

# The Strandloper

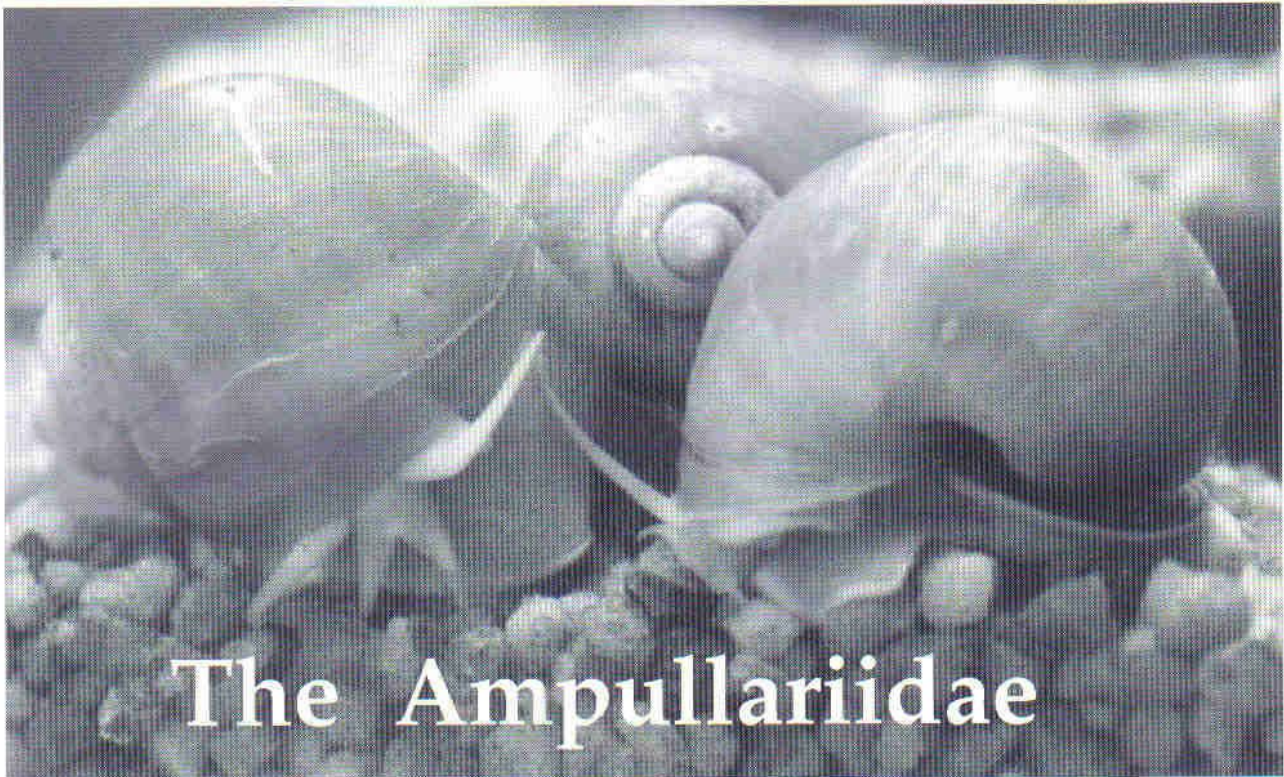
BULLETIN OF THE CONCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA



Strandloper 251

September 1997

Page 1



## The Ampullariidae

by Mike Cortie

Prosobranch gastropods have evolved to fill ecological niches in places as diverse as the sea, lakes, trees, swamps and rivers, and, more recently, even aquariums! Of these, the Ampullariidae, also known as 'apple snails', grow to quite respectable sizes. The family is found all over the tropical world, while South African examples may be found in the Mpumalanga Lowveld and Kwazulu-Natal<sup>1,2</sup>. The snails are common in the Kunene, Okavango and other tropical rivers to our north, and empty shells are often washed up onto the shores of the African Great Lakes in large numbers. However, the family is particularly well represented in South and Central America, from where I was recently very pleased to receive a box of fresh examples, probably *Pomacea haustum* (Pilsbry) (illustrated overleaf). These had been collected in southern Colum-

