The Strandloper
BULLETIN OF THE CONCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

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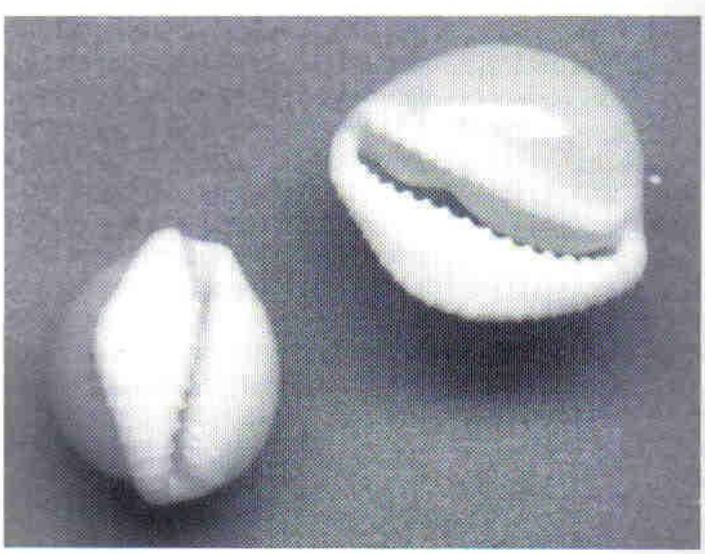
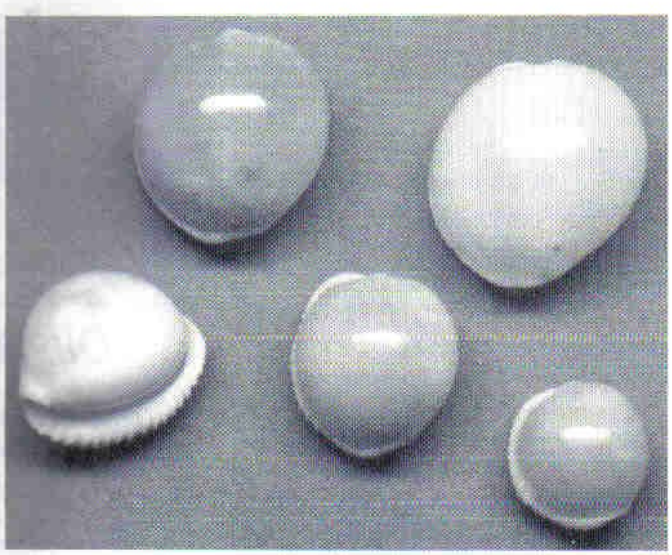
Determining *Trivia calvariola*

by Matthew H. Grote*





As is true with many South African *Trivia*, subtle physical traits in the living animal and empty shell determine speciation. Therefore *Trivia calvariola* Kilburn, 1980 is easy to place if you heed its characteristics. *Trivia calvariola* is a shell noted both for its beauty and fragility. Most specimens are a translucent white with a highly inflated, glossy dorsum. Some examples have an infusion of colour. The majority of *Trivia calvariola* taken have been light weight and thin shelled. A few samples, however, are thicker and therefore heavier. (*Trivia calvariola*'s spire is typically not nacred over.)

Another way to determine *Trivia calvariola* is to examine its basal components. *Trivia calvariola* has a distinct labrum that is both very large and flared medially. The labral lips do extend for a few millimetres onto the dorsum. The columella side of the base is usually rounded with a single row of fine teeth that run parallel to the labrum. Within the aperture there is a well formed fossula.

Although *Trivia calvariola* is quite distinct, it may be confused with *Trivia khanya* Liltved, 1986. *Trivia khanya* does have the same delicate demeanour, but is pyriform in shape and is often smaller. Also, its labrum is not as pronounced.

Most *Trivia calvariola* taken today come from fish traps set at 100 to 200 meters depth. Typical size is between 15 and 25 mm. In conclusion, I hope the above guidelines make determining *Trivia calvariola* easier. For further reading on *Trivia*s see Liltved's book *Cowries and their Relatives of Southern Africa*[1].

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Reference

Liltved,W.R. *Cowries and their Relatives of Southern Africa,* Gordon Verhoef-Seacomber Publications, Cape Town (1989).

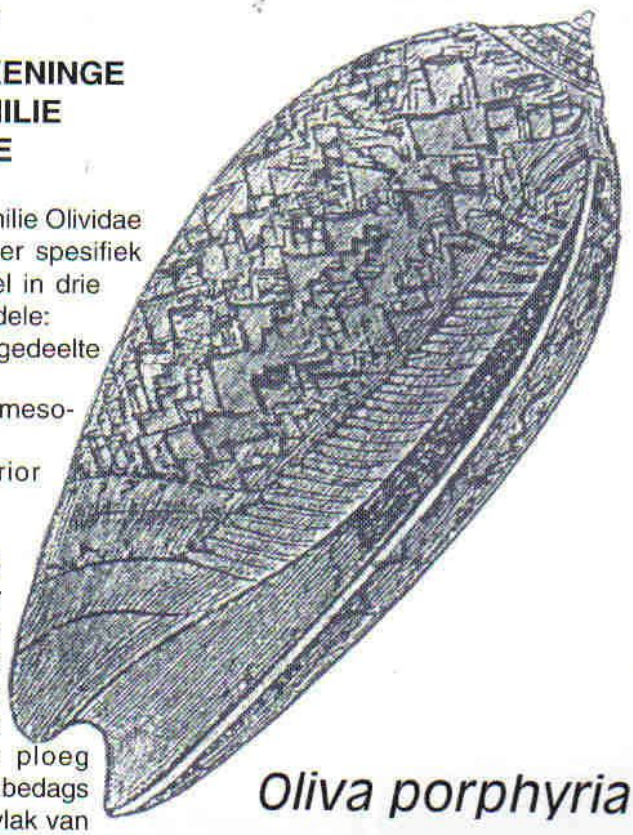
Some notes on the Olividae

by Gladys Myburgh#

original text in Afrikaans:

ENKELE AANTEKENINGE I.V.M DIE FAMILIE OLIVIEDAE

In die geval van die familie Olividae is die voet van die dier spesifiek aangepas. Dit is verdeel in drie duidelik waarneembare dele:
die voorste of anterior gedeelte (propodium),
die sentrale gedeelte (mesopodium) en
die agterste of posterior gedeelte (metapodium).



