



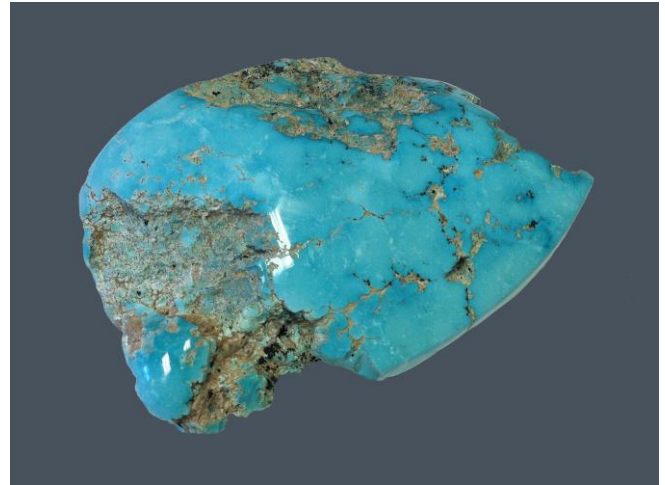
Arizona Rocks 72

Text and photos by Ray Grant

We have covered the state mineral (wulfenite), the state dinosaur (Sonorasaurus), and the state fossil (petrified wood). There is also an official state gemstone, turquoise. Turquoise is a copper aluminum phosphate and normally not a common mineral, but in Arizona over the years, many thousands of tons of turquoise have been mined. Most of the turquoise has come from the major copper mines and a few properties that were mined solely for turquoise.

It has been mined in Arizona since prehistoric times; for example extensive prehistoric workings for turquoise were found around the Mineral Park area in Mohave County. One of the major commercial producers was Turquoise Mountain in the Turquoise district near Gleeson, Cochise County. Several claims have been worked almost continuously since their discovery in the 1890s. At one time, Tiffany Jewelry of New York is reported to have leased one of the properties and had 40 miners working. Other turquoise producers include Bisbee, Cochise County, Sleeping Beauty Mine (Copper Cities) near Miami, Gila County, Pinto Valley Mine (Castle dome), Gila County, Mineral Park, Mohave County and Morenci Mine, Greenlee County.

Today, high quality, untreated turquoise is hard to find and expensive. Large amounts of poor quality turquoise is stabilized and color enhanced by commercial producers for sale to the lapidary market. Other materials used to make fake turquoise include glass, plastic, dyed howlite, and dyed magnesite. This material can be difficult to distinguish from real untreated turquoise.



Turquoise, Sleeping Beauty Mine, Miami, Gila Co., AZ - AZ Mining, Mineral and Natural Resource Education Museum collection.



Turquoise, Bisbee, AZ
Roger Weller photo



Turquoise, Morenci, AZ