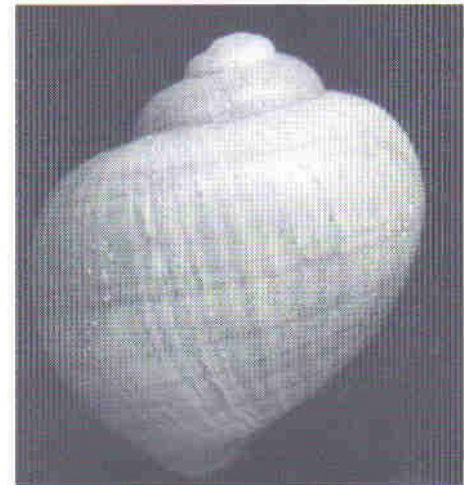
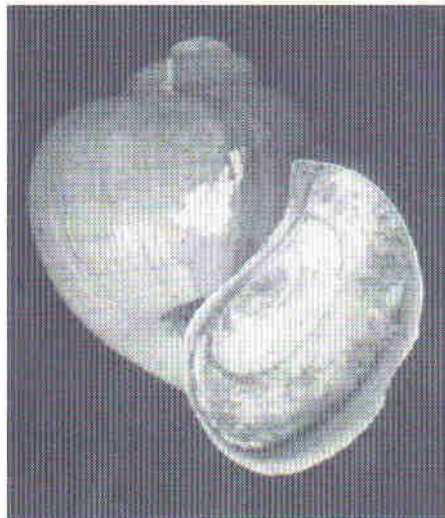
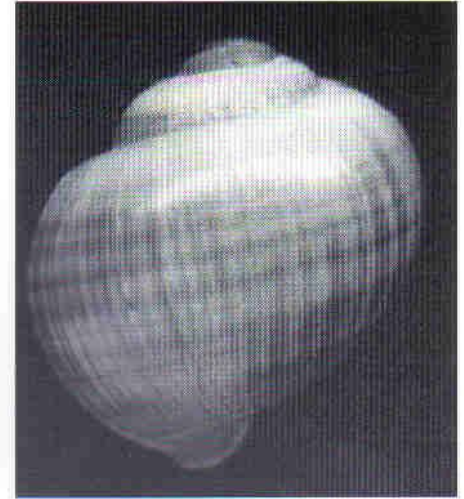
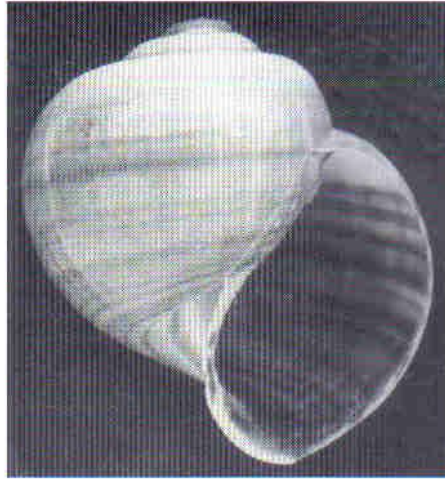
bia by Mrs Walda Acevedo, the daughter of longtime members Bill and Lana Kruger of Pretoria.

Much, much closer to home, many of us have admired these snails in fresh water aquariums, where they make a very interesting addition. Illustrated above are some beautiful golden 'mystery' snails which may sometimes be found for sale in pet shops.

The apple snails have distinct globe-trotting tendencies and there have been several instances where they have flourished in new countries after having been accidentally or purposefully introduced there. In some cases the snails have been imported by the aquarium trade, and eventually escape when somebody tips the remnants of a tank

into the local waterway. In other cases the snails have been imported live for the purpose of farming them for food. This is because the snails are an excellent source of protein and are eaten in southeast Asia and Central America (however, they are known to occasionally harbour some nasty diseases so must be well-cooked!)<sup>3</sup>. One of these is the New World species *Pomacea canaliculata* which is spreading rapidly through the rice and taros fields of South-East Asia, but which is luckily considered a delicacy<sup>3</sup>.

Interestingly, in their natural habitat in South America and the Caribbean, many of the Ampullariidae are preyed upon by specialized predators such as the Snail Kite (a bird) and the Caiman Lizard<sup>3</sup>. Presumably the absence of such specially adapted predators in southern Asia has facilitated their spread there. Appleton reports that one of these 'imports', *Ampullaria lineata* (Wagner, 1827), has escaped to streams and ponds in the Durban area<sup>1</sup>. As another example, a large species of *Pila* with a magnificent golden-yellow shell has now become established in the rivers of Phuket Island off the coast of Thailand. The shell of this last species can grow to a length of 150 mm. Its ancestors were probably originally from somewhere in South America<sup>4</sup>.



*Pila occidentalis* (Mousson, 1887), top -Ovamboland, length= 49mm, bottom - northern Botswana, length = 48 mm.



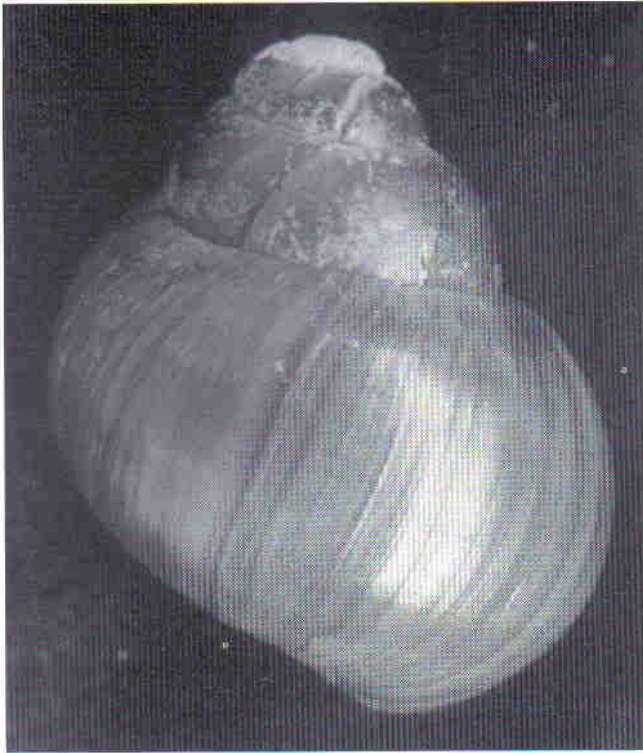
*Pomacea cf. haustrum* (Reeve) shells from Columbia