Oliva porphyria

Die halfmaanvormige propodium is besonder sterk ontwikkel met 'n groef aan die bokant. Dit word gebruik soos 'n sneeuploeg om die sand voor die dier oop te ploeg aangesien die weekdiere bedags net onderkant die oppervlak van die sand skuil en snags jag. In die geval van die meeste genera, het die operkulum verlore gegaan, maar is nog teenwoordig by die genera *Olivella* en *Ancilla*, waar dit op die metapodium gelê is.

By sommige genera van die mollusca word die skulp toegevou in die mantel van die weekdier. Nuwe skulpmateriaal word neergelê deur die rant van die mantel, maar by sommige genera soos by die Olividae is die voet van die dier in staat om skulpmateriaal neer te lê. Die voet bedek die skulp lateraalwaarts heeltemal wanneer gegrawe word of onder die sand geskuil word; vandaar die glansende aard van die skulpe.

In die genus *Olivella* vind 'n merkwaardige proses plaas wanneer die weekdier die volwasse stadium bereik. Die binneste windinge van die skulp asook 'n deel van die kolumella word geabsorbeer. Wanneer die proses voltooi is, is die binnekant van die skulp dan min of meer keëlvormig en die viscera verloor dan ook sy spiraalvorm en neem die vorm van die holte aan. Die proses vind ook plaas by die Cypraeidae en Naticidae.

By die meeste spesies van die mollusca is 'n periostrakum tydens een of ander fase van die groeiproses teenwoordig. Die doel van die periostrakum is om die skulp te beskerm teen chemiese prosesse in water of lug. Die periostrakum kan dik en harig of dun en glad wees. 'n Mens dink dikwels dat gladde blink skulpe soos die Olividae nie 'n periostrakum besit nie, maar lewend word die skulp beskerm deur 'n baie dun deursigtige periostrakum, byna soos 'n vel wat die skulp omvou.

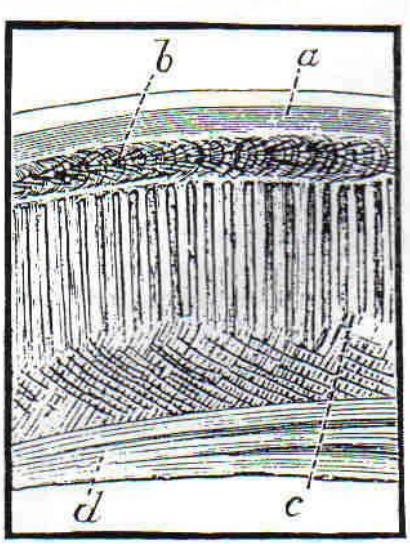
Dit is algemeen bekend dat kauris in

#3 Cloete Crescent, Fichardt Park, Bloemfontein 9322.

Abbreviated English version:

The Olividae have attracted attention from collectors over the years on account of their glossy and magnificent shells. What follows here are some notes on the family and its component genera.

The foot of this carnivorous animal is specifically adapted to its lifestyle, and has three main parts: the propodium at the anterior or front end, the metapodium in the posterior region, and the mesopodium in the middle. The propodium functions much like a snow plough, and is used to move sand over the animal, which normally only emerges from its hiding places at night. Most species have lost their operculum, however a small version is still found on the mesopodium of the genera *Olivella* and *Ancilla*. The shiny nature of the shell arises from the fact that the foot of the animal can be extended to cover the entire shell: this normally prevents marine growth or abrasion from damaging it. An interesting process occurs when an *Olivella* matures - the internal coils and a portion of the columella are reabsorbed. The body parts then lose



Structure of the olive shell: *a*, outer layer; *b*, layer of crossed and curved laminae; *c*, prismatic layer, succeeded by layer of laminae at right angles to one another; *d*, inner layer.

historiese tye as betaalmiddel gebruik was, maar *Olivella biplicata* was in Kalifornië ook algemeen gebruik as betaalmiddel. Die spits van die skulp was afgevryf en dan in stringe geryg om verskillende geldwaardes te verteenwoordig.

GENUS *Oliva*:
Skulpe is van klein tot medium grootte. Daar is omtrent sestig spesies hoofsaaklik versprei in warmer see. Skulpe het geen skulptuur nie en is glad en blink met groot variasie in patronering en kleur. Albino, melanistiese en goue (oranje) kleurvorms kom algemeen voor. Die spits is skerp en kort en die liggaamswinding bedek vorige windinge feitlik heeltemal. Die naat is gewoonlik gegroef. Die opening is lank en smal, met 'n diep keep om die sifon te akkomodeer. Die lip is glad met 'n dun rant. Op die kolumella is 'n kallus met voue of groot tande langs sy hele lengte. Die voet is groot en bedek die hele skulp. Die mantel sifon is baie lank.

