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X THE CONCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA X
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CIRCULAR NO. 21.

MAY, 1961

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MEETING:

The next meeting will be held in the Lecture Room of the S.A. Museum on Tuesday, 16th May at 8.15 p.m. The shell families for display and discussion will be some of the Bivalves - Pectinidae, Spondylidae, Limidae and Ostreidae. (Barnard p.185-193) Please separate S.A. and Foreign shells.

A fine colour film will be shown of Mr. Dirk Ackermann and his shell collection (this is a must!) and another of Natural History interest. Also at this meeting will be displayed the First and Second Prize winning exhibits of the Junior Members Competition.

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ABOUT MEMBERS:-

A very pleasant morning was spent by members at Melkbos on 3rd April. A good variety of shells was collected, the most notable being a live Kraussina rubra found by Mary Kuttel. Others were - Megatebennus scutellum, Crepidula rugulosa, Chaetopleura papillio and various small Marginella.

At this meeting, the following were proposed:-

<u>Proposed Members.</u>	<u>Proposed by:</u>	<u>Seconded by:</u>
Miss C. Higgs	L. Kerr	D. Ackermann
Mr. D. Freeman	D. Ackermann	L. Kerr.

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MEETING AT THE S.A. MUSEUM. 19.4.1961.

Apologies were received from Dr. Talbot and Mr. Grindley. Our President, Mr. C. Swanevold took the Chair. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed. The following members were elected:-

Miss C. Higgs, 3, Worcester Road, Sea Point.
Mr. D. Freeman, Hotel Mimosa, Church Road, Sea Point.

<u>Proposed Members:</u>	<u>Proposed by:</u>	<u>Seconded by:</u>
Mrs. R. C. Mobro	D. Ackermann	C. Swanevold.
Mrs. Y. M. Petrie	D. Ackermann	J. Ackermann.
Mr. F. A. Hulme	D. Ackermann	L. Kerr.

Arrangements for the Junior Competition were discussed and it was decided to present some trawled shells to all competitors.

Members asked the Council to arrange a shelling week-end at Arniston, and the Secretary was instructed to make enquiries.

Coloured slides of shells were shown by Leila Kerr, and of fish by Jock Dichmont.

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JUNIOR COMPETITION HELD AT S.A.MUSEUM. 22.4.1961.

This was disappointing as far as entries were concerned, but not in the quality of the exhibits. Christopher Walker won the First Prize of the tray donated by the late Mr. John Hutt, and Penny Ismay won the Second Prize. Chris had the greater number of varieties, all correctly named, while Penny's display was very good indeed.

It is hoped that more Juniors will enter for the next competition, which will be for the very young ones.

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A letter has been received from Mr. Robert R. Talmadge, Box 71, Willow Creek, California, U.S.A.

Mr. Talmadge has been unfortunate in losing most of his collection through a serious fire, and appeals to members for specimens with animals of the following:- Haliotis, Fissurellidae, Patella, Helcion, and Gellana. Soak the shell with animal in spirits, then seal in tin with cotton-wool soaked in spirits. It might be as well to write to Mr. Talmadge first.

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GENERAL NOTES:A CONCHOLOGIST AT FISH HOEK by Clarice Connolly.

Scratching in the mud in the small lagoon at Fish Hoek, I was amazed at the life that has multiplied there in the last few months. The Silvermine River is dry, but the lagoon is fed probably by some high tides. There are fish, shrimps, small red worms and crabs by the hundreds. What excited me most was a number of small Bulla, possibly Haminea natalensis, with three gizzard plates and pale translucent shell, the largest just under half an inch. I have kept a few alive and have observed mating. So far, I am not sure just what they are feeding on.

After these recent gales, we have found two small Argonauta with animals, one with a male arm. Also on the beach were huge Janthina.

I have been observing the feeding of Thais. I have not seen them boring into shells, but always eating live molluscs. A Patella oculus with a quarter inch of his foot eaten by Thais dubia was placed in a jar of sea-water. One hour later, his mantle and head were moving feebly. After two hours he was fully awake and able to grip fast. One wonders whether this is due to a poison similar to that of Conus. I have seen Thais feeding on Oxystele spp., Patella granularis, P. granatina and P. oculus.

The Thais dubia juveniles (Barnard's book) only seem to feed on Littorina. I have seen Thais on a black mussel apparently feeding through the aperture at the byssus threads.

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NOTES ON COWRY COLLECTING IN ZANZIBAR

by Sue Talbot.

Anyone interested in collecting their own tropical shells, especially cowries, would find it rewarding to make a trip up the East Coast to Zanzibar. There are good shelling beaches within walking distance of the town and cars can be hired to get to the other beaches of the island which are easily accessible by road. Members of the flourishing Zanzibar Conchological Society are helpful to visiting conchologists and would be worth contacting. With some advice from them, a collector could quite easily pick up about twenty cowry species on the various reefs.

Most of my collecting was done at low tide on the reefs between mid-water and low-water springs. The cowries were usually found on the under surface of coral boulders, in crevices and on weed.

There are nine abundant species which are nearly always seen on most reefs right around the island. These are:- Monetaria moneta, Ornamentaria annulus, Ponda carneola, Lyncina Lynx, Metaponda Vitellus, Ovatipsa caurica, Ravitriona helvola, Erosaria erosa, Cypraea tigris.

C.tigris can occasionally be found in two striking colour varieties - creamy yellow and orange.

The less common cowries tend to occur in restricted areas. An extreme case is the onyx cowry, Adusta onyx which was considered very rare, until it was discovered in quite large numbers on a sandy beach on the South West coast of the island. It was usually on or near fronds of a brown seaweed (very much the same colour as the shell) which were washed up on the wet sand. This cowry was not seen on any of the other beaches of the island. My guess is that a skin diver would probably find the animal's true habitat below low tide level in beds of this weed.

Another allegedly rare cowry that was fairly easy to collect once its habitat was known, was Pustularia globulus, the beautiful little honey-coloured globular cowry. It did not occur in the intertidal zone, but could be picked up by skin-diving and breaking off pieces of living coral on a particular underwater reef near Prison Island (one of the small islands in the harbour area). The cowry was found in crevices in the coral. The only other cowry commonly seen well below the intertidal zone was the tiger cowry Cypraea tigris. The very rare Argus cowry, Arestorides argus, has also occasionally been found by diving.

The Mole cowry, Talparia talpa is an unpredictable creature usually not common, but occasionally one might come across anything up to a dozen, lying exposed on weed and in pools, all within a few feet of each other.

Among the less common cowries, nine of the smaller and perhaps more delicate species were found almost exclusively

on the reefs of the sheltered West coast of Zanzibar.
These were:- Staphylaea staphylaea, Staphylaea limacina,
Evenaria ursellus, Evenaria punctata, Cribraria cribraria,
Palmadusta ziczac, Palmadusta clandestina, Bistolida stolida,
Paulonaria fimbriata.

Cowries were on the whole not as abundant on the exposed Eastern reefs, but two of the heavier robust species, Ravitrona caputserpentis and Arabica histrio were found more often there than on the West coast.

Juvenile cowries of a few species could also be picked up on the reefs in the intertidal zone. Juveniles of Ovatipisa caurica were quite common while young stages of Staphylaea limacina and Ravitrona caputserpentis were also occasionally seen.

My collection of Zanzibar cowries consisted of thirty-six species, but probably over forty species occur on the island, not to mention the wealth of other tropical groups of which the cones, cassis shells, harpas, mitres, murex shells, tritons, pteroceas and clams are perhaps the most striking.

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