The golden 'mystery' snail (shown on the front page) which has entered the aquarium trade has an interesting story attached to it. It appears to be a mutation of the normal brown-striped *Pomacea bridgesii*. The mutation seems to have eliminated all greenish pigments from the shell and body of the mollusc thereby producing a bright orange, and eminently saleable, item of aquarium livestock<sup>3</sup>. The strain is now carefully selected and bred by aquarium stockists in places like Florida, USA. Walls notes that the normal striped version, often incorrectly described in aquarium books as *Ampullaria cuprina*, is still available, and could arguably be considered to be the original 'apple' snail<sup>3</sup>.

continued on page 4

## The South African species

by the late Don Aiken



Formerly the family Piliidae. The shells in this family are distinctive in being globose and of large size compared with most other freshwater molluscs. They are operculate and can aestivate for several months in dried mud. The respiratory cavity is divided so that one half functions as a gill and the other half as a lung. In addition, extensions on either side of the proboscis form inhalant and exhalant siphons. The sexes are separate and eggs are laid in large masses, in some cases out of the water. The members of this family are, therefore, completely amphibious molluscs.

### Genus: *Pila* Röding, 1798.

The shells in this genus are predominantly dextral but occasional sinistral shells are found. The animal, however, is always dextral. Eggs are laid above water and have a calcareous outer covering. The operculum is mainly corneous but has a calcareous inner layer. This genus is circumtropical in distribution but has not yet been found in South Africa proper. However, it is included for comparison with the next genus.

### *Pila occidentalis* (Mousson, 1887)

A medium sized shell, narrowly umbilicate with four to five whorls. Sculptureless to the eye except for growth lines. The colour pattern consists of spiral bands of brown alternating with bands of paler shade. Size: 44 to 48 x 38 to 46 mm. Distribution: Confined to the Kunene and Okavango river systems, thus occurring in Angola, northern Namibia and Botswana.

### Genus : *Lanistes* Montfort, 1810.

Sinistral shells but, again, with a dextrally oriented animal. Eggs are laid under water and have a gelatinous outer covering. The operculum is corneous.

### *Lanistes ovum* Peters, 1845.

A large, umbilicate shell with four or five whorls. Columella white, remainder of shell a glossy olive-green to brown often with a narrow, paler band below the suture. Sculptureless apart from occasional malleation and growth lines. *Lanistes ellipticus* Mts 1866 is the name given to a very closely related form that intergrades with *L. ovum*, and which might be just a synonym of the former. Size : commonly 58 x 50 mm; has been recorded as large as 105 x 80 mm. Distribution: Widespread in Africa and, in South Africa, in the Pongola River and the Mpumalanga Lowveld, as well as in Lake Sibaya in Zululand. I have a fresh-dead specimen collected by my father at the Illovo River mouth, 34 km south of Durban. If this shell were washed down the river then it implies a considerable extension of the range.



*Lanistes ovum* Peters, 1845 - Salima, Malawi "in swamp", length 55 mm



*Lanistes nyassanus* Dohrn, 1865, Ncopol Lodge, Lake Malawi, length is 69 mm.

There has been quite an amount of scientific interest in the biology of various ampullarid snails because they are effective competitors to the Planorbidae (which may act as hosts for the parasites that cause bilharzia). The incidence of bilharzia has in some instances been reduced in Caribbean countries by the deliberate introduction of Ampullariidae into the local fresh water rivers and lakes<sup>5</sup>. Another useful property of certain of the species is that they can munch their way through exotic water weeds. For example, the snail *Pomacea cumingii* (King, 1831) was accidentally released in the Republic of Panama in 1979. It proliferated energetically and showed a preference for the water weeds that were clogging up some of the country's freshwater lakes and rivers. In only a few years many of these became navigable again<sup>6</sup>.

It should be noted that precise determination of the species appears to be quite problematic in many instances. The shells of the New World species in particular seem very variable in colour, shape and sculpture, thus making these attributes a somewhat unreliable guide to determination of species. On the other hand the various African species of *Lanistes* have nearly identical soft parts<sup>7</sup>, and are

normally distinguished on the basis of shell shape and radula.

A detailed description of the Southern African ampullarids *Pila occidentalis* and *Lanistes ovum* may be found in the article by the late Don Aiken elsewhere in this issue. Other Ampullariidae of possible interest to readers are described below.

#### ***Pila wernei* (Philippi, 1851)**

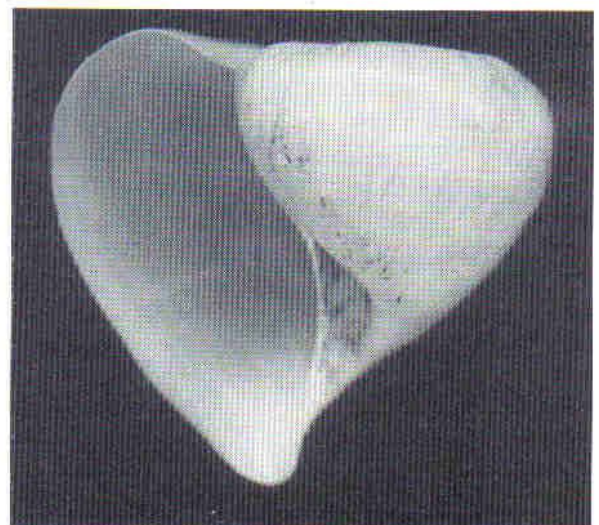
*Pila wernei* is the largest African freshwater snail and can have a shell measuring up to 127 x 125 mm. It is distinguished by its sculpture which is spirally malleate (*malleate ... appearing as though hammered*) and is brown to olive-green. The operculum is corneous with an inner calcareous layer. Distribution : Sudan, Kenya and Somalia. Connolly<sup>8</sup> had reported that the species was also found in the Kunene and Okavango river systems but this is no longer accepted as correct. Rather, the species found in those regions is now considered to be *P. occidentalis*.

