



# SHELL-O-GRAM

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## **March Meeting**

The March 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Jacksonville Shell Club will be held at the Southeast Branch Public Library at 7:00 PM.

Charlotte Lloyd will present the month's educational slide program entitled "Diving the Grenadine Islands" chronicling her recent dive trip to Union Island.

The Shell-Of-The-Month will be given by Harry Lee on *Polydontes perplexa* (Férussac, 1821), a terrestrial pulmonate thought to be extinct (Abbott, 1989) and apparently limited to Grenada and the Grenadines.

Don't miss one of Charlotte's famous slide presentations. Plan now to attend and bring a guest!

## **April Meeting**

The April 26<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Jacksonville Shell Club will be held at the Southeast Branch Public Library at 7:00 PM.

Harry Lee will present the month's educational program on the Figsnails [*Ficus*], a small but well-known genus of tonnoidean gastropods occurring in warmer waters circumglobally except for the eastern Atlantic.

The Shell-Of-The-Month will be given by Mary Reynolds on *Littoraria irrorata* (Say, 1822) [Marsh Periwinkle].

See you there!

## **Shelling The Cape Romano Area**

By Phil Poland

The southwest coast of Florida has always been the most popular part of the state for shelling. From Anclote Key near Tarpon Springs, southward to Cape Romano near Marco, wide areas of sandy shoreline are exposed during low tides, particularly in the winter. *Busycon* and *Pleuroploca*, two of nature's larger snails, dot the sandbars and bay margins. *Strombus*, *Dinocardium*, *Neverita*, *Oliva* and *Fasciolaria* can be found popping out of exposed sand. Smaller forms leave their distinctive trails in the sand or cling to any available hard substrate.

For me, nowhere beats the Cape Romano area. I first started visiting the islands and flats south of Marco by canoe over twenty years ago. I was struck by the relatively colorful and uneroded specimens I found. The *Busycon sinistrum* Hollister, 1958 [Lightning Whelk] were spiner than any I'd seen to the north, and they exhibited a wide range of pastel shades. *Conus anabathrum* Crosse, 1865 [Florida Cone] and *Naticarius canrena* (Linnaeus, 1758) [Colorful Moonshell], uncommon farther north, were found in good numbers inside the barrier islands. Everything I'd found in the Tampa Bay area was here, and more. Abundance, diversity, size and overall quality were the best I'd seen.

I'll divide the shelling in the vicinity of Cape Romano into three types, and give examples of each. These categories may be applied to any part of southwest Florida.

### **The Outside Flats**

These flats, when tides are very low, appear as exposed areas of sand, shell and grass. They are transition zones between inside, or bay environments, and the open Gulf. Equivalents to the north would include the mouths of passes where a similarly rich mix of Gulf and bay fauna is found. (Continued on page 3.)



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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 (domestic), and \$20.00 (foreign). Lifetime membership is available.

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

The club meets each month, excluding December, at the Southeast Branch Public 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.

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### Welcome New Member

Barbara Moon  
P.O. Box 35115  
Jacksonville, FL 32235  
Phone: 645-6207

### Membership List Changes

Nancy Garry-Chadwick  
2053 Sea Hawk Circle  
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082-1680  
Phone: 280-0465  
E-mail: [N.garry-chadwick@worldnet.att.net](mailto:N.garry-chadwick@worldnet.att.net)

Christine Cavan & Family  
4460 Hodges Blvd. # 1503  
Jacksonville, FL 32224

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## Jacksonville Shell Club Web Pages

Effective February 20<sup>th</sup>, the Jacksonville Shell Club has a new home on the Internet at [www.jaxshells.org](http://www.jaxshells.org) – certainly an easier URL to remember than our previous address. This “high-level domain name” is the property of the club as long as it pays the yearly fee to Network Solutions (the registrar - currently \$35) and can be transferred to another host at any time. Currently, our domain is hosted by Dell Computers on one of their servers, and the first years registration fee was waived by Dell for choosing them as our host.

In the past, our pages were spread over three of your webmasters personal dial-up accounts, which was not only inconvenient, but also expensive. Our new service agreement with Dell not only gives us four times the server space of the previously cobbled-together accounts, but also only slightly increases (less than a dollar) the fee that the club must pay each month.