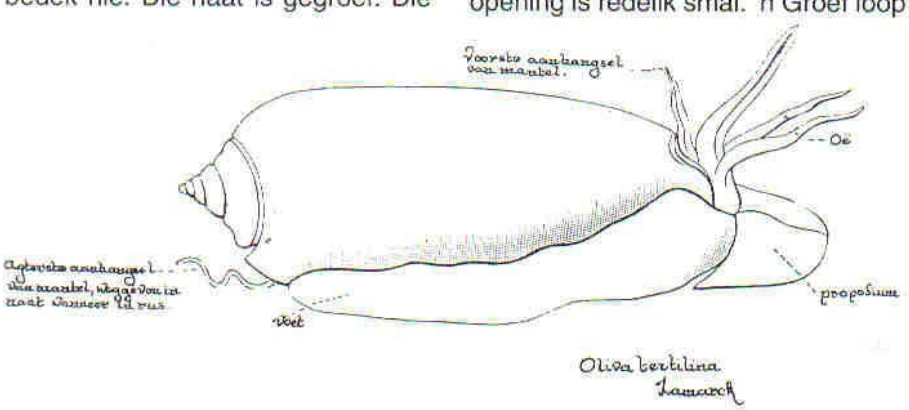
Habitat: Al die spesies van die genus *Oliva* lê gewoonlik bedags begrawe net onder die oppervlak van die sand. Snags word kos gesoek. Hulle is aktiewe predatore en jag deur die voet oor die prooi te gooi en dit dan onder die sand in te trek om te eet. Die weekdiere sal egter ook aas eet. *Oliva* spesies kom dikwels voor in koraalsand. Hulle bewoon gewoonlik vlakker water in die tussengety sone.

GENUS *Olivancillaria*:
Hulle is skulpe van medium grootte, redelik dik en robuust. Liggaamswindinge is groot en bedek alle vorige windinge, net die plat spits is nie bedek nie. Die naat is gegroef. Die opening is ogivaal met 'n wye sifonkanaal. Kleur is gewoonlik gryserig of bruin met geen skulptuur behalwe die groefie om die anterior derde van die skulp. Die buitelip is dik met groot kolumella kallus. Habitat en jaggewoontes is soos die van die genus *Oliva*.

GENUS *Olivella*:
Hulle is baie klein tot klein skulpe met 'n relatief hoë spits. Liggaamswinding is groot. Die opening is redelik smal en amper driehoekig. Lip is dun met 'n skerp rant. Die kolumella is dun met 'n effense kallus wat strek tot op die ventrale kant van die skulp. 'n Klein operkulum is teenwoordig. Habitat en jaggewoontes is soos die *Oliva* asook die res van die familie en is wyd versprei in warmer oseane.

GENUS *Ancilla*:
Hulle is medium grootte skulpe met 'n dun en ligte struktuur. Die spits is hoog met 'n wye en kort sifonkanaal. Die naat is nie gegroef nie en die liggaamswinding is redelik konveks. Die naat en spits is gewoonlik bedek met groot kallus wat egter nie die liggaamswinding bedek nie. Die opening is ovaal en verleng met 'n dun kallus. Die lip is dun en skerp. Kleur is gewoonlik 'hazel' of 'chestnut' met bruin bande wat om die skulp spiraal. 'n Klein operkulum is gewoonlik aanwesig. Habitat en jaggewoontes is soos die van die res van die familie. Hoewel nie eksklusief nie, kom baie spesies van die genus in die Japanse streek voor.

GENUS *Agaronia*:
Hulle is klein tot medium skulpe. Hulle het 'n gladde blink struktuur met 'n skerp spits. Die kanaal is gegroef. Die opening is redelik smal. 'n Groef loop



Oliva bertolina
Lamarck

English - continued

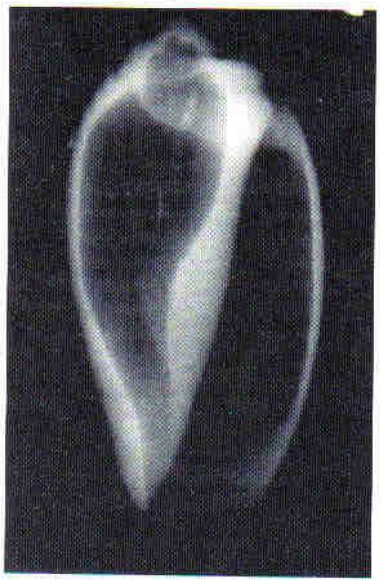
their spiral shape as they expand to take up the shape of the cavity thus produced. A similar process is known to take place in the Cypraeidae, the Naticidae and the Neritidae. The advantage to the snail is that there is now more room for its soft parts and stomach contents while at the same time the protection offered by its shell is not compromised.

The genus *Oliva*
There are at least sixty species of this chiefly tropical genus. The shells are very shiny with a great variability in pattern and colour. Many species also have albino, melanistic or golden forms. Most species are nocturnal predators, and envelop their prey with their foot. The magnificent Panamic species *Oliva porphyria* (see drawing) reaches up to 100 mm in length.

The genus *Olivancillaria*
These are usually rather solid shells, with a grey or brown colour and a relatively wide-open aperture. There can be a groove on the anterior third of the shell, and a well developed callus is normally present on the columella.

The genus *Olivella*
These have small to very small shells with a relatively high spire. While it is widely known that the cowrie *Cypraea moneta* was used as money in the past, did you know that *Olivella biplicata* from California was also used

Olivella biplicata,
1.5x magnification



Olivancillaria gibbosa, actual size

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. If possible, send articles on a MS-DOS diskette in Word for Windows, WordPerfect, or ASCII format. Photographs and line drawings are especially welcome. Please address correspondence and submissions to

Dr M.B.Cortie,
P.O.Box 1664,
Ferndale, 2160
South Africa

or e-mail
MIKEC@MSINFO.MINTEK.AC.ZA

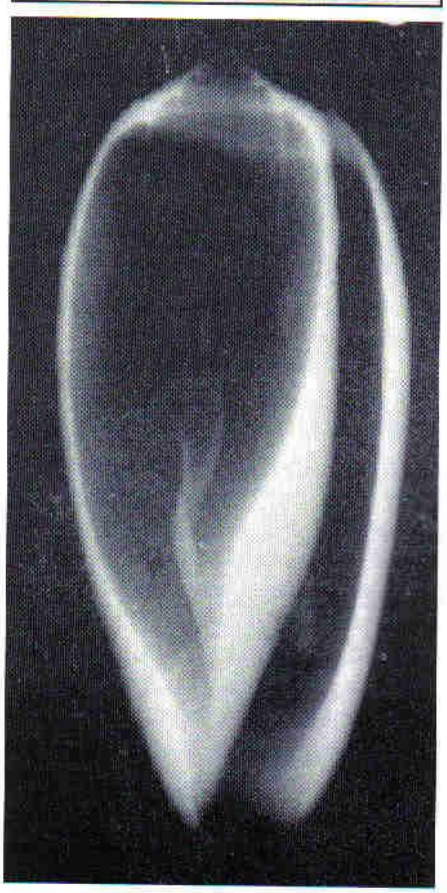
om die anterior deel van die skulp. Die lip is dun en skerp met 'n kolumella kallus wat sterk gegroef is.

