

Bahamian Seashells

A Thousand Species from
Abaco, Bahamas



Colin Redfern

Redfern, C. 2001. Bahamian seashells a thousand species from Abaco, Bahamas. (i)-ix +1-280 + 124 plates (18 in color). Bahamianseashells.com, Inc., Boca Raton, Florida. 8.5 by 11 in.; paperback.

The presentation of a regional molluscan fauna is constrained by its own special set of problems, including inclusivity, currency of nomenclature and systematics of the widest diversity of taxa, and rigor of data drawn from resources beyond the author's empiric study, such as the literature and museum records. These daunting caveats notwithstanding, This author has nearly single-handedly chronicled a 37-year study of a marine molluscan faunule inhabiting a relatively small chain of islands, mostly on its shallow flanks, at the northern rampart of Bahamas Bank. By applying his own photographic and computer skills, Colin Redfern has created an illustrated taxonomy that will serve workers in virtually every branch of marine malacology as well as conservation, ecology, evolution, zoogeography – not to mention serious hobbyists, who, like the author, are impelled toward a better appreciation of the natural world and its order.

The work begins with a short introduction, which indicates the geographic and ecological scope of the report, the magnitude of the material studied (108,000 well-chosen specimens, essentially all personally collected over 30 years with 16 years in residence), collection techniques, which were diverse but emphasized drift and sediment material, his computer and photographic techniques, acknowledgements, etc. He cites the nearly exclusive use of personally-collected Abaco specimens in his discussions and illustrations – the only important exception being primary type material not in his possession.

There follows a 246 page systematic treatment of 100 mollusks (777 gastropods, 10 scaphopods, 21 polyplacophorans, 211 bivalves, and 2 cephalopods). Except for the latter group, this is clearly an exhaustive treatment for such a small geographical area, and the gastropod element is stunningly diverse. Every taxon is presented with full scientific (only to generic or, rarely, familial level in 147 cases, *comme il faut*) along with the uniform citation of illustration(s). There follows a generally substantial paragraph which includes a detailed description, maximum size, frequently more specific reference(s) to illustration(s) for special morphological features, and random comments on synonymy, systematics, zoogeography, etc. at the conclusion. A shorter paragraph entitled "occurrence in Abaco" gives a sense of frequency, bathymetric range, habitat, habits, and presence in beach drift.

A four-page glossary and an 11 page bibliography conclude the text section.

There follow 106 black and white and 18 color plates are comprised of over 2700 photographs and 75 SEM's – the latter executed by Emilio Rolán. The selection and execution are very good to excellent – rivaled only by the finest works of this sort. Particularly striking (and *de rigueur*) are the color images of all the several dozen shell-less gastropods treated in the work.

The 18 page, three-column index features species - genus, common name, and all supraspecific taxa. Genus - species and reversed common names listings are not included.

The strength of this study lies in three principal areas: the underpinning of productive and well-documented field work, scholarly curation and taxonomic research, which

accurately exploits virtually all modern (and some essentially overlooked classical) works, and the organization and quality of the illustrations. The synthesis of these strengths are typified in the treatment of the taxonomically nettlesome groups (*e. g.* Vitrinellidae, Cerithiopsidae, Triphoridae, Eulimidae, Marginellidae, Turridae, and Galeommatidae), which are depicted as thoroughly and clearly as in any modern work – and much clearer than the vast majority.

The editorial execution is as close to perfect as any work in existence. After several hours of review, only a few trivial problems were encountered. There are *Odostomia* species C and E, but no D is treated. Species 602 *Stylopsis* sp. and species 628 *Careliopsis octona* appear to be congeneric and better assigned to *Bacteridium* Thiele, 1929. Nomenclatorial minutiae include (correction): *Eulithidium thalassicolum* (*thalassicola*), *Petalococonchus floridana* (*floridanus*), *Murexiella mcgintyi* (*mcgintyi*), *Antalis ceratum* (*cerata*), *Ctenoides scabra* (*scaber*). The bibliography is nearly exhaustive, but I was stymied on least three references critical to “forgotten” taxa appearing for the first time in the modern literature: Bavay, 1922, Mørch, 1876, and Nowell-Usticke, 1969. These were easily found in Mikkelsen, P. M., R. Bieler, and R. E. Petit, 1993, which title was also missing.

This work is the finest regional faunal treatment to enter the annals of western Atlantic malacology in over a decade. It will prove essential to any serious student in this and related disciplines for many times that interval of time. The cost is \$114.00 plus postage and handling. It is available only from <bahamiananseashell.com> and the Bailey-Mathews Shell Museum.

LITERATURE CITED

Bavay, A., 1922. Sables littoraux de la Mer des Antilles provenant des abords de Colon et de Cuba. *Bulletin du Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle*, Paris, 28(6):423-428.

Mikkelsen, P. M., R. Bieler, and R. E. Petit, 1993, A bibliography of Caribbean malacology 1826-1993. *Amer. Malac. Bull.* 10(2): 267-290.

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Nowell-Usticke, G. W., 1969. *A supplementary listing of new shells (illustrated). To be added to the check list of the marine shells of St. Croix.* Published privately, 32 pp., 6 pls.

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