#### ***Lanistes olivaceus* (Sowerby, 1834)**

This species has a high spire and straight, regular sides. Its colour is similar to that of *L. ovum*. According to Connolly it is known from Mozambique and Zanzibar<sup>8</sup>. Individual shells are usually about 60 mm long, but a few specimens of over 90 mm have been recorded.

#### ***Lanistes nyassanus* Dohrn, 1865**

This large and solid snail is a Lake Malawi endemic<sup>3,7</sup>. It has a considerably more angular shell than *L. ovum* and is easily differentiated from



*Lanistes nasutus* Mandahl-Barth 1972 - a rare species from Lake Malawi



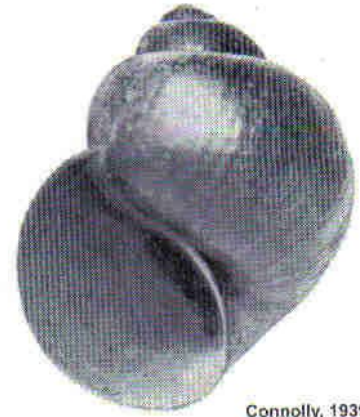
Connolly, 1939

*Lanistes olivaceus* (Sowerby, 1834)



Connolly, 1939

*Lanistes ovum* (Peters, 1845)  
typical form illustrated in  
Connolly's monograph



Connolly, 1939

*Lanistes ovum* - variation illus-  
trated in Connolly's monograph  
as *L. ellipticus*

that species by virtue of its very flat spire. Large numbers of the snail are washed up onto the more exposed lake beaches, as for example at the resort beach at Cape Maclear. Smaller specimens may be obtained in shallow water by snorkelling, however the really big ones seem to live in deep water and reliance must be made on scuba divers or local fishermen, who sometimes find specimens in their nets.

*Lanistes nasutus* Mandahl-Barth 1972  
A noticeably thin-walled shell, with a prominent umbilicus. The aperture has a characteristic prolonged basal margin. This comparatively rare species is also endemic to Lake Malawi and may occasionally be found washed up on the beaches at the resorts at the southern end of the lake.

*Pomacea canaliculata* (Lamarck)

This species is native to South America but was introduced to the Philippines, Japan and Hawaii as a potential protein source. Unfortunately, the snail is a prolific breeder, has no natural enemies in this region, and can survive buried in soil for long periods. It has undergone a population explosion and is a serious pest of lowland rice paddies<sup>9</sup>.

*Pomacea glauca* (Linnaeus)

This species has a large and particularly handsome shell, often over 70

mm in size. It comes from the Caribbean islands and the northern part of South America. Its solid and shiny shell has a large, open umbilicus and is coloured yellow or orange, usually with 5 or so rich brown stripes. The eggs are bright green and about the size of a pea!

*Pomacea papyracea* (Spix)

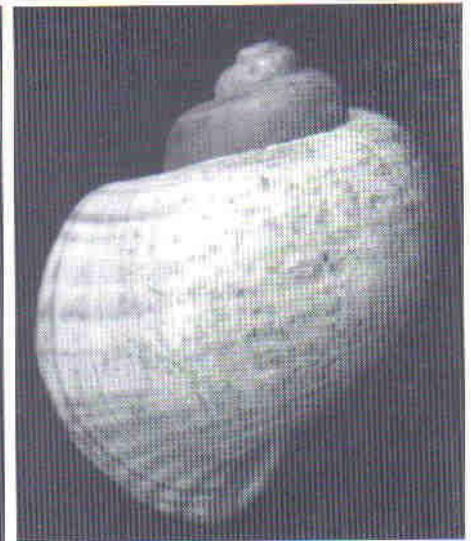
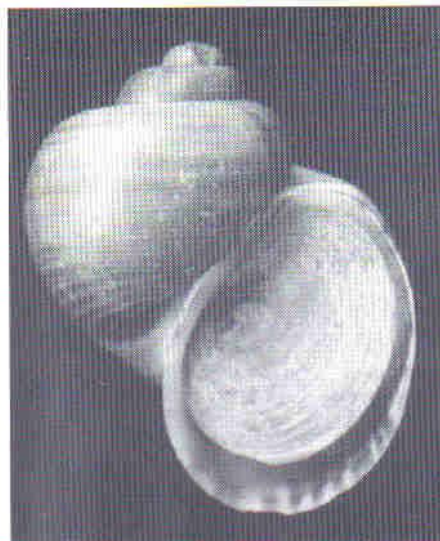
This is apparently sometimes known as the 'Exploding apple snail'! The reason for this is that while the comparatively large shell of this mollusc is very thin and fragile, its periostracum is rather thick. After it has been collected, the tightly adherent periostracum dries out and contracts,

thereby inducing compressive stresses on the underlying shell. In many cases the shell shatters, probably with quite a bang!

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continued on page 6



Common aquarium 'apple snail', *Pomacea bridgesii*, length = 37 mm.

