



SHELL-O-GRAM



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September-October, 1999

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September Meeting

The September 22nd meeting of the Jacksonville Shell Club will be held at the Southeast Branch Library at 7:00 PM.

The month's educational program will be presented by Harry Lee and is entitled "Constantine Samuel Rafinesque (1783-1840) odd oracle of the Ohio." The program will deal with the life and scientific contributions of this eccentric pioneer naturalist.

The Shell-Of-The-Month will be given by Gertrude Moller on freshwater mussel pearls and other nacreous products.

The nominating committee will also present its proposed slate of officers for the upcoming fiscal year, and elections will be held.

Plan now to attend this important meeting.

October Meeting

The October 27th meeting of the Jacksonville Shell Club will be held at the usual time and place.

Kurt Auffenberg of the Florida Museum of Natural History will present the month's educational program on the museum and Powell Hall (that museum's exhibit and information center).

The Shell-Of-The-Month will also be given by Kurt on *Georissa cavini* Auffenberg, 1998 – an operculate land snail collected and first described by Kurt.

Refreshments will be served. Plan now to attend and bring a friend.

The Jacksonville Shell Clubs 33rd Show

Under the leadership of chairman John Fatu, The Jacksonville Shell Club held its 33rd Shell Show at the Days Inn Resort in downtown Jacksonville Beach on Saturday, July 31st and Sunday, August 1st. In the interest of economizing, this year's event was open to the public on only two days vice the three days that had been customary in the recent past.

The event featured some 227 linear feet of scientific displays (23 exhibits) and 32 linear feet of arts and craft displays (26 entries). Filling out the remainder of the 3,000 square foot plus exhibit hall, were six dealers of shells/shell related items.

Ably handling the judging duties were Kurt Auffenberg and Roger Portell (Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville, FL) on the scientific side and Ruth Abramson (Jacksonville) and Bobbi Cordy (Merritt Island, FL) on the arts and crafts side.

Paid attendance at the two day event was approximately 575 guests – comparable to the 587 guests at the club's three-day show in St. Augustine in 1997 and the 553 at the same three-day venue in 1998.

While attendance was somewhat disappointing in light of the outstanding publicity arranged by Publicity Chairperson Claire Newsome, preliminary information indicates that the club made a profit of over \$500.

The Jacksonville Shell Club wishes to thank all of our out-of-town exhibitors, dealers and guests for your support. We hope to see you all back next year at the same location! (See page three for a complete listing of shell show winners.)



At the door, Harry and Claire discuss show attendance.



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The **Shell-O-Gram** is issued bimonthly and mailed to all regular members. Annual membership dues are \$12.50 individual and \$15.00 family. Lifetime membership is available.

Send dues to: Teresa St. John, Treasurer
2605 Emily Court
Jacksonville, FL 32216-5101

The club meets the fourth Wednesday of each month, 7:00 PM at the Southeast Branch Library, 10599 Deerwood Park Boulevard, Jacksonville Florida. Please address any correspondence to the club's address shown above.

Closing date for article submission is two weeks prior to the first of each month of publication. Articles may be republished provided full credit is given the author and this newsletter and one copy of the complete publication in which the article appears is mailed to Editor at the above address.

Membership Dues Are Now Due

Club membership dues for the year 2000 were due for a vast majority of club members on the 1st of September. You can determine when your membership expires (or when it expired) by checking the numerical entry which appears before your name on the newsletter mailing label. An entry of "8/99" would indicate that your membership will expire on the last day of August, 1999.

Don't delay - mail your check to the Club Treasurer at the address provided above.

Welcome New/Rejoined Members

New Members

Lloyd & Jackie Hendry
7262 Coligny Rd.
Jacksonville, FL 32217
Phone: 731-2067

Mark Johnson
1053 Planters Curve
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464

Rejoined Member

Kathy Hughes
P.O. Box 1304
Bristol, FL 32321

Change To Membership List

New Address

Nancy Gilfillan
30254 Winchester Dr.
Seneca, SC 29678-1357

Upcoming Event

January 21-23, 2000 – "Space Coast Shell Festival" sponsored by the Astronaut Trail Shell Club at the Melbourne Auditorium in downtown Melbourne, Florida. Contact Bobbi Cordy at 385 Needle Blvd., Merritt Island, FL 32953 – Phone (407) 452-57636 – Email cordy@yourlink.net for additional information and entry forms.