GENUS *Melapium*:
Hulle het 'n kort spits met 'n groot liggaamswinding. Hulle is roomkleurig met bruin aksial strepe. Die opening is groot en rond. *Melapium lineatum* is endemies in die Suid-Afrikaanse streek. Dr Kilburn het onlangs genoem dat die genus in sy eie familie, die Melapiidae, geplaas is.

BIBLIOGRAFIE

The Cambridge Natural History, Mollusca by Rev HA Cooke
Seashells of the Wild, Ersenberg
The MacDonald Encyclopedia of Shells, MacDonald
Skulpe van Suider Afrika, Deirdre Richards

Note. The English version incorporates some additional comments made by Dr Kilburn.



Oliva porphyria, actual size

English - continued

in this fashion? The spire was rubbed off and the shells were then threaded onto a string.

The genus *Ancilla*
Medium sized shells with a light structure and a high spire. The whorls are significantly more convex than those of the preceding genera. Colours of the shell normally brown, chestnut, orange or pink. There are a number of other closely related genera including *Amalda, Turrancilla, Ancillista* etc.

The genus *Agaronia*
Smallish shells with a shiny appearance and a sharp spire. Bears some similarity to *Olivancillaria* according to Dr Kilburn.

The genus *Melapium*
Rather different to the other Olividae, the South African endemic *Melapium lineatum* has a very inflated body whorl and string axial stripes. The animal is exceedingly beautiful, with a blue fringe around its foot. Dr Kilburn advises that the genus has now been placed in its own family, the Melapiidae.

Looking for information on South African **Marginellidae** ?

Strandlopers 206 and 207 contain a detailed article on the subject, illustrated with **colour plates** and line drawings. **Order** the pair for R12 (local) or US$15 (foreign). Cheques payable to the Conchological Soc. of S.A. (see back page for address)

The Marginellidae revised

by David Freeman

The *American Conchologist* of March 1996 carries a report on a revision of the family Marginellidae, as published by G.A. and H.K. Coovert in the October 1995 issue of *Nautilus*, journal of the American Academy of Natural Sciences. Based on shell morphology and anatomy, they split the Marginellidae in two, raising the Cystiscidae to full family status. The living genera placed in this new family are : *Canalispira*, *Crithe*, *Cystiscus*, *Extra*, *Gibberula*, *Granulina*, *Persicula*, *Plesiocystiscus* and *Pugnus*.

South African species affected by this change would include

Granulina aphanospira (Tomlin, 1913) (synonym *Persicula nigrocrocea* Barnard, 1969)

Granulina pseustes (E A Smith, 1904) (synonym *Persicula alborubida* Barnard, 1969)

Granulina algoensis (E.A. Smith, 1901)

Canalispira fallax (E.A. Smith, 1903) (synonym *Marginella paxillus* Sowerby, non Reeve, 1892)

Cystiscidae differ from the Marginellidae in having the internal whorls of the shells partly reabsorbed, and the columellar plications reduced internally. There are also consistent radular and other alimentary differences. The authors comment that this new family has features more closely related to the Olividae than to the Marginellidae.

You will find more information on the South African species in *Strandlopers* 206 and 207 of 1981. However, notwithstanding anything to the contrary herein above contained, it is probably still okay to go on calling your shells 'marginellas'.

The Border Shell Club's Shell Show 10-11 August 1996

by R.M. Tietz

It was toward the end of 1995 that we realized that something should be done to promote shelling in the Eastern Cape, as well as membership of our regional group. Planning and publicity for our shell show started in February through an introductory article in the *Newsletter to the Friends of the Museum* while 127 'seaside' schools were invited to participate in June. Meanwhile we decided on accepting entries for 16 classes in four divisions. Schools Group and Individual Entries comprised
- a collection of different seashells from Eastern Cape beaches
- a collection to show variety of shells in any one group
- a spread of colourful shells arranged in an interesting pattern

Classes in the Open Division included
- a systematic collection of shells
- an item of shell craft
- a single shell selected for its significance, rarity or beauty

Our judges were Mary Bursey, Malacologist at the East London Museum who looked after the scientific side and Maritza Coetzee, a local artist and shell enthusiast who appraised aesthetic attributes. In the members' division the following first prizes were awarded:

Class 1 : A systematic exhibit of shells belonging to any one class, family or genus - Nancy Tietz for Fissurellidae.

Class 2 : An exhibit of one species to show variations in form, adult size, colour or patterning - no member tackled this class.

Class 3 : A thematic exhibition of mixed species of shells selected for their significance, economic importance, rarity or beauty of form/colour - D.J. Hodgkinson for a collection of freaks and sinistral shells

Class 4 : A collection of shells from one place - Noggs Newman for shells from Mozambique.

Class 5 : A collection of shells collected live intertidally, dived or trawled from any one site or a number of sites off the South African coast with full identification - D.J. Hodgkinson for prize specimens from the Eastern Cape.

Class 6 : A collection of non-marine Mollusca - Mike Wigley for a first class collection of local shells in this difficult group.

Class 7 : Members' preference, a general class including shell craft, shell art, shell stamps, or shell photographs - first prize went to Amanda van Niekerk, a Port Elizabeth member, who brought 12 exquisitely crafted floral pictures for the exhibition in east London.