## Ampullaridae - continued

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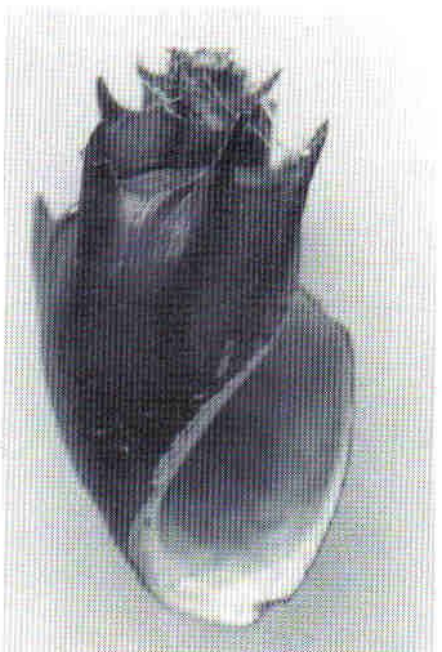
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## Mystery shell

### What is it ??

This species and the rest of its family will be discussed in the next *Strandloper*. I wonder how many members have it in their collections?



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Drawing studio from Post-Magnum, S.S. III.

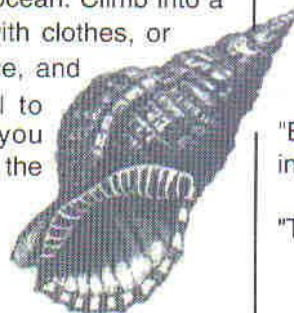
C. Pye

## Flotsam

### The roar of the sea (debunked)

**H**ands up all those who have held a shell to their ear to listen to the roar of the ocean. Of course, the smarter kids (or adults) will smile knowingly, wink, and if pushed, tell you that what you are really hearing is the sound of your own blood, sloshing around inside your head.

However, this appears not to be the case, because, if it were, then there should be a change in sound after you have done some strenuous exercise. In fact, according to Dr G. Rosenberg of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia and Mr R. Smallberg, who makes science education TV programs for kids in New York, what you are really hearing is all the ambient noise, resonating in the shell's cavity and becoming blurred and 'white', just like the distant ocean. Climb into a closet stuffed with clothes, or other quiet place, and place the shell to your ear, and you should find that the roar has gone.



## Binominal vs binomial

**A**s most readers will know, molluscs and all other biological organisms are identified by a two part name consisting of a genus and a species. This is called the **binominal** system, or is it the **binomial** system? There has been some argument on the Internet about which term is the correct one. However, I think it depends on where you live. Binomial is used in the USA, and binominal everywhere else in the English-speaking world.

## A little scene from Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*

-contributed to CONCH-L by M.Parr-

"I have never come across a more decided foe of marriage than yourself," remarked Sergius Ivanich.

"No. I am no foe of marriage, but I believe in division of labour! Persons who can do nothing else must make men, and the others must help them to culture and happiness. That is how I look at it. There are hosts of aspirants who aim at mixing these two professions, but I am not one of them!"

"How delighted I shall be when I hear of your falling in love!" said Levin. "Pray invite me to your wedding!"

"I am in love already."

"Yes, with a mollusc! Do you know," said Levin, turning to his brother, "Katavasov is writing a work on nutrition and..."

"Oh don't confuse matters! What does it matter what I write about? The fact is, I really do love molluscs."

"But they would not prevent you loving a wife!"

"They would not, but the wife would..."

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**Exchange or sale**

Mrs Johel van den Berg collects shells from the Eastern Cape has some uncommon and rare specimens for sale. Write to her at 30 Murray Str., Burgersdorp 2520.

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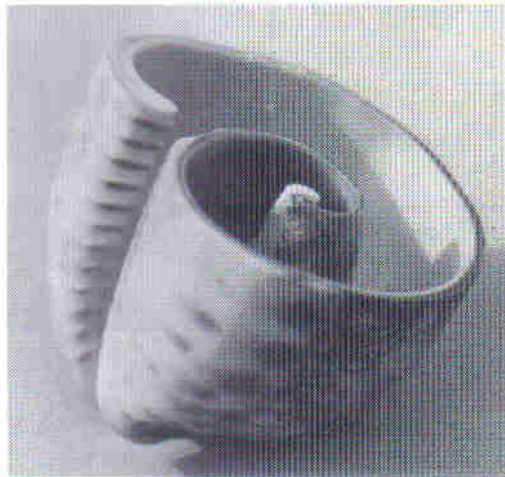
Jenny Scarboro of Fort Hood, Texas, is keen to trade world wide shells with for South African ones. If you have access to email then why not contact her on [scarboro@centraltx.net](mailto:scarboro@centraltx.net).

Mr Luciano Petruccioli specializes in Cypraeidae, Conidae, Muricidae and Strombidae. He wants to exchange shells with South African collectors and can offer Mediterranean and Indo Pacific shells in exchange. Why not write to him at

Via Segesta 34, 00179 Rome, ITALY  
or fax him in Italy at 0039-6-78930.

**Saying "Cypraea" out aloud!**

How should we pronounce the Latin names of our shells? Is there a 'right' way? These issues recently taxed the minds of the folk who chat on the CONCH-L group on the Internet. It seems that there are several standard ways to pronounce Latin words anyway, including the European 'Classical' Way, the British Church Way, the Catholic Church Way and the American Way. And then there are people who declare that it doesn't matter anyWay, since nobody speaks Latin any more. Still, I gather that purists will have it that the one to use is European



'Classical' Latin, and furthermore it seems from what I can gather South African collectors are mostly on the right track, because of the Afrikaans influence. Here are a list of some of the 'European' Classical rules:

*i* is pronounced "ee", so *kelletii* should sound like kelleet-ee-ee.