President's Message

Thanks to all who made the Jacksonville Shell Show a success. It could not have been done without the support of our loyal members, the out-of-town exhibitors, judges, friends and guests of the club. Special thanks to the Show Chairman John Fatu, for all your work and dedication. Members will be happy to hear that we have already scheduled next years show in the same location. So it is not too early to start the publicity and plans.

I have really enjoyed being your President for the last two years. I have time now to travel, dive, and photograph and that is what I plan to do this coming year. Hopefully I will be able to bring some interesting slide programs home for our meetings.

I often think of the benefits to belonging to a fine organization such as ours, friends that span thirty years, fellowship, field trips, social activities and scientific enrichment. I am lucky indeed.

See you at the meetings!

Publication Notice

The Sexual Behavior of Mollusks (Land – Freshwater – Marine) by Beatrice E. Winner and available from E. B. M., P.O. Box 14923, North Palm Beach, FL 33408-5328. The price is \$19.00 plus \$3.00 for postage and handling. Checks should be made payable to B. Winner.

According to the author, "This book contains facts, and information on the odd sexual behavior of many mollusks. These creatures have an interesting and fascinating sex life, and unusual courtship behavior. The species are illustrated as well as their sexual organs when it was available. The most unusual encounter regarding their sex life is described and written in a simplistic manner. Explanations are easily understood. The Latin names and common names are mentioned for convenience of seeking a particular mollusk. The book cover is in color and laminated. A few sketches have been added for humor. The book is informative and mentions some factual oddities."

August Meeting

On Wednesday, August 25, 1999, Gertrude Moller took 35 people on a nearly-half-century shellers' tour-de-force from her first days of reefcombing through the halcyon decades of the American shell scene. Gertrude recalled the beginnings of her shelling enterprise on the island of Eleuthera, Bahamas along with her toddler children, the founding of the Jacksonville Shell Club in 1959, our many shell shows, field trips, parties, members and friends, American Malacological Union and Conchologists of America meetings, museum visits, and other wonderful personalities and experiences. It was a sentimental yet enriching stroll on the beaches of history, which, natch, as club historian for more than a score of years, was ably led by Gertie.

What a pleasure to see slides of Gertie's famous exhibits on the "Angels of the mudflats," "Greece" (with faux-Cyrillic characters in the title), the freshwater mussels of Georgia, self-made shell mirrors, and others.

I lost count of the number of shellpeople Gertie captured on celluloid, but they ranged through four or five generations and included veterans like Cecilia and Tucker Abbott, Minnie Lee and Don Campbell, Bill Clench, Gerald Combs, Liz Eubanks, Clyde Hebert, Bonnie Holiman, Anne Joffee, Grace Kapp, Gene Keferl, Sammy Lawson, Bill Lyons (with Ringo Starr coif), Liz Sasser, David Stansbery, and Marion Webb. What a pleasure for the largest JSC attendance in years - and what a tribute to Gertie, who walked, swam, waded, dug, and groped alongside all these fine people in the pursuit of shells.

1999 Jacksonville Shell Show Winners

Scientific Categories

A-1-2 Worldwide

1st - Gene Everson (Louisville, KY)

A-1-3 One Area

1st - Peggy Williams (Tallevast, FL)

A-1-4 Florida & Caribbean (Any Source)

1st - Teresa St. John (Jacksonville, FL)

A-1-5 Self-Collected S.E. U.S./Caribbean

1st - Linda Jacaruso (Palm City, FL)

A-1-6 Self-collected Worldwide

1st - Jim Cordy (Merritt Island, FL)

A-1-8 One Major Family

1st - Teresa St. John

A-1-10 One Genus

1st - Bill Frank (Jacksonville, FL)

2nd - Peggy Williams

A-1-11 One Single Specimen

1st - Jim Cordy

2nd - Karen Vander Ven (Pittsburgh, PA)

3rd - Nancy Gerry-Chadwick (Ponte Vedra Beach, FL)

A-1-12 Educational

1st - Peggy Williams

2nd - Gertrude Moller (Jacksonville, FL)

A-1-13 Rare

1st - Harry Lee (Jacksonville, FL)

2nd - Karen Vander Ven

3rd - Jim Cordy

A-1-14 Oddities

1st - Harry Lee

2nd - Karen Vander Ven

A-1-17 Beginner

1st - Carol Rishel (Atlantic Beach, FL)

