

The Strandloper

BULLETIN OF THE CONCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

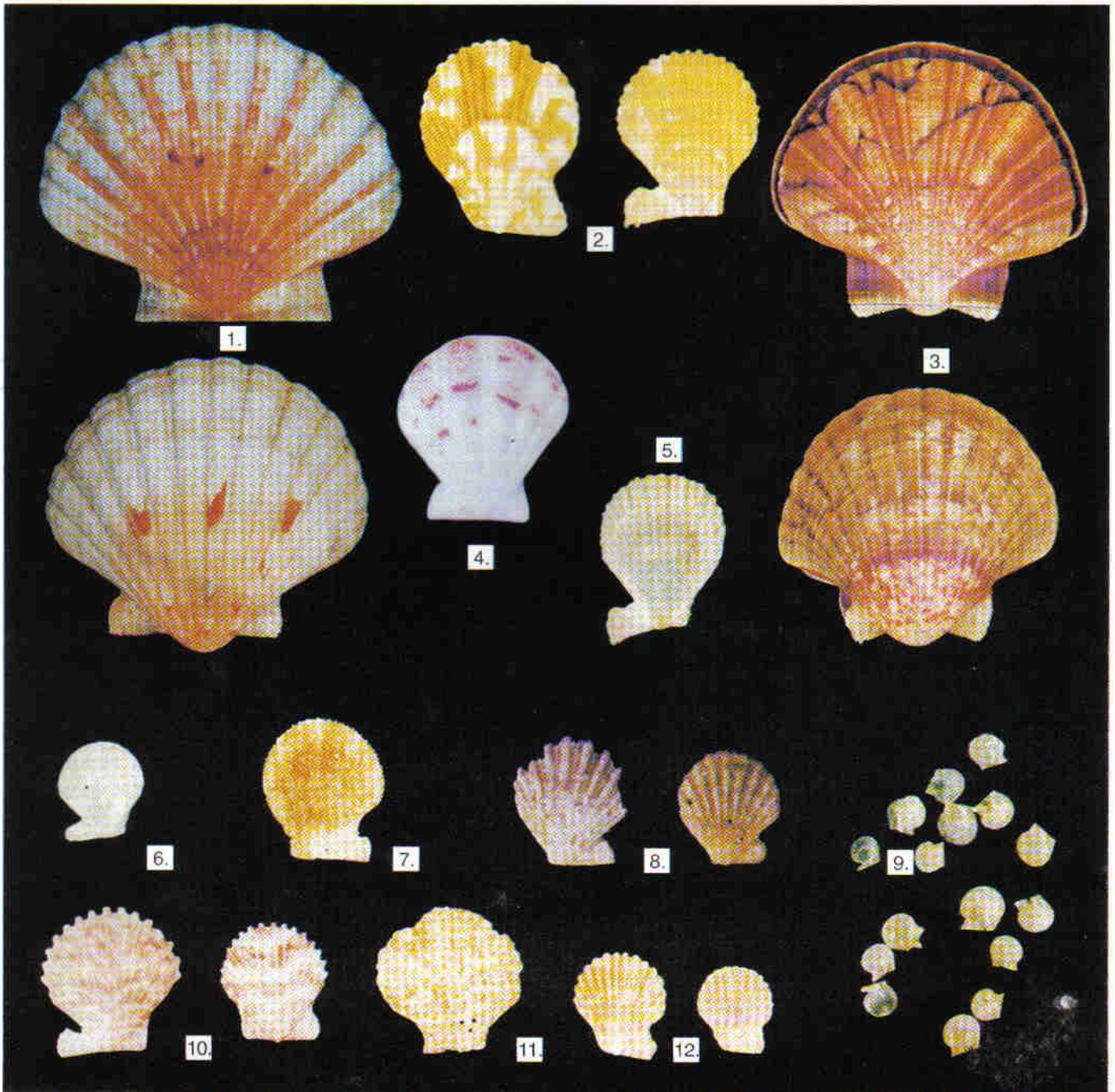


Strandloper 242

June 1995

Page 1

Pectinidae and Propeamussiidae in South Africa by Markus Lussi



Most scallops occur infratidally in South Africa and as a result are hard to find. Species found living in the intertidal region are *Chlamys coruscans*, *C.tincta* and *C.weberi*. When young most scallops are attached to the substratum by means of a byssus but when adult many are free-swimmers. Locomotion is achieved by a jet of water generated by the valves rapidly opening and closing. Curtain-like inner folds of the mantle edge direct water downwards to counter gravity. Swimming speeds of up to 73 cm per second are on record. Deep-water scallops are particularly good swimmers and may be trawled well clear of the sea floor. The bottom valve of "swimmers" is generally lighter in colour than the top valve. This makes them less conspicuous when viewed from either above or below (an adaptation also