*e* is always pronounced long like "a" in "day"

*ae* is usually pronounced "eye"

*o* is always long "oh"

*a* is always pronounced short but like father, not like man.

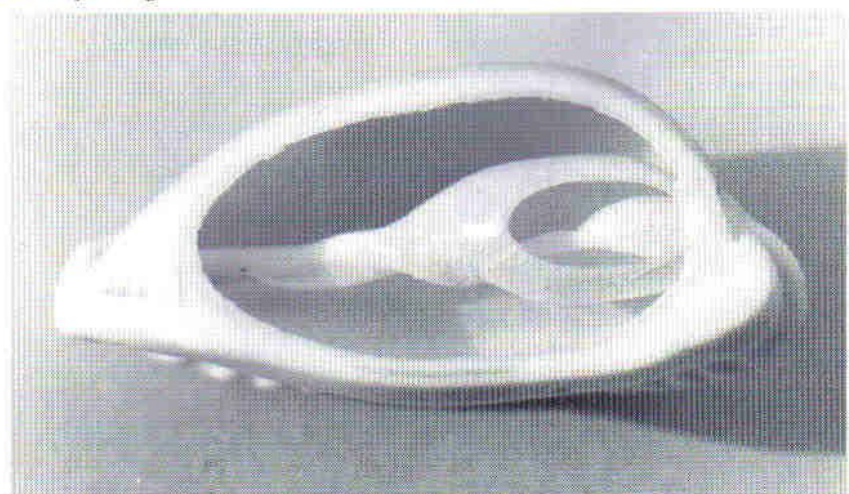
*u* is always pronounced "oo".

*c* and *ch* are pronounced like "k"

*y* is pronounced like "ee" with rounded lips, but that's difficult so let's just call it "ee"

However, the genus *Cypraea* presents something of a dilemma, with the conchological and malacological community being somewhat divided on its pronunciation. If you want to follow the classical

Latin rules then it seems that there could be a case for pronouncing it with a hard *c* as in "Kip-rhe-a", or according to another source, "Koo-pry'a". However it seems that the Italians themselves use a soft *c* as in chew, to yield "Chip-r-ae-a". In this case the *ae* is a diphthong and is pronounced like the *e* in bed or head while the final *a* is pronounced like the *a* in car or father. However, almost everyone in the English-speaking world pronounces it with a soft "c" as in "Sip-rhe-a". Therefore, this would seem to be a most suitable pronunciation for South Africans.



## Happy finds of a nutty shell collector

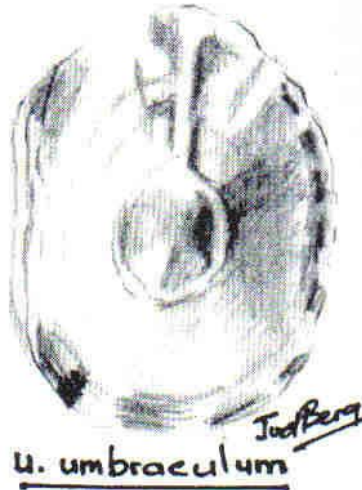
by Johel van den Berg

The beautiful and appropriate poems published in the *Strandloper* of June '96, especially the *Rhyme for a Shell Collector*, lets one's mind linger on all the weather - foul or fair - spent looking for 'finds'.

And what a wonderful feeling when you whoopee shamelessly while jumping into the air and scramble back to hubby, your grandchild or even the dog, shouting ecstatically "Look what I've found!" Like my first paper nautilus (*Argonauta argo*). At Blombos it was, on that lonely shell bare beach, a beauty, which unobserved I nearly trod to pieces. My shriek still resounds in that lonely vicinity I'm sure.

Or the rather evasive *Umbraculum umbraculum*. I at first took it for an obscure *Patella longicosta* until I rolled it over with my foot, so discovering its strange milky-yellow interior. Believe me, I ran all the way to our Kei Mouth cottage after identifying the shell to share my good fortune with hubby.

And the beautiful *Haliotis spadicea* at Double Mouth? (between Morgan Bay




and Haga Haga). I nearly disregarded it as yet another Venus Ear (*Haliotis midae*) when suddenly I recognised the blotches and extraordinary colouring. It was also in the same Double Mouth area while strolling along the undergrowth on the river bank that I found a *Cerithidea decollata* right in front of me. My first find was at Kosi Bay, a rather ugly black colouring while this one was light grey with fawn bands.



c. decollata.

While mentioning Kosi Bay, I was indeed thankful for the superb *Ficus ficus* lying among debris, while at Cape Vidal I picked up the most fantastic fresh *Conus betulinus*. And to think children were frolicking around without being aware of this precious gem! At Sodwana I was most fortunate to discover an extraordinarily beautiful *Cypraea criberia* and the scarce *Cypraea tortirostris*, the latter slightly damaged.


The Muricidae family fascinates me, especially the minute members like



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*Jud Berg*  
C. betulinus.



*Jud Berg*  
C. cribraria.

the delicately sculptured *Aspella acuticostata*. Boy was I lucky when somebody gave me a jar of shell 'debris' collected at Struisbaai because on close inspection I not only found my long wished for *Aspella* (actually two of them) but also two *Janthina janthina* with distinct white bands around their bases.