A-1-18 Sea Life

1st - Phyllis Gray (Orlando, FL)

2nd - Teresa St. John

Judges Special Awards

1. Harry Lee (Southpaw Seashells)

2. Gene Everson (David & Goliath)

R. Tucker Abbott Award

Peggy Williams (Chitons)

DuPont Trophy

Jim Cordy (Philippines – Paradise For Shell Collectors)

Conchologists of America Trophy

Teresa St. John (Beautiful Cowries)

Shell Of The Show

Harry Lee (*Cymbiola chrysostoma*)

Florida-Caribbean Shell Of The Show

Harry Lee (*Pholadomya candida*)

Self-Collected Shell Of The Show

Jim Cordy (*Turbinella angulata*)

Shell Arts And Crafts Categories

B-1-1 Pictures

- 1st - Marion Richeson (Jacksonville, FL)
2nd - Gertrude Moller
2nd - Shew-Fan Bielefeld (Jacksonville, FL)

B-1-2 Flower Arrangements

- 2nd - Betsy Lyerly (Jacksonville, FL)
3rd - Selma Thigpen (Jacksonville, FL)

B-1-3 Christmas Related Items

- 1st - Judy Blocker (Atlantic Beach, FL)
2nd - Gertrude Moller
3rd - Selma Thigpen

B-1-4 Mirrors

- 1st - Selma Thigpen
1st - Judy Blocker
2nd - Selma Thigpen
2nd - Betsy Lyerly
2nd - Gertrude Moller

B-1-6 Paintings And Drawings Of Shells

- 1st Joyce Cabiou

B-1-10 Wreaths/Wall Hangings

- 1st - Judy Blocker
2nd - Judy Blocker
3rd - Judy Blocker

B-1-11 Miscellaneous

- 1st - Shew-Fan Bielefeld
2nd - Judy Blocker
3rd - Betsy Lyerly
3rd - Carol Rishel

B-2-1 Miscellaneous (not the work of the owner)

- 1st - Betsy Lyerly

Judges Special Awards

1. Judy Blocker
2. Gertrude Moller

Helen Murchison Award - Judy Blocker

Most Creative Plaque - Selma Thigpen

**From "Your Mantle Is Up!" to Treasures on my
Mantle
An Eleuthera shelling Adventure***
by Karen VanderVen**

"Your mantle is up" commented Bobbi Cordy as I hummed and sang happily to myself while packing my shells on the last day of the May 9-14, 1999 shelling trip to Eleuthera. Bobbi continued to explain that she and Jim, recognizing that a cowry must be happy when surrounded by its mantle, often used that term at home to acknowledge human high spirits. And, indeed my "mantle was up". Why? Read on.

Day 1: "Yes, You Can Have Your Bananas!"

The rest of our party, Betty Lawson, Carol and Art Hough, Jan and Jack Alexander, BJ and Larry Shoupe' and Ed and Viola Phelps, assembled at the Jet Port in Fort Lauderdale and were soon headed for Eleuthera in two tiny twin engine planes. The first thrill of the trip was simply looking down into the sea, gazing at the curves and gradations of color visible as the waters go from deep to shallow, as sand flats and plateaus surface and then are covered. I imagined an artist with a palette of cobalt blue, navy blue, tan, yellow, mustard and light green putting dabs of paint down on a canvas and swirling the brush through to get the unique, dynamic effect that enthralled me until we landed at Rock Sound.

Our entry into Eleuthera, however, got off to an inauspicious start when an overly-conscientious customs official had us untape our ice chests with food supplies and confiscated bananas and tomatoes. I returned to him a bunch of bananas he had missed and testified to their reliable sources, and pleaded that we be able to keep them. "Yes, you can have your bananas" he finally conceded. Although we knew he was going to have those nice homegrown tomatoes for lunch. Soon we were on our way to Ethel's cottages in Tarpum Bay in the three rented cars that were waiting for us and the rest of the trip was absolute joy.

Within minutes after pulling into the cottages, we had slapped our frozen foods into the refrigerators, tossed our clothes into the drawers, donned our snorkeling gear and were floating in Tarpum Bay, right across the street from the cottages. Shelling was productive: *Leucozonia nassa*, *Marginella apicina*, *Cittarium pica*, *Conus flavescens*, *Murex pomum*, and *Oliva reticularis* were among the finds.