used in fishes). Scallops lie on their right valves when at rest which, in many species, is more rounded than the left valve and prevents the opening from coming into contact with the sea floor. Most scallops are suspension feeders, feeding on micro-plankton. Some deep-sea species feed on crustacea and are regarded as carnivorous.

The central ligament pit of the hinge of some scallops possess no true teeth but weak side-folds, known as crural ridges. The right valve is often bordered by a series of small teeth known as the ctenolium. Members of the genus *Pecten* possess one flat valve and the "wings" are equal in size, whilst those of the genus *Chlamys* have similar-sized valves but dissimilar "wings". The following species are endemic to South Africa:

Chlamys gilchristi, *Chlamys humilis*, *Chlamys tincta* and *Pecten sulcicostatus*. *Pecten sulcicostatus* is the only edible scallop in South Africa but its limited numbers render it commercially unviable. The family Propeamussiidae is represented in South Africa by two species namely *Parvamussium texturatum* and *Propeamussium sibogai*. Members of the Propeamussiidae are translucent and very fragile. One valve is more colourful and the interior of the valves are sculptured with ribs.

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Index to shells figured

Shallow dredged = 1 to 30 metres, scuba = 1 to 50 metres, ex pisces = found in the stomach of a fish, dredged = 100 to 150 metres, trawled = 200 to 300 metres. The size in mm represents the dimension of the specimen. The abundance of the species refers to South Africa only.

Page 1

1. *Pecten sulcicostatus* Sowerby, 1842. Beached / 109 mm / Cape / uncommon
2. *Chlamys (Mimachlamys) senatoria* (Gmelin, 1791). Scuba / 27 mm / Natal / uncommon
- 3¹. *Pecten (Oppenheimopecten) sp. aff. erythraeensis* Sowerby, 1842. Scuba / 62 mm / Natal / uncommon
4. *Decadopecten plica* (Linne, 1758). Scuba / 23 mm / Natal / rare
5. *Chlamys lemniscata* (Reeve, 1853) Scuba / 18mm / Natal / rare
6. *Chlamys sp.3.* Dredged / 12 mm / Cape / rare
7. *Chlamys humilis* Sowerby, 1904. ex pisces / 17mm / Cape / uncommon
8. *Chlamys elegantissima* (Deshayes, 1863). Scuba / 18mm / Natal / rare
9. *Cyclopecten vidalensis* Barnard, 1964. Dredged / 6 mm / Natal / rare
10. *Volachlamys fultoni* (Sowerby, 1904). Trawled / 38 mm / Natal / uncommon (juveniles, see also 14)

11. *Chlamys (Cryptopecten) bullata* (Dautzenberg & Bavay, 1912). Dredged / 19mm / Natal / rare
12. *Chlamys sp. 1.* Beached / 12 mm / Natal / rare

Page 12

13. *Parvamussium texturatum* (Dautzenberg & Bavay, 1912). Dredged / 11 mm / Natal / rare
14. Adults of 10.
15. *Propeamussium sibogai* (Dautzenberg & Bavay, 1904). Trawled / 52 mm / Natal / uncommon
16. *Chlamys gilchristi* Sowerby, 1904. ex pisces / 13mm / Cape / rare
17. *Chlamys sp. 2.* Scuba / 15 mm / Natal / rare
18. *Brachtechlamys noduliferus* (Sowerby, 1842). Scuba / 41 mm / Natal / rare
19. *Chlamys liltvedi* Wagner, 1984. Beached / 42mm / Zululand / uncommon
20. *Cyclopecten (Delectopecten)*