*Jud Berg*  
J. janthina.



*Jud Berg*  
C. austramosus

Oh and can a shell collector's life ever be the same after picking up a fine example of *Turritella sanguinea*, which I found next to Saldana's unsavoury smelling fishing harbour? Or an *Epitonium coronatum* in all its 40 millimetre splendour found at Kei Mouth, a *Chicoreus austramosus* beautifully sculptured at Double Mouth, a *Nassa francolina* shining like a brown berry at Scottburgh? No indeed not, for as Margaret White mentioned in her poem :

*You wonderful nuts with a glassy-eyed stare?*

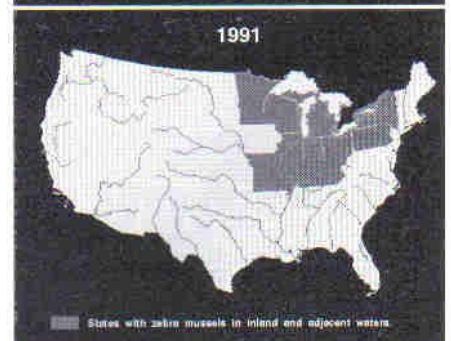
That's me, long past being normal any more.



*Jud Berg*  
T. sanguinea.

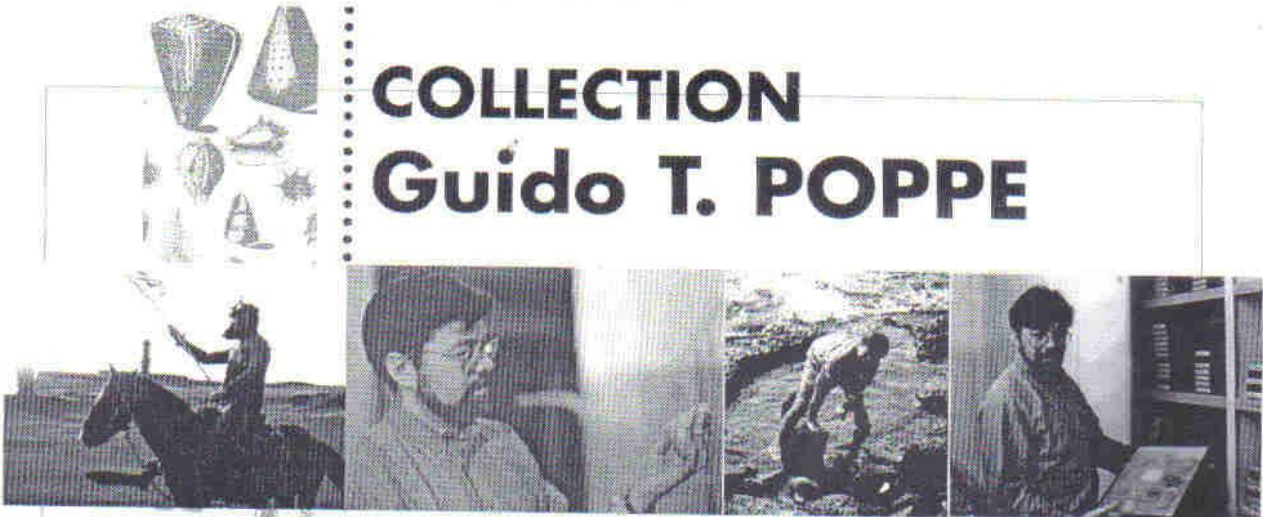
### March of the zebra by Mike Cortie

Readers whose memory can stretch back to *Strandloper* 237, may recall that the little European freshwater bivalve *Dreissena* has 'invaded' the rivers of the eastern states of the USA and Canada. There are now so many of these little filter-feeding bivalves in certain of the Great Lakes that it is stated that they have had the result of inducing a marked improvement in the clarity of the water ! However, their habit of attaching themselves to whatever solid surface they can find has caused consternation in engineering circles, but even the concern in that regard has now been far outweighed by the disastrous effect they are having on native American freshwater unionids (bivalves). The native shells are literally being buried alive under a burden of *Dreissena*. The maps below show how rapidly the invader has spread. There appears as yet to be no solution to the crisis and it is very likely that many of the indigenous unionids in the States will become extinct in their natural habitat.



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## Grading shells

Many members who trade or buy shells will be aware that there is a kind of grading scheme which dealers and others use to describe the condition of the shell they have. However, the criteria used to grade the shells are not always clear. This question came up on the CONCH-L newsgroup on the Internet, and US dealer **Mr Richard Goldberg** of Worldwide Specimen Shells, P.O. Box 6088, Columbia, MD 21046-6088, USA was kind enough to explain how the gradings are arrived at. Herewith his explanation:

"The shell grading that you see on dealer's price lists grew out of a need to have a standardized method for grading shells that everyone world wide could adopt when selling or exchanging shells.

In 1973 Eimer Leehman and Stu Lillico proposed a method by which the condition of shells would be described using a standard method and using uniform terms. This was based on long discussions during the previous two years. They published their proposed standards in the March 1973 issue of *Hawaiian Shell News*. The proposed system was not at first universally adopted, but used by some dealers and serious collectors. It eventually came to be called the HMS-ISGS (Hawaiian Malacological Society International Shell Grading Standard).

The ISGS system, as proposed by Leehman and Lillico, classified a shell in four categories.