As we entered the schedule for the next four days, Jim suggested that Thursday, our last full day, would be best for a special excursion to a hard access spot that might harbour *Conus abbotti*, a shell I was especially hoping to find.

Day 2: "Did I Hear, 'We're Ready'"?

Restless until the group could be assembled for the next day's trip with their lunches and gear, a plaintive voice said, "Did I hear, 'We're Ready'"? Soon however, our caravan had completed a scenic ride through a garbage dump that brought us out on a rocky and sandy beach with offshore reefs and mussel beds. Soon we were facedown to business - so focused on our shelling that we barely noticed the inky black, billowy clouds that were closing in across the sky. Suddenly the placid water was blown into angry waves and the rain pelted down. Deciding it was best to just go with the flow, I just kept my face in the water, and tossing around, let the wind and wave action do my shelling for me. The turtle grass blew one way in the motion of the water and there

sat a lovely lace murex, *Chicoreus florifer dilectus*. Then the grass waved the other way and up popped a lovely, spiny *Astraea phoebia*. Later I found myself in a veritable colony of carrier shells, *Xenophora conchyliophora*, each sporting a little green garden on its back. Wondering whether the sudden wind squall had blown them in, and collecting enough for any other sheller on the trip who might want one, I left the rest. Bountiful here were also Milk Conchs, *Strombus costatus*, cockles, *Laevicardium laevigatum*, in a rainbow of colors; and other bivalves such as *Codakia orbicularis* and *Lucina pensylvanica*.

A quick stop at the inland brackish lake that is the home of the famous little black murex *Chicoreus dunni* generously yielded for all of us not only murex, but also tiny black *Fasciolaria tulipa*, dark brown bubble shells and shiny fragile orange *Marginella pellucida*.

Day 3: Long Reign the Queen

The next day took us to beaches and coves out on Cape Eleuthera, at the southern part of the island. An array of beautiful coves offered a variety of habitats for all tastes. One area was rich with all three varieties of helmet, *Cassis flammea*, *Cassis madagascarensis* and *Cassis tuberosa*. The stunning live Queen Helmet (*madagascarensis*) was an uncommon special find and there was just the one. Jim found another prize, a rare Carinate False Cerith, *Fastigiella carinata*. The day's take also included, shiny, fresh dark brown spotted cowries, *Cypraea zebra*, and lovely gold mouth tritons, *Cymatium nicobaricum*. Elsewhere in this diverse area were colorful bivalves, *Asaphis deflorata* in the complete yellow-red-purple color spectrum and *Tellina radiata*. I was thrilled with a little colony of tiny, fresh dead Sunray Tellins that I could collect by fanning the sand. Juvenile *Strombus gigas* were abundant (we were literally stepping all over them). For the die-hard rock turners up came *Mitra barbadensis*, *Typhis pinnatus*, *Aspella paupercula*, *Pecten antillarum*, and *Pecten ornata*. Another beach stop on the way home yielded a large brown and white *Fenimorea fucata*.

Day 4: Potholes Worse Than Pittsburgh's – Shells the Best of All

Lurching over potholes more challenging than those left in roads during a typical Pennsylvania snowy winter, through cactus and thick foliage as well, our skillfully steered cars brought us to the very southernmost point of the island at the lighthouse. While shells were not prolific at this postcard-perfect beach area, we still emerged with beautiful large tellins, and a long, shiny gray *Terebra cinerea*. Another drive and we spilled out at Millar's Beach, which several on the trip felt offered the most outstanding shelling of all. And indeed there were more mitres than in the College of Cardinals: *Mitra puella*, *Mitra nodulosa*, *Pusia albocincta*, the

uncommon *Mitra semiferruginea* and *Mitra barbadensis*; a variety of cones, such as *Conus jaspideus*, *Conus flavescens* and *Conus regius*, and the smaller cowries such as *Cypraea spurca acicularis* and *Cypraea cinerea*. Other species included *Cyphoma gibbosum*, *Fenimorea haidorema*, *Bailya parva*, *Coralliophila caribbea*, *Phalium granulatum*, *Marginella guttata* and another *Fastigiella carinata* (found by Bobbi).

Day 5: Abbott-I?

