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THE CONCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
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CIRCULAR NO.12.

JULY 1960.

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MEETING:

Our next meeting will be held at the South African Museum on Thursday, July 14th, at 8 o'clock. This time members are invited to bring along their Muricidae. There will be a competition and a surprise prize will be awarded to the best displayed collection of the South African representatives of this family. The prize has been specially donated by Mr. John S. Nutt of Port Alfred and is well worth competing for.

Agenda:-

- (1) Minutes of last meeting.
- (2) Matters arising out of the minutes.
- (3) Election of members.
- (4) Proposal of members.
- (5) Any other business.
- (6) Film - the subject is as yet unknown but will be of general interest.

ABOUT MEMBERS:

At our meeting on May 15th the following were elected:-

- (C) Dr. Francis Llabador 1, Rue Gambetta, Nemours, Algeria.
(C) J.G.J. Kuiper, 121, Rue de Lille, Paris VII.
(S) Master B.C. Ginsberg, "Stillerus", 57 Kloof Road, Sea Point, C.P.
Mrs. C.W. Louw, P.O.Box 111, Heidelberg, C.P.
Mr. J. Walker, "Lisieux", Capri Road, St.James, C.P.

At the same meeting the following was proposed:-

- | | <u>Proposer.</u> | <u>Second.</u> |
|--------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| (S) Master Martin Plant. | Mrs.L.Kerr. | Mr. le Roux. |

At the meeting on July 14th the following will be proposed:-

- | | <u>Proposer.</u> | <u>Second.</u> |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------|
| Mrs. M. Theron. | Mrs.L.Kerr. | Mr.C.Swaneveld |

Please note the following change of address:-

Mr.D.J.Ackermann, The Roundhouse, The Glen, Camps Bay, C.P.

Miss Natalie Evans is resigning from the Society as she is leaving the country for England. We wish her success and happy shelling.

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OUR FIELD DAY ON MAY 15TH:
by L.Kerr.

Although the weather looked threatening when we left Cape Town, it cleared up later and by the time we reached Dawid's Kraal it was very pleasant. We spent the morning shelling and there was great excitement when a particular treasure was found. The "bag" included some fine cones, marginellas, *Liottis*, *fasciolaria lugubris*, *aplysias*, and the more common *patellas* and *turbos*. After our braaivleis we proceeded to Kleinmond where we viewed Mr. Le Roux's fine shell collection.

Mrs. le Roux kindly provided a noble tea and a short meeting was held. Mr. le Roux generously presented cones and trowled shells to each member, and we reluctantly wended our way home after a most enjoyable day. Our sincere thanks go to Mr. and Mrs. le Roux.

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GENERAL NOTES:

I have received a letter from our member, Mr. D.J. Bosman, P.O. Box 1729, Bloemfontein, in which he writes as follows:- "I want to start doing research on Siphonaria and would welcome any live material collectors could possibly send to me. Also, any literature or articles which may be of use in such research. If any person feels that he/she could assist me in any way, he can write to me and give me an idea of what he has available, when I can send further details. I would also appreciate it if our friends from Natal could co-operate."

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The Department of Mollusks of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia has started the publication of a series of monographs on the marine mollusks of the Indo-Pacific region. These publications are edited by R. Tucker Abbot with William J. Clench and Ronald A. Rehder as co-editors. Each number covers all the known species of a genus or a family and gives descriptions, data and an illustration either in colour or black-and-white of all species. The subscription rate is \$5.00 (about £1. 17. 6) per 100 pages and it is hoped that, although the numbers will be issued at irregular intervals, the yearly minimum will be about 100 pages. In view of the fact that many Indo-Pacific species extend as far as Natal, this publication should be of great interest to our members. Further particulars may be obtained from the Secretary.

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Mrs. Nancy Deverall mentions in a recent letter that while beachcombing at Costa da Sol near Lourenco Marques, they found a large quantity of fresh pansy shells obviously recently washed up by the tide. This shows that the Flettenberg Bay coast is not the only place where they are common.

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The Trustees of the South African Museum have kindly agreed that members of approved scientific societies are entitled to free admission to the Museum upon presentation of membership cards at the door. Since, so far, we do not have membership cards, we suggest that members wishing to make use of this facility enquire for Mr. Talbot.