- vitreus* (Gmelin, 1791). Ex pisces / 16 mm / Cape / rare
- 21². *Chlamys testudinea* (Reeve, 1853). Scuba / 38mm / Natal / rare
22. *Chlamys coruscans* (Hinds, 1845). Beached / 17mm / Natal / uncommon (see also 25)
23. *Chlamys weberi* Bavay, 1904. Beached / 27mm / Natal / uncommon
24. *Chlamys (Cryptopecten) bornardi* (Philippi, 1851). Dredged / 14mm / Natal / rare
25. see 22.
26. *Chlamys tincta* (Reeve, 1853). Beached / 25mm / Cape / common]
27. *Gloripallium speciosum* (Reeve, 1853). Scuba / 45 mm / Natal / rare
28. *Decadopecten amiculum* (Philippi, 1851). Shallow dredged / 41 mm / Natal / rare

Notes added by Dr Kilburn. 1. probably a new species rather, 2. almost most certainly a synonym of *C. senatoria*

The 1995 Annual General Meeting

The Society's 1995 AGM was held on May 10th at the Pretoria Zoo and was hosted by the Pretoria Group. Over 30 members attended the meeting which had the dual purpose of also serving as the AGM of the Pretoria Group. As a reward for their diligence in serving the Society's needs, persons present were treated to several magnificent displays of shells, many from the Group's recent and very successful trip to Zanzibar, and the usual outstanding spread of edibles for which the Pretoria Group will surely become world famous at some stage. A short slide show of the Zanzibar trip was presented, and all those who had not gone along admired (and, no doubt, longed to be on) the beautiful white coral-sand beaches. A full report-back on the trip will be forthcoming in a future issue of *Strandloper*, so in the meantime it may be suffice to say here that the beaches, shells and people are worth going for, but please do not have high expectations of the accommodations!

As far as the affairs of the Society are concerned, the news is good. We ended the 94/95 financial year with R13 143 on hand. Income for the year was R13 845 while expenses (mainly the *Strandloper* and postage) were R6 403. The income includes a donation of R1000 by *Rocks and Gems* of Durban, which will be used to offset some of the costs of the present issue of *Strandloper*. The low cost of printing the *Strandloper* last year was the result of various indulgences permitted to the Editor while he experimented with the method to be used, and is unlikely to be repeated this year. Your committee remains committed to the concept of 4 issues of *Strandloper* per year, at least one of which will include colour.

The bad news is that we were forced to remove quite a number of lapsed members from our mailing list. So if you have not paid your membership fee, or know of someone who has forgotten to do so, then please get busy! As matters stood on the night of the AGM we have 222 paying members, and about 60 non-paying addresses. The latter consist of Life Members (25 years or more with the Society), a sprinkling of Honorary Members, and the various Clubs, Museums, Libraries or Societies to which we send the *Strandloper*. However, we believe that a bigger membership would be even better, and address an appeal to all mem-



bers to exercise their ingenuity to find ways of increasing our membership. In particular, we would like to attract those folks who collect shells or who are interested in them but who, for some reason, are not members of the Society. We estimate that there may be several dozen people in Southern Africa in this category.

The meeting as a whole was quite lively, and various proposals to increase the number of members and enhance the value of the *Strandloper* mooted. With regards to the former, it was agreed that insertions of publicity material into magazines and newspapers would be one way to go. We hope to address this before the end of the year but would welcome your assistance too. Exhibitions of shells at hobby fairs or in libraries or other central locations has also proved in the past to be an effective way of introducing new members.

It was unanimously agreed also that South African collectors might benefit from a family by family review of our molluscs in the *Strandloper*. (The Editor stayed silent during this part of the discussion since he knows just how much

research could be involved in such an undertaking!) However, let that not discourage anybody from tackling some part of the task. Markus Lussi's fine article on the scallops to be found in our waters, and Brian Hayes' comprehensive treatment of the subgenus *Poropteron* in a previous issue, are already a start. Please let Laurie Smith or Mike Cortie know if your Group or someone within it is interested in reviewing a family.