**Gem Quality** - a perfect live taken shell, fully adult, well cleaned, no alteration to the shell such as a filed lip, and operculum if the species has one, excellent coloring, and complete collecting data, among other things.

**Fine Quality** - a live taken shell, with only minor faults and not more than one minor growth flaw. "Color and gloss must be satisfactory."

**Good Quality** - "A reasonably good specimen" not necessarily live taken, exhibiting a few defects, including growth marks, and good color as long as not faded.

**Fair Quality** - a dead or beach collected shell, chipped lips in the case of *Conus* species, noticeable flaws, and no data and operculums.

The descriptions, as published, were more in depth, but you can get the gist of their proposal.

In May 1977, former shell dealer Bob Morrison proposed modifications to the Leehman & Lillico shell standards in *Hawaiian Shell News*. His contention was that a perfect shell means different things to different people. His revision shortened the description of a gem shell to say, "a mature shell with no noticeable flaws. Fine - a shell with a minor flaw or flaws which do not detract significantly from the appearance, shell may be slightly subadult ... and so on.

Morrison was the first to propose using a plus (+) sign after the grading to indicate a shell that is better than that grading, but not quite the next grade. He also stated that due to certain environmental influences, certain species almost always show some noticeable flaws. He proposed that such flaws should be noted as "typical." Both the original proposal by Leehman and Lillico and Morrison's proposal stated that a written description of the good and bad qualities of a shell should accompany the listing.

By September 1977 Leehman and Lillico wrote in HSN that the HMS-ISGS was a success (I guess based on the number of dealers and collectors who adopted the standard).

During the four year evolutionary period the standards were yet again revised and finally published as official in the September 1977 HSN issue. This included adding a plus (+) and minus (-) sign to the basic grading designation. (I do not think many people use the minus sign after a grade designation anymore). Also a commercial grade was added to indicate shells not acceptable for mail

order retailing and which should not be offered as collectors' specimens.

Other symbols such as w/o (with operculum), F/D & B/D (full and basic data), JUV (juvenile for shells graded Good & Fine) were also adopted.

And even today there is some variation on this system. The unofficial use of a (++) after the basic quality grading takes into account an even finer delineation between gradings. I have even seen a (+++) used. But I think the line has to be drawn somewhere since the bottom line is that even with a standard to follow, grading shells is still a very subjective pursuit.

It is great that all mail order shell dealers that I know of use this standard. If you are a seasoned mail order buyer, you will quickly learn how dealers use this standard to grade their shells. I do not think the authors of the HMS-ISGS intended it to be an end-all, but at least all dealers have these guidelines to follow and offer to our customers-

### **Strandloper**

The editor welcomes original articles, news, shelling reports, feedback, advertisements (rates on application) and any other material likely to be of interest to members of the Society. Illustrations are especially welcome. Please send to

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## Shell collecting is for everybody

- thanks to Guido Poppe who contributed many of these thoughts to the Internet some months ago.

Shell collecting is not just for rich people nor is it a new pasttime. As soon as Renaissance Europe began to send ships to far corners of the world, people started to collect shells in earnest. The early collectors of the 1600s liked to fill cabinets, often made of rose wood, with rare and exotic shells. As the years have rolled past shell collecting has waxed and waned, but has always been around as one of the few hobbies that appeals to young and old, rich and poor, amateur and professional. However, the hobby boomed as never before since the end of World War II and the advent of travel to, and communication with, almost every corner of the world.

As always the available shells are sort of split into three groups - the mass of readily available 'pretty' marine species, a special group of incredibly rare and expensive marine shells, many costing thousand of dollars, and the specialist species, usually non-marine or tiny, which have little commercial value except to the relevant small group of aficionados.

Today you can buy any one of tens of thousands of attractive marine shells for less than a price of a cup of coffee. In fact, the cost to the dealer of handling the shell often exceeds its original purchase price. Never before have there been so many collectors. And where are we going? Not an easy question to answer. Some of the traditional shell-exporting countries have implemented restrictions of one kind or another. They have been motivated by the visibly evident destruction of habitat in the more accessible areas, due primarily to pollution (excess nutrients can kill a coral reef more surely than dynamite can) but in some cases by unsustainable methods of food collection. On the other hand, shells are becoming available commercially

from regions that were not previously exploited.

The great rarities still appear sporadically for sale, and are always an option for the individual with deep pockets. And for the rest of us, the beaches, reefs, rivers, forests and gardens are there too, just waiting to be investigated.

Our hobby is certainly for all people, from all ages, but major collections take a lot of time to put together and maintain. So, the major collection, with thousands of species, is often the domain of older people, to work towards once they have finished working. Many busy people elect to collect like crazy through their working life, carefully storing everything they get, and then, when they retire, they set about the business of organizing and filling in the gaps in earnest.

On balance, the future of collecting is as diverse and bright as ever. One person might just keep the shells he collects personally, in many cases as much for the memories of happy holidays that they invoke as anything else, the wealthy might assemble cabinets of fantastic tropical jewels, in many cases equalling or exceeding the value of rare coins or stamps, another individual might assemble a huge and diverse collection of every species he or she can get her hands on, others might just collect cowries, or volutes, or cones, some people only collect 'century' shells (those over 100 mm in length), others collect microshells, or land snails or albinos or ... the list of possibilities is endless. Some collectors are so scientific in their approach as to approach the professionals in rigour or reputation, others feel that a nice tea doily with little pink shells is a meaningful acquisition...

**Its up to you!**

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