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On the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the Netherlands Malacological Society, a supplement volume of Basteria has been published. It is called "The Netherlands as an Environment for Molluscan Life" and gives in 174 pages a synopsis of the ecology of the Mollusca (marine, fresh water, and brackish water forms) in the Netherlands. The text consists of six chapters (all with a short summary in Dutch) compiled by ecologists and taxonomists. It is available for Fl. 4.00 (about 8s.) at the following address:- Mrs. W.S.S. van der Feen, Malacological Department, Zoölogisch Museum, Plantage Middenlaan 53, Amsterdam (C), Netherlands. Apply for Basteria, Vol. 23, Supplement, 1959.

FURTHER NOTES ON SOUTH AFRICAN SPECIES OF "CALLIOSTOMA":
by D.A. Kennelly.

- Calliostoma fultoni*, Sowerby. Locality Port Elizabeth.
(Journal of Conchology, Vol.VI, 1839).
Calliostoma farquhari, Sowerby. Locality Port Elizabeth.
(Marine Shells of South Africa, 1892).

The above mentioned are two species which are possibly not well known to our members, hence these few notes.

Compared with other species of the same size they show a very acute angle, being much narrower across the base, and more acutely conical. It will be noted that the finding and description of these shells goes back 70 and 67 years respectively, and the reader is referred to "Marine Shells of South Africa", 1892, for illustrations.

However, with the building and completion of the Harbour at Port Elizabeth, with the attendant oil tank site, etc., the reefs where in all probability these shells were first discovered have been obliterated and all molluscan life destroyed. The two species have been regarded as "lost for over 50 years, and the writer cannot find any record of more specimens being found.

In October 1956 the writer with his family spent a week at Jeffreys Bay. Miss E.A.Kennelly, one of our student members, more or less concentrated on "Calliostoma", and one specimen found at that time proved to be "*Calliostoma farquhari*". This rediscovery of a "lost" species is of great interest, for further collecting may reveal the occurrence at Jeffreys Bay of "*C. fultoni*". It is this element of the unexpected in shell hunting which makes the hobby so fascinating.

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RARE SHELLS:

by A.C. van Bruggen.

For various reasons certain shells can be rarer than others, e.g. the inaccessibility of their habitat, difficulties in distinguishing species, etc. There are still hundreds (probably thousands) of species of Mollusca from all over the world which are only known from one or very few specimens. Rare shells which still fetch high prices usually belong to families such as Conidae and Cypraeidae; they are generally large and beautiful.

One family of Prosobranchia is especially well known for the rarity of its species, viz: the Pleurotomariidae or slit-lips. Our own South African species, *Pleurotomaria africana*, is a much sought after rarity. There are now six specimens in collections in South Africa, and the U.S.A. Very probably the rarest species in the family is the large *Pleurotomaria rumphii* which has been recorded from the Moluccas, off Japan and Formosa. So far, only three specimens are known to have been in existence. The type specimen of this beautiful species is still carefully preserved in excellent condition in the Natural History Museum at Rotterdam. The second and third specimens were deposited in Japanese collections and were destroyed during World War II. Therefore, the type specimen is again the only existing example of *Pleurotomaria rumphii*. The Pleurotomariidae are an ancient and primitive family; many fossil species are known but the recent members of the family occur only on the deep sea bottom.

Various species of the genus *Conus* are very rare.

They are real collector's items and still fetch high prices. One of the most valued species is the Glory of the Sea, Conus gloriarius. At the present day only 23 specimens of this handsome shell are known, some only as a figure or plate. I have seen several of these specimens in Dutch museums. Some of the figured specimens belonged to old conchological cabinets in Europe, but unfortunately many of these private collections became scattered after the death of their owners. Therefore it is impossible to trace the whereabouts of the specimens. Only recently the 23rd specimen was discovered in the Darmstadt Museum, Germany. This particular Conus was over 80 years in the museum until it was "discovered"! The typhoon "Hester" near the Philippines was the cause of the 24th specimen being found still alive near the island of Corregidor; this beautiful specimen, which was 99mm. long, is preserved in a Philippine collection. Unfortunately, at least two specimens were destroyed during the last war. In the old days collectors offered considerable sums for the Glory of the Sea; amounts of 250 Dutch guilders (1827) and 3000 Swiss francs are among the highest paid.