Wishing you the best of luck and every success in your collection or study of shells for the coming year,

Dr Dick Kilburn **Lizike van den Berg**
President **Vice-president**

Laurie Smith **Han van den Berg**
Secretary **Committee member**

Mike Cortie **Bill Krüger**
Director **Treasurer**

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Some special South African cowries

by M.Cortie

Photos by Sean Swarts, of *Rocks and Gems*, Durban

Many coastal regions of the world boast some conchological speciality, the mention of which is likely to put dreamy, far-away looks into the eyes of shell collectors. Among others, West Africa has its volutes and marginellas, the Caribbean its spectacular strombs, Australia has the world's biggest gastropod and much more beside, and the myriad islands and coastlines of the Indo-Pacific contain a magnificent variety of just about everything. However, South Africa does not fare badly, and has its special shells too. Our marine waters are world-renowned amongst conchologists for their endemic, cool water Conidae, their diverse variety of limpets and Haliotidae, our large numbers of beautiful Marginellidae, our deep water volutes, our *Bullia* ("plough shells") and, especially, our endemic cowries.

Discussion of South Africa's endemic Cypraeidae has appeared from time to time in the *Strandloper*, and a very comprehensive and splendidly illustrated treatise on the subject was published some years ago by Bill Liltved¹. The present article is therefore not a scientific review of the subject, but is rather a celebration of the shells and their beauty. The photographs are, unless otherwise acknowledged, by Sean Swarts, and are of shells from the cabinets of *Rocks and Gems* in Durban.

As far as cowries go, it seems that South Africa has two rather different

groups. The Indo-Pacific species extend down our east coast, from KwaZulu-Natal to the Transkei and down as far as Port Elizabeth, and may often be found intertidally. The number of species diminishes in general as one proceeds southwards. The shore and near-shore reefs of northern Natal are populated by quite typical Indo-Pacific species such as *Cypraea annulus*, *arabica*, *helvola* and *cribraria*. The Indo-Pacific influence is still strong at the Natal/Pondoland border, with, for example, specimens of *C.annulus*, *lamarcki*, *tigris*, *caput-serpentis*, and *carneola* turning up live in the intertidal region there and others, such as *C.teres* and *helvola* being reasonably frequent in beach-drift.

The South African representatives of the Indo-Pacific Cypraeidae are not without their charm, and have provided many conchologists, marine aquarists, and other amateur natural historians with much excitement and pleasure. In addition, some of the species possess especially well-developed shells. For example specimens of *C.tigris* from Pondoland are very large and beautiful, and our *C.arabica* are so consistently bigger than average that they have been awarded the subspecific name *immanis*.

However, it is not for specimens of our Indo-Pacific cowries that foreign conchologists crave, rather it is for our hard-to-obtain endemic cowries.

Mention names such as *capensis*, *algoensis*, *fuscodentata*, *edentula*, or *fuscobruba* to a collector and you are sure to get his or her attention. (However, as we will soon see, professional malacologists are more apt to get a vexed expression!) Many of us remember the time when these endemic cowries were only available *ex pisces* or as beach shells. Perhaps the most reliable way to get hold of them was to scour the winter beach drift along the Cape coast with a gusty wind rattling about your ears.

Circumstances changed in the late 1970s, when an increasing number of collectors took up scuba diving, and nowadays a trickle of live-taken specimens is available on the market. However, it is never going to be easy to acquire specimens of these shells for the simple reason that their collection is difficult. Our coastal waters are notoriously rough, and are exposed almost everywhere to the full strength of swells generated in the great Southern Ocean. To get to a suitable dive site, scuba divers often need to use ski-boats launched through the surf (since we have rather few harbours). Furthermore, the endemic cowries generally live on relatively deep reefs, and dives to 30 or 40 metres or deeper may be required. Add to this the fact that the water is relatively cold, offshore currents may run at up to several knots and that there is the ever-present possibility (especially in the Cape) of meeting a large predator or being subjected to an unfavourable change of weather, and you can appreciate that these animals are quite well protected from humans. However, it may be worth pointing out that intertidal shelling is not totally futile as far as finding some of these shells is concerned, and at least one living *Cypraea capensis* has apparently been found in rock pools at Gonubie near East London. There have surely been other finds by shellers or snorkelers



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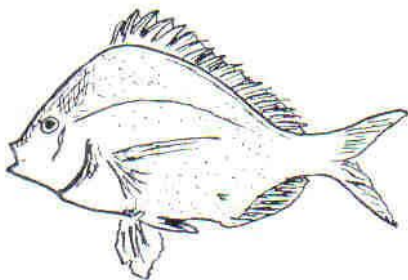
that I am unaware of.