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## Kiwanis Science And Engineering Fair

On February 27<sup>th</sup>, George Hapsis and Nellie Hawley judged the 46th Annual Kiwanis Northeast Florida Regional Science and Engineering Fair on behalf of the Jacksonville Shell Club. The fair is open to all students in grades six through twelve and was again held at the Jacksonville Fairgrounds. The club offered a \$75.00 cash stipend to the best science project dealing with marine science and a \$50.00 award to the runner-up.

The First Place Award was presented to Tyler A. Hott, a sixth-grade student at Darnell Cookman Middle School, for his exhibit "Basking Turtles - Basking Time Effects Growth". This was a hands-on study dealing with freshwater turtles in a controlled environment with documentation as to the growth and condition resulting from light or lack of it.

The runner-up award was presented to Hillary A. Futch, a fifth-grade student at Venetia Elementary School, for her exhibit "A Study of the Aquadynamic Efficiency of Various Marine Vertebrates." This was a study that compared models of the body structure of a dolphin to a type of whale in a wind tunnel to determine the motility of each animal while moving through its natural environment. Although only a fifth-grade student, Miss Futch received a special invitation to compete in the fair due to her outstanding exhibits over the past three years at her school.

**Editor's Note:** This article, accompanied by two color photographs, is available on the Internet at [www.jaxshells.org/kwfair.htm](http://www.jaxshells.org/kwfair.htm).

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## Shelling The Cape Romano Area - Continued

Just east of Cape Romano Island, two areas, "Pompano Flat" [2552N 8138W], also known as "Pompano Hump," and flats at the northeast side of "The Hump" [2551N 8140W], with acres of very productive shelling at winter lows, are always worth the visit.

The past two winters, *Chicoreus pomum* (Gmelin, 1791) [Apple Murex] and *C. dilectus* (A. Adams, 1855) [Lace Murex] were abundant at both spots. Very large *Calliostoma tampaense* (Conrad, 1846) [Tampa Bay Topsnail] were found at Pompano. *Busycon sinistrum*, included several albinos and a beautiful abnormally dextral specimen were also found at Pompano. Several albino *Pleuroploca* were collected at these spots as well.

An interesting discovery for me was that *Calotrophon ostrearum* (Conrad, 1846) [Muave-mouth Drill] are very commonly found with the *Busycon* egg cases that are ubiquitous here.

*Hespererato maugeriae* (J. E. Gray, 1832) [Green Erato] and several columbellid forms were among the species netted from the surrounding grass beds.

## The Gulf Beaches

Sandy beaches and bars on the Gulf are also worth visiting. These barrier islands include Keewaydin Island, just northwest of Marco, Tigertail Beach at Marco, and the islands to the southeast of Marco, Kice and Cape Romano Islands. The most productive areas are near the ends of the islands where the broadest bars develop near the passes.

*Strombus alatus* Gmelin, 1791 [Florida Fighting Conch] and *Busycon* are common. Smaller forms include *Epitonium* and *Olivella* species. Several live *Ficus papyratia* Say, 1822 [Atlantic Figsnail] were found, with their siphonal canals poking from the sand like the similar *Busycotypus spiratus* (Lamarck, 1816) [Pear Whelk]. Red forms of *Fasciolaria tulipa* (Linnaeus, 1758) [True Tulip] were found popping out of the sand at Tigertail this last winter. Remember, a few days of westerly winds (which often precede the lowest of wind-driven tides) can bring even more exotic species ashore, dead and alive.

Several years ago, I found all the barrier islands littered with colorful *Argopecten gibbus* (Linnaeus, 1758) [Atlantic Calico Scallop], still snapping their valves (and fingers of collectors). Reasonably fresh *Scaphella junonia* (Lamarck, 1804) [Junonia] have also been washed ashore here. My favorite recent find was live *Arcinella cornuta* Conrad, 1866 [Florida Spiny

Jewelbox], with very elegant and *Spondylus*-like spines, blown ashore at Cape Romano.

## Inside Waters

Protected by the barrier islands, Marco area bays are well known to collectors as the place for *Naticarius canrena* and *Conus anabathrum*, along with the usual bay habitat sand-dwellers.

