you're literally looking at tiny, minute details that differentiate a well-carved rock from a bone in a field where the ratio of rocks to fossils must be at least ten thousand to one. So, I was amazed how well adapted your eye becomes at differentiating between small features. We also learned how to identify animals by their dentition or osteology. For me it was amazing to see how much you can learn about an animal by studying their bones and what really surprised me was how diagnostic teeth can be for telling us about an animal's lifestyle, age, and behavior. For us, primate teeth were the most desirable fossils and by the end of the 9 days we were able to find two, which we later identified as an incisor and a molar. The feeling of finding those fossils was a rush because for at least 6-8 hours we were out in the sun, sweating, grinding our noses to the pavement and looking for things that more often than not were nowhere to be found. I'm very excited to see what we're going to be able to do with these new fossils.