The prize certificates were graciously presented by our founder member Majorie Courtenay-Latimer and several members were more delighted to have the honour of shaking Marge's hand than to receive a certificate.

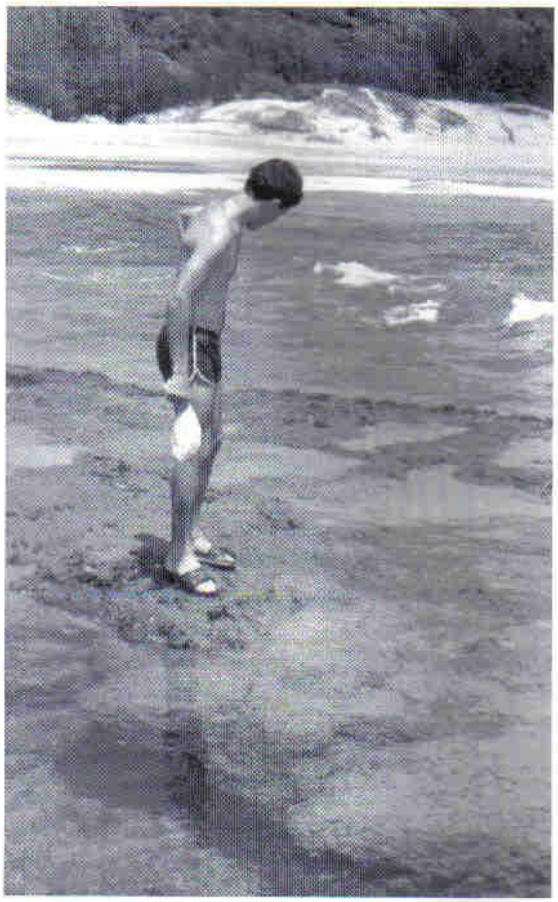
Of course we did make mistakes. Next time we should cater for more classes, for example to accommodate children. Also, it is no use just to invite schools to participate. The invitation must be followed by an introductory talk and possibly an outing to give direction. This was probably why we had such a good response from the Stirling Primary School.

We are, however, well satisfied with our first shell show. All together there were 45 exhibits. At least 165 people attended the show lured by press articles, radio features but mostly by friends of friends of members. We were also able to enrol several new members to our Group.

You *know* you are a sheller when.....

You know you are a sheller when

- the most negative tides of the year are marked on your calendar
- you're not at work the day after every big storm
- you travel with empty plastic bags, containers and rubbing alcohol
- your toolbox includes dental picks, toothbrushes and an engraving tool
- you stop for sand trails on the beach
- your beach wear includes a broad-rimmed hat and a bucket or bag
- each rock at the shore is evaluated as being turnable or not
- your neighbours have noticed that your yard smells like something died each time you return from a trip to the shore
- there are non-edible molluscs in your freezer
- the back of your neck is the most tanned part of your body
- paying $100 for a book no longer seems outrageous
- there is at least one room in your house that looks like a museum
- when driving past a body of water, you spend more time looking at the water than the road as you evaluate its shelling potential
- you don't leave the beach when it starts to rain
- you're just a little disappointed when the hurricane doesn't hit
- the names Abbott, Lamarck and Linne mean something to you
- you ID the craft shells in stores
- standing in frigid water up to your waist is still an enjoyable experience
- necessary furniture is moved out of the living room to make room for your collection
- you consider buying a shell instead of food for dinner
- you are on vacation and you know there is good shelling close by, so you give your wallet to your spouse and say "have a good time dear"
- when your standard diving gear includes miner's light, coat hanger, four prong garden tool and your wife's spaghetti strainer
- climbing a 30-foot tree for three inch snail does not seem unusual
- if traffic is really bad but you are still prepared to brake for an *Achatina*.



With acknowledgements to various contributors to the CONCH-L newsgroup on the Internet

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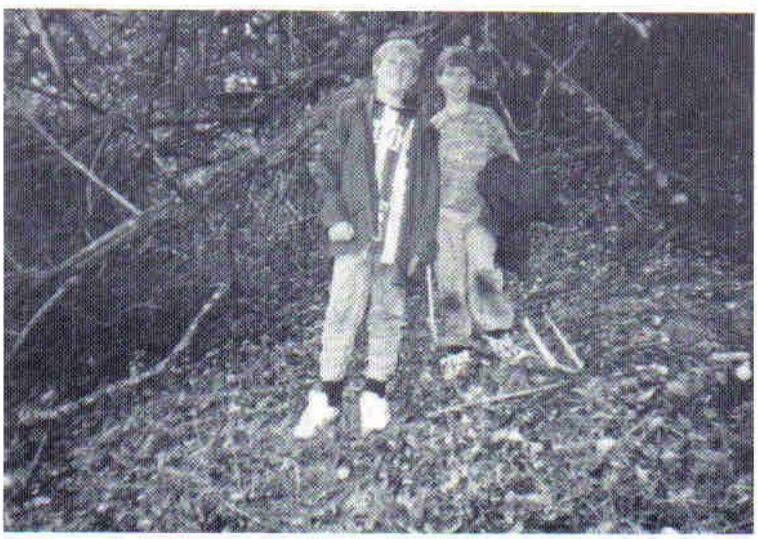