*Pleuroploca gigantea* (Kiener, 1840) [Horse Conch], *Busycon sinistrum* and *Busycotypus spiratus*, *Fasciolaria lilium hunteria* (G. Perry, 1811) [Banded Tulip] and *F. tulipa*, *Neverita fossata* (Gould, 1847) [Gould's Moon Snail], *Dinocardium robustum* (Lightfoot, 1786) [Atlantic Giant Cockle], *Trachycardium egmontianum* (Shuttleworth, 1856) [Florida Pricklycockle] and *T. muricatum* (Linnaeus, 1758) [Yellow Pricklycockle] are among the common larger shells here. A variety of lucinids, terebrids, tellinids, muricids *et al.* will be found here too. Netting sand and grasses, and closely examining dead shells encountered will substantially increase the number of species found.

Typically productive locations include the bars and island margins on the Marco River and inside Caxambas Pass. The terrain is often muddy and soft, so wear well-tied or zippered shoes.

On the inside edge of Kice Island, I found a peat bed near low-water. I was able to extract the pholads *Barnea truncata* (Say, 1822) [Atlantic Mud-piddock] and *Cyrtopleura costata* (Linnaeus, 1758) [Anglewing], and the look-alike *Petricola pholadiformis* (Lamarck, 1818) [False Anglewing]. Several *Martesia* species, also pholads, were found in waterlogged wood nearby.

## Getting There

While a visit to Tigertail Beach does not require a boat, it is not legal to collect live shells there or anywhere on Marco. Rangers will likely check your bucket. Tip: don't bring one. Most other areas are reached only by boat. Pontoon boats or airboats may be chartered at Marco or nearby Goodland. Most captains now frown on live shelling, so be upfront with them about your intentions.

## Be Good

The collectors who return from the trips with buckets full of whelks and tulips contribute mightily to the increasingly hostile environment we collectors find ourselves. Please – be selective and discreet. Do it for the environment and for the rest of us who want to pursue a legal and respected hobby.

**Editor's Note:** The above article, accompanied by color photographs and a map, is available on the Internet at [www.jaxshells.org/romano.htm](http://www.jaxshells.org/romano.htm).

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### Shells In The Classroom

Through the generosity of Hazel and Allan Walker, Honorary Life Members of the Jacksonville Shell Club, with the assistance of Angie Anderson and club member Nellie Hawley, a permanent collection of shells and sea life was recently presented to the Crystal Springs Elementary School. The collection consists of Florida univalves, bivalves, and shells with egg casings (including embryonic shells). The lower shelves of the exhibit are filled with corals, sponges, echinoderms, and other sea life that students might find on the beach.

Hazel Walker, commenting on the presentation, emphasized that "Education is always a basic function of the Jacksonville Shell Club, and members have presented collections and programs in the local schools and many throughout the state. The enchantment and wonders of sea life can build a bridge of early childhood learning and enrich the child's entire life."

Acknowledging the presentation, Crystal Springs School Principal Rita Franklin wrote:

"Dear Mr. and Mrs. Walker,

Thank you for the beautiful permanent shell collection that is now a part of our media center and an enhancement to the learning environment. Our students are extremely excited about the collection and view it with much interest. Our second grade classrooms are already planning an Oceanography unit for March and have requested that part of the unit be taught in the media center so that students can have access to this wonderful collection. An added feature of the collection is the variety of hands-on shells available for our students. They will not only be able to view the miracle of sea life but will actually be able to use their sense of touch to examine and thus better relate to what they are seeing. What an experience for them!

Our teachers, staff, parents, and visitors have only glowing remarks for the work that went into putting a collection of this magnitude together. We definitely appreciate the work of Mrs. Nellie Hawley and Mrs. Linda "Angie" Anderson who made sure that the shells and other sea life were labeled and in the right place. We are delighted to have it in our school and thank you for your hard work.

Again, thanks for making our media center a showplace in the county for sea life."

**Editor's Note:** This article, accompanied by three color photographs, is available on the Internet at [www.jaxshells.org/event.htm](http://www.jaxshells.org/event.htm).

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