Among the cowry shells (Cypraeidae) are some well known rarities: Mystaponda leucodon (unique specimen), Mystaponda broderipi (3 specimens known), Leporicypraea valentia (5-6 specimens known). Other species, once considered rare, appeared to occur only in one locality but in great quantities, such as Gratiadusta vredenburgi. Callistocypraea aurantium, the golden or orange cowry, is not very rare, but its restricted range in the Pacific and the fact that the local natives hold it in high esteem make it a prize possession for those who are so fortunate as to obtain it. Recent quotations show that the value of a good specimen is round about £8 to £12.

As mentioned before, the vast majority of rare shells do not attract amateur collectors. Most of these are either small or without striking colours and pattern; therefore they are only of interest to the scientist and the really seasoned collector. There exists a rare and highly interesting species of slug (Milax niger) on the top of a certain mountain in South Switzerland; at present only about a dozen specimens have been collected. The author made a special trip to get this species and in his experience a search of a day or so would certainly yield a good number of specimens. But, fortunately, nobody but some scientists and museums is interested, and there is no danger of extermination. This is a good example of a rare species which is not really rare, since collectors are obviously not interested.

NOTES ON THE CYPRAEA & TRIVIA FAMILIES AS FOUND AT FORT ALFRED:
by John S. Hutt.

Of the 19 varieties of Cypraea listed by Turton as having been found by him, only four: Capensis, Edentula, Citrina and Tabescens, are other than rare or very rare - the first two very common, the other two barely common. The remaining 15 on his list are, in my opinion, mere casual visitors brought in either by the Mozambique current or by fish.

It is possible that Cypraea Amphithales (Melville) is a rare resident as I have found three specimens, while Turton's Cypraea Capensis Albolineata, of which I also have three specimens, may also be a local residential variety.

The commonest Cypraea is undoubtedly C. Edentula, but curiously enough very few "fresh" specimens are found, perhaps 1 in 200 as a guess. I have a few which show from 3 to 7 teeth on the outer side and very occasionally indications of teeth on the inner side of the aperture. I doubt whether I have yet found a Cypraea Edentula Alfredensis, as without a specimen for

comparison there is no means of gauging Turton's descriptions of "thick outer lip". I have however found an *Edentula* which has not only a very thin outer lip but an outer lip which is almost a semi-circle giving the shell a wider aperture than usual.

Among my other "varieties" I have a *C. Capensis* which is somewhat larger and which is a pleasing brightish yellow all over. Over and above those listed in Turton's book (but I have not found all of those yet) I have 29 varieties of *Cypraea* which include several juveniles, as well as 2 specimens of *C. Fuscodontata*, one with 18 teeth and one with 14 teeth. Among these are two specimens, 15 and 13 teeth respectively, which are almost identical with *Fuscodontata* in colouring but with teeth which are not coloured and not so prominent yet sharper. It is probable that some of these are worn specimens and therefore difficult to identify and it is more than probable that most of them have been brought down from the Wild Coast or even high by the vagaries of currents, etc.

Of the *Trivia* all listed in Turton are common, with the exception of *T. Vesicularis Pseudovoluta* (Schilder) which is comparatively rare. I have found one specimen of *Trivia Oryza* (Lamarck) mentioned by Turton as a Natal shell. In this family I have a very small shell like *T. Pellucidula* which is white, almost completely spherical with an aperture curved in an arc, and having 20 teeth on the outer and 16 teeth on the inner sides of the aperture. Ribs run up both sides but leave a long narrow open smooth groove down the centre of the top. The variations and varieties in this family form a fascinating subject for a beachcomber. I have 68 different ones according to my ideas of what constitute differences.

A USEFUL BOOK FOR SHELL COLLECTORS.
by D.H. Kennelly.

I expect every collector at one time or another has been faced with the problem of obtaining a book or books on shells and shell collecting. For the benefit of our members I append the name of a book of which I obtained a copy through a bookseller in Port Elizabeth. It is "The Shell Collectors Handbook" by A. Hyatt Verrill, published a few years ago by Putnam & Sons, New York, and the cost was about £1. The book is well written with a lot of very useful information to the collector, and also contains a number of plates illustrating shells referred to in the text. I have found it most useful and interesting and recommend it to any of our members who may be in want of such a book to help them along the road to successful collecting.