Flotsam

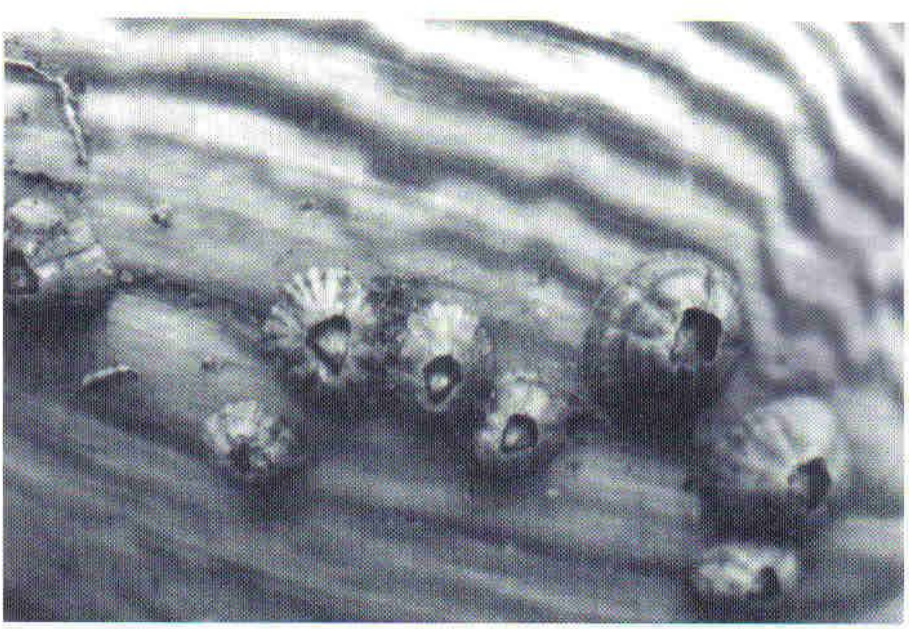
Wandering snail

Recently, while comparing shells with Roy Aiken of Benoni, I came across a rather odd find : a barnacle-encrusted *Achatina zebra* (a land snail) that had been dredged in 1973 by an I & J fishing trawler some 45 km off Port Elizabeth! How on earth could the shell, which would normally be found in the coastal forests on the eastern Cape have arrived *there*? Various possibilities have been mentioned by people with whom I have posed this question. It is not, for example, totally impossible that an empty *Achatina* shell could float in the sea, and provided that a reasonable offshore breeze was blowing it might end up several kilometres out to sea. However, this seems an improbable scenario. Another possibility is that the empty shell was occupied by a hermit crab scavenging on the littoral, and then carried out by the crab into deeper water. This phenomenon is known from the deep offshore basins of southern California, in which are sometime found the hermited shells of molluscs that could not live there on account of the low oxygen content of the basins. However, it would have been a long walk out to sea in the present case! Probably the most likely explanation for this shell is that the snail was clinging to floating debris washed out of a river mouth as a result of a storm. Eventually the debris would have become water logged and sunk, perhaps not before barnacles had become attached to the snail shell.

If there is any moral to the story it is that only a live-taken shell provides a reliable indication of provenance.

Acknowledgements

Andrew Rindsberg, Geological Survey of Alabama, USA, for useful suggestions.



Linnaeus' love-hate relationship with shells

Karl von Linné, perhaps better known as Linnaeus, was reponsible for the establishment of the binominal system of taxonomy (see past *Strandlopers*[1,2]). He also named a great many of the common sea shells found in collections. I had always thought of him as a rather earnest and serious sort of a chap. Unfortunately, it seems that my understanding of Latin, even after five years of it at high school, is really quite superficial, because his humour was completely lost on me. However, I was recently set right by an article in *La Conchiglia*[3], in which the author, the late Mario Angioy, noted that Linnaeus did not initially have a high opinion of molluscs, referring to them as 'filthy worms' ! His dislike carried over in many instances to the names he awarded them. For example mention of the names of the cowries *stolida*, *spurca*, *lurida* and *stercoraria* have up until now evoked in me an image of pretty, shiny little shells from exotic and beautiful beaches. Now this image has been forever shattered- apparently the English translations of these Linnaean Latin names are, respectively, *stupid*, *dirty*, *lurid* and *shitty* !

References

1. Anon., *Strandloper* 192 (1978). pp.1-2.
2. Van der Walt, H. *Strandloper* 239 (1994). pp.2-4.
3. Angioy, M. A digression on malacological nomenclature, *La Conchiglia*, no. 281 (1996). pp.6-7.

Exchanges desired

Mr Jens Hemmen of Grillparzerstr. 22, D-65187, Wiesbaden, Germany, wishes to swop non-marine shells from Europe or South-East Asia for non-marine material from Africa.

Mr Luciano Petruccioli of Via Segesta 26, 00179, Rome, ITALY wishes to exchange Mediterranean and Indo-Pacific Cypraeidae, Muricidae, Strombidae, Coralliophilidae and Harpidae for Southern African members of those genera. His email address is: shellcol@melink.it.

Dredging for shells on the 'Net

There has been quite an increase in the amount of shell-related material on the Internet since we last mentioned the subject in *Strandloper* 245. Collectors who find themselves temporarily removed from the sea and consequently relatively unable to satisfy the well-known itch for shells might therefore consider surfing the Internet. This mountain of electronic information, probably most kindly described as the biggest junk mail emporium in the history of humanity, continues to grow explosively.

Among its hundreds of thousands of 'sites' dedicated to *inter alia* science, commerce, get-rich-quick schemes, flying saucers, government and sectarian propaganda, male teenage humour, New Age gobbledygook , personal ego, sex, and general misdirection, are also a few hundred devoted to some or other aspect of shells and shell collecting. To access these you will need a PC that can run Windows 3.1 or better (or a Mac), a modem, and an account with a local service provider. Even rather an old PC will do but a colour screen is essential. Local Internet service providers offer a variety of schemes but you should be able to secure unlimited access for less than R100 a month. Remember however that you still have to pay for your local telephone calls, which could have duration of thirty or forty minutes apiece. Once you are connected all you have to do is type in the address of the site you are interested in and off you go. One site links smoothly to another and another and another and another and before you know what happens your coffee is cold, your spouse has gone to bed and it is past midnight!

