



## Arizona Rocks 71

Text and photos by Ray Grant

The Arizona state fossil is petrified wood, specifically the species *Araucarioxylon arizonicum*. It was a primitive conifer of a very large size. It is found in the Triassic Age Chinle formation so lived about 225 million years ago. The area was tropical with forests of trees growing in swamps, on riverbanks, and on lakeshores. It is believed there were large floods that knocked down the trees carried them downstream and buried them quickly so they did not decay. There are some fossils of leaves and more delicate vegetation, but these are rare and it is assumed most leaves and branches were destroyed in the flooding or not easily preserved in the mud.

Ground water dissolved silica rich ash that was deposited from volcanoes to the south and west and this solution was carried to the buried logs to replace the wood with quartz. Iron and manganese in the solutions colored the quartz red, yellow, and black. Collecting is forbidden in the National Park, but there are acres of private land in the area where the wood is collected for sale. At the Dobell Ranch you can go and collect your own wood for a fee, get information about their hours on the internet.



Petrified Forest NP



Polished petrified wood at the Tucson show (above and below).



Petrified log at the Petrified Forest NP