One of the features of the Cape endemic cowries that, as more and more live material is found, it has become apparent that the various species are not clearly defined. Thus for example, while 'typical' specimens of *C. capensis*, *edentula*, *fuscorubra* and *fuscudentata* are easily identified, there are a variety of Cape cowries with shells (and animals) of an intermediate nature. These are often given new species or sub-species names as they turn up, but it seems that the authorities do not agree on the details.

As far as the species *capensis*, *edentula* and *alfredensis* are concerned, the interested reader is referred to a very recent article by Raybaudi Massilia². Massilia considers the status of *amphithales*, and confirms that it often quite clearly a hybrid between *capensis* and *edentula*. However, he also illustrates a shell that appears to be a hybrid between *capensis* and *alfredensis*! He gave this new mollusc the subspecific name *amphithales alfrediana*.

Besides the endemic cowries of the Eastern and Southern Cape, the deep reefs off Natal and the Transkei also harbour a selection of rare and eminently collectable cowries. The list includes *C. fultoni*, *broderipii*, *cruickshanki*, *barclayi*, and the relatively common *citrina* and you have a world-class assemblage of very special shells.

Some of these special shells are illustrated in colour on the following pages for your pleasure and interest. Sean Swarts of Rocks and Gems,



The "slinger", *Chrysoblephus puniceus*, is commonly 20 to 60 cm in length. It inhabits rocky seabeds at 20 to 100m depth and eats crustaceans and molluscs.

Durban, who provided the photos, has also included some explanatory notes. We also wish to thank Sean for assisting the *Strandloper* with some of the printing costs of this issue.

Notes on shells on pages 6 and 7

by Sean Swarts and Mike Cortie

1. *Cypraea cohenae* Burgess, 1965. This shell was collected fresh dead in the Cape St Francis area of the Cape. It was identified by W.R. Liltved who also supplied the photograph. The shell is regarded by some as a hybrid of *Cypraea fuscudentata* and *edentula* and is restricted to the Jeffery's Bay region. Specimens show some variability, tending in some cases towards *edentula*, or in the shell figured, *fuscudentata*. *C. cohenae* grows to about 32 mm in length.

2. *Cypraea iutsui* (Shikama 1974). This is the Indian Ocean form of this shell. The deep water Atlantic form of this shell, which was first described by the Japanese is shown as number 13. *C. iutsui* has quite a globular shell. Although the deep water specimens illustrated here seem quite distinctive in appearance, other specimens of this shell seem to share some of the features of *C. fuscorubra* or *C. cruickshanki*. While *iutsui* found west of Cape Point vary in colour from white through to plum, those from the Indian Ocean are mottled brown. It grows to about 40 mm in length.

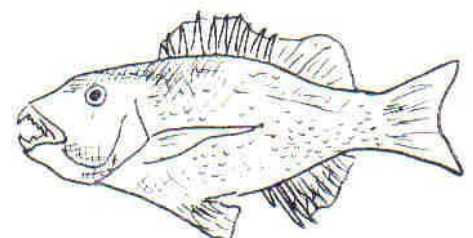
3&4. *Cypraea fuscorubra* Shaw, 1909 (3) and *Cypraea fuscudentata* Gray, 1825 (4). These were collected at various points off the Cape coastline, and are included here to show the great variation in colour and basal dentition that is possible. In general these animals live at 30 to 60 m, and prefer rocky reefs which are well covered with sponges. In general, *fuscudentata* is supposed to have well-developed dark-brown teeth extending across the base, whereas

fuscorubra does not. Both Liltved and Burgess regarded them as distinct species in their respective books, but it is known that shells of intermediate appearance (such as the lower shell of group 3) occur near Cape Point where they may be found living together with typical *fuscudentata*. The variability of these molluscs extends to their mantles which are both colourful and very variable. A live-taken sinistral *fuscorubra*, a very rare find indeed, was recently reported by member Bruno de Bruin³. The shells of both species may grow to nearly 45 mm.