As far as sites go, one of my personal favourites is that of Belgian dealer Guido Poppe. He has a large on-line collection of colour images of shells and quite a bit of scientific information for you to browse. His 'home page' (sort of like his front door) is **http://www.club.innet.be/~year0078**. Society member and shell dealer Brian Hayes, of Port Elizabeth, has recently opened a site too, you can inspect it at **http://www-pe.sprintlink.co.za/~algoabay**. Other sites well worth visiting include the Internet Resources for Conchologists and the *Vita Marina* home page at the addresses given in *Strandloper* 245, and the web page of Conchologists of America at **http://coa.acnatsci.org/conchnet/**. Our Society is also on the 'Net in a modest way; see **http://www.molluscs.net/ConchSocSoAfrica.html**. Pretoria member Kobie du Preez has plans too.. why not have a look at **http://home.global.co.za/~peabrain** and see what's there?

Do not forget about CONCH-L, the 24 hour-a-day ongoing discussion on shelly matters that is hosted by Conchologists of America. To join in you must already have your own email address (normally part of a deal with an Internet service provider anyway) and then you send the following email message **SUBSCRIBE CONCH-L <your name>** to the email address **LISTSERV @UGA.CC.UGA.EDU**. Obviously replace the <your name> bit with something like 'Mike Cortie'. You don't need to send them your own email address, it is automatically part of any message you send them. Soon after they receive your message, they will begin to email you the contributions of various people around the world. Expect about ten messages a day. Incidentally, unlike 'surfing the web', retrieving email only takes a minute or two. Highly recommended but do remember, in this case, to refrain from advertising for commercial gain.

Surf's up dudes!

A bright idea

The bivalve family Pholadacea are unusual in that they can bore into solid rock. In addition they have the curious property of becoming phosphorescent at night. The dye emitted by the animal is so strong that it illuminates everything that it touches. Recently, it was discovered that this liquid is preferentially absorbed by human blood cells. Now an extract from *Phalas dactylus* (Linnaeus,1758), the common piddock of Europe, is replacing certain radioactive isotopes for blood analysis. The new dye is being commercially produced Plymouth, UK. It is clear that we still have lots to learn from molluscs!

Acknowledgement
Stanley Francis, N. Ireland, on the CONCH-L group of the Internet, 5th May 1997.

Riddle : What do *Chimaeria*, an opal and an albatross have in common?

by Mike Cortie

The unusual, very rare and beautiful cowrie, *Chimaeria incomparabilis*, first described in 1993, (see *Strandlopers* 237 and 238) has been in the news again. Since its unveiling to the public in the magazines *La Conchiglia* and *World Shells* in 1993[1,2], this shell has aroused intense interest. Its deep chocolate colour, great rarity, and apparent affinity to certain long-extinct types of cowries have led to it having been described as "one of the great malacological discoveries of the Twentieth Century". As of the beginning of 1997, only five specimens were known, all obtained from depths of 100 m or so off the Horn of Africa.

The first three specimens were acquired by an American, Donald Dan, from Russian trawlers operating in 1982 in the Gulf of Aden. These were examined by Dr Gary Rosenberg of the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, USA. However, before these particular specimens could be described in the scientific literature, Italian collector Bruno Briano bought two of his own from Somalian fishermen sheltering from the civil war in nearby Djibouti. Briano impressed on the fishermen that he wanted additional specimens with the animal intact. As luck would have it, the fishermen apparently retrieved a live specimen less than a month later, but, it seems, the ship's cook and captain became engaged in a dispute over ownership. The cook became so angry he threw the shell overboard, and that so far, is the last genuine find of this shell[3]. (I say genuine because George Sangiouloglou, a collector in Greece, caused a fair bit of excitement and quite a few knowing smiles, when he "advertised" on the Internet on April 1st this year that he had found *two* more, and was offering them for sale.)

In any event, Briano showed his shells to the well-known European specialists Guido Poppe and Gabriella Raybaudi. The importance of the find was recognized at once, and the shells were speedily named and described. There was, however, some difficulty placing this shell in its correct family. According to Drs G. Rosenberg and J. Harasewych in the USA, the species shows an affinity with certain ovulids thought to have become extinct about between ten

photo courtesy of Poppe and Goto

and forty million years ago. On the other hand, Guido Poppe believes that its has a stronger affinity with the Cypraeidae. It is therefore, a sort of "missing link", and obviously of interest to scientists.

Values of US$ 10000 to 20000 each were rapidly placed on the single specimen initially available for purchase, and it was reportedly snapped up by a Japanese dealer. (The holotype was placed in the National Museum in Paris.) Therefore, you might be able to imagine the excitement of shell dealer Martin Gill of the USA, when he came across two unnamed, and apparently forgotten, specimens of this shell in the holdings of the American Museum of Natural History in New York. Gill had been contracted by the museum to assess the value of their collection and, perhaps believing that the museum had no idea of what they had, he removed one[4].

Unfortunately, the museum noticed, and promptly but quietly hired a private investigator. Operating on a hunch, the investigator then began an on-line watch of those sites on the Internet dedicated to discussion of shells. And that was where the unfortunate Mr Gill made his mistake : probably angling for the best possible price, he arranged via a third party for the message to be sent worldwide that a specimen of *Chimaeria* was available for sale. Belgian dealer, Guido Poppe, quite unaware that the ownership of the shells was to put it mildly, questionable, rose to the bait and bought it. The US Attorney's office in Miami swooped, but not before Guido had been and gone, having bought the shell for $12 000, and in turn resold it to Mr Widodo Latip, a wealthy collector in Indonesia for US$ 20 000. The upshot of all this was that Mr Gill got into a serious bit of bother. The good news is that Messrs Poppe and Latip have returned the troublesome shell to the Museum of Natural History. In a deal with American justice, Mr. Gill returned the money to the Museum, who then refunded Mr. Poppe, who in turn refunded Mr. Widodo Latip. In a curious twist, the whole series of transactions was facilitated by none other than Mr Donald Dan, the original discoverer of the shells!