Thursday - our scheduled trek to "Abbott Country," finally came along. All systems seemed "go," with good weather and an offshore breeze. Jim and I trudged a long distance up a sandy beach and around a rocky spit to another beach facing the ocean and along it - until at last Jim said "We can go in here." In we plunged, heading outwards and then parallel to shore, hopefully being near the special spot where, lurking under rocks, the elusive cones might be found.

You know the feeling when you first plunge in the water on a shelling trip and the bottom rushes into your sight of elation and optimism when you sense that the underwater scene is the kind that might be a good shell habitat. Even if you are not finding anything, this feeling lasts for a while before gradually descending into despair. You have turned over and back, rock after rock, showing Herculean strength and you didn't think you had. It seems you have fanned enough sand to cover the earth around and swallowed most of the water in the ocean. And still - nothing. You now worry that you are simply retracing the same territory. You are shivering and about ready to paddle in and sadly pack it up, when suddenly (and literally) paydirt!

This is what happened to me. It must have been two hours and I lackadaisically turned over a small, nondescript rock I had almost passed completely by. Under it - two *Conus abbotti*. Staying in the same area, I found three that almost got away. I turned over a big rock and at the base were two nebulous shapes that I ignored. After I turned the rock back and was swimming off, an inner voice said: "Better take another look at that base." I returned, and the "shapes" were not only two more *C. abbotti* but also another I had not seen at all the first time.

With this luck and feeling a peaceful closure as if I had just entered shell heaven, I decided to drift in. Imagine my delight again when I could tell by telltale outlines in the sand bellow that I had hit "telling territory." Like a bird diving for a tidbit, each time I saw the shapes, I jackknifed with new energy towards the bottom about 10 feet below me and ended up with about 15 beautiful fresh-dead shiny, colorful pairs. Jim similarly was successful in his *C. abbotti* finds. Before we called it a day, as further dividends, there were also

an unusual *Risomurex roseus*, *Cypraecassis testiculus*, *Cymatium nicobaricum*, *Conus verrucosus*, *Leucozonia ocellata*, *Mitra puella*, and *Engina turbinella*.

Shellers at other beaches also had a successful day of finding tiny treasures in the shore drift. Particular highlights included two nice sized *Epitonium lamellosum*; and a variety of limpets, including Betty Lawson's beautiful pink *Fissurella fascicularis*.

Day 6 - After Shell Life

Each night, we would all have a bit of "shell and tell," admiring and clucking over each others' finds. Dinner and games followed. Some of the men played chess, while the women settled for the word recognition game "Boggle". In our cottage, fueled by ice cream and cake, we played energetically - Bobbi's vocabulary boggles my mind! There was also a fine purchase of deep pink conch pearls transacted with island natives.

In shelling, it seems as if each person has different wants and interests, and that each person actually finds what he or she is looking for. Some wanted large shells and some wanted small. Sizes of shells gathered by all ranged from a huge West Indian Chank, *Turbinella angulata*, to an utterly miniscule *Triphora nigrocincta*. For non-shelling spouses, there was excellent fishing.

While I wouldn't presume to select a "shell of the trip" - there are so many to choose from. I can mention those finds among all shellers that to me were the most exciting: The Carinate False Ceriths, the Queen Helmet, the two wentletraps, one of the Milk Conchs with a lavender aperture and of course, the *Conus abbotti*. I was especially thrilled when Jim told me one of my specimens, orangey red instead of olive brown, was an unusual color.

When all is summed up, we collectively found over 70 different species! During the trip, walking by a sandy plant bed directly underneath the cottage porch railing, I noticed two spines sticking up. Digging, I soon uncovered a spiny *Astraea phoebia*. Some unsuspecting sheller displaying the shell on the rail at an earlier time must have knocked it off. While waiting for our plane to come, we did a last round search for land snails around the airport. You just never can tell where you're going to find something, or what you are going to find, in shell-filled Eleuthera. Go there and see for yourself!

Back home, the *Astraea phoebia* cleaned up beautifully - it's three inches in diameter and subtle burnt gold color. And, even better, as I place up on my mantle the display boxes containing all my recently acquired treasures, I find once again, that "my mantle is up!"

*Adapted from an article published in The Capsule, newsletter of the Astronaut Trail Shell Club, Volume 31, No. 6, July/August 1999.

**Karen, of Pittsburgh, PA, is a corresponding member of the Jacksonville Shell Club.

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