I believe that is was Guido who first mentioned that involvement with this shell seemed to bring all kind of misfortune. In fact, he has now gone so far as to claim that he wouldn't accept another one of these "bad luck shells" even if it was a free gift. This brings me back to the riddle. The recent events have caused *Chimaeria* to develop a reputation in the shell-dealing fraternity that is not dissimilar to that surrounding the opal. But what is the connection with an albatross? Well, if you have ever read Samuel Taylor Coleridge's classic Eighteenth Century poem, the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, you might recall what happens to anybody foolhardy enough to collect one of those !

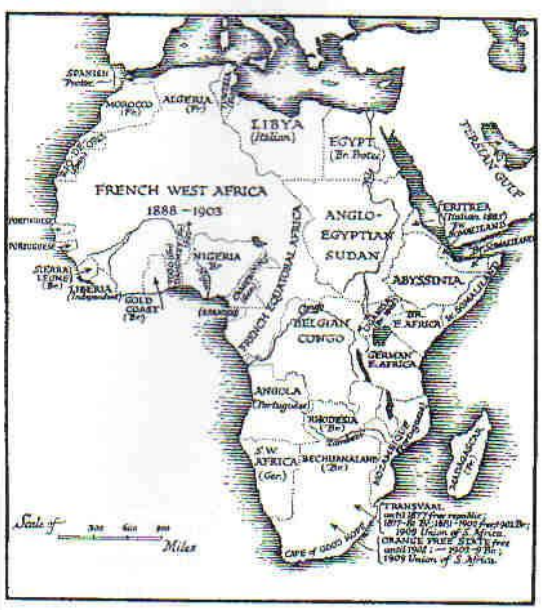
Those were the days!

by Dai Herbert,

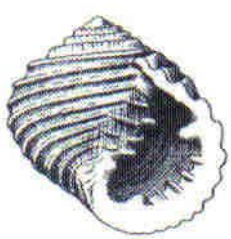
Natal Museum

A historian colleague of mine at the Natal Museum, Graham Dominy, has passed on to me something that he thought might be of interest. It concerns a short excerpt from an old book *Natal; A History and Description of the Colony*, by H. Brooks (1876). In a chapter concerning aspects of the province's natural history, Brooks had the following to say about the rocky shores:

'The rocky sea coast of Natal is everywhere alive with crustaceans and molluscs. In many places the rocks extending round into the mouths of the rivers are covered with a large rock oyster. The shallow cavities and basins of the rocks themselves teem, when the tide is out, with the most beautiful forms of mollusc life in miniature. In a small natural aquarium, constituted by a rock-enclosed pool of pellucid water a couple of yards across and a few inches deep, cypraea, trochuses, cones, trumpet-shells, murices, turbos, naticas, volutes, delphinulas, terebrae, limpets and barnacles may be seen all at once, making the most of the interval of still water, and carrying on in intimate companionship the various operations of mollusc existence.'



Sounds idyllic doesn't it - ah those must have been the days, even allowing for a little exaggeration and embellishment to suit an armchair audience back in England!



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1. G. Raybaudi, *La Conchiglia*, No. 268, July/Sept 1993, pp.16-17.
2. *World Shells*, No. 5, 1993, pp.14-17.
3. Poppe,G. Discussion on the CONCH-L forum on the Internet, 30th Jan 1997.
4. *Orlando Sentinel*, Jan 30th, 1997.

Book Reviews

Wild About Cape Town

by Duncan Butchart,

Southern Book Publishers, Halfway House, Gauteng. Soft cover, 146 pages,

R48-00.

Reviewed by David Freeman

This is the fourth handbook in the series '*Wild About...*' produced by this naturalist, artist and photographer. The others deal with the animals and plants of Johannesburg, the Lowveld, and the Okavango.

The introduction, with maps and photographs, is well written and informative, and reminds us that the Cape Peninsula consists of a remarkable variety of habitats supporting the amazing range of plants and animals for which this region is famous. The book is divided into sections covering mammals, birds, reptiles and frogs, freshwater and marine fishes, marine invertebrates (which section includes molluscs), land invertebrates, and plants in several subdivisions.

Each species is illustrated with an excellent small colour photograph with a descriptive caption. An enormous number of birds and plants make up the bulk of the book. Shell collectors will inevitably be disappointed with the sixteen species of mollusc shown. We all have our own personal opinions about what ought to be included in even such a non-specialised book as this. More irritating, perhaps, are the errors and inaccuracies, considering that the author apparently did consult professional specialists in the various fields.

In this connection, the choice of common names for shells (some of them seemingly invented for this book) adds to the confusion when, for example, he distinguishes between 'perlemoen' (*Haliotis midae*) and 'Venus ear' or 'siffie' (*Haliotis spadicea*) but illustrates a juvenile *H. midae* instead of a true *H. spadicea*. He illustrates a group of *Patella granularis* on a rock as 'granular limpets' and gives their size as 8 cm, which is significantly bigger than normal, and then he refers in the caption to a 'subspecies' which he calls the 'bearded limpet', which is possibly *Patella barbara*, which does reach 8 cm in diameter. He uses a specimen of *Turbo cidaris* to illustrate the 'alikreukel' or 'giant periwinkle', and he compounds the error with the comment that it reaches a diameter of 10 cm and that the minimum size permitted for taking is 64 mm. These are certainly the dimensions of *Turbo sarmaticus* which is the correct species to which the common name applies. He gives the name 'finger ploughshell' to a group of *Bullia rhodostoma*, whereas in my opinion this common name sounds as if it ought to be applied to *Bullia digitalis*.

Obviously, the author cannot be expected to be an expert in all branches of natural history, so one shouldn't allow one's disappointment over shortcomings in one specialised branch of the subject to cloud one's appreciation of a remarkable condensation of a wide field into a small, well-illustrated pocket sized handbook. Any visitor to the Cape Peninsula would find this small field guide most useful on any outing. The 146 pages end with a useful index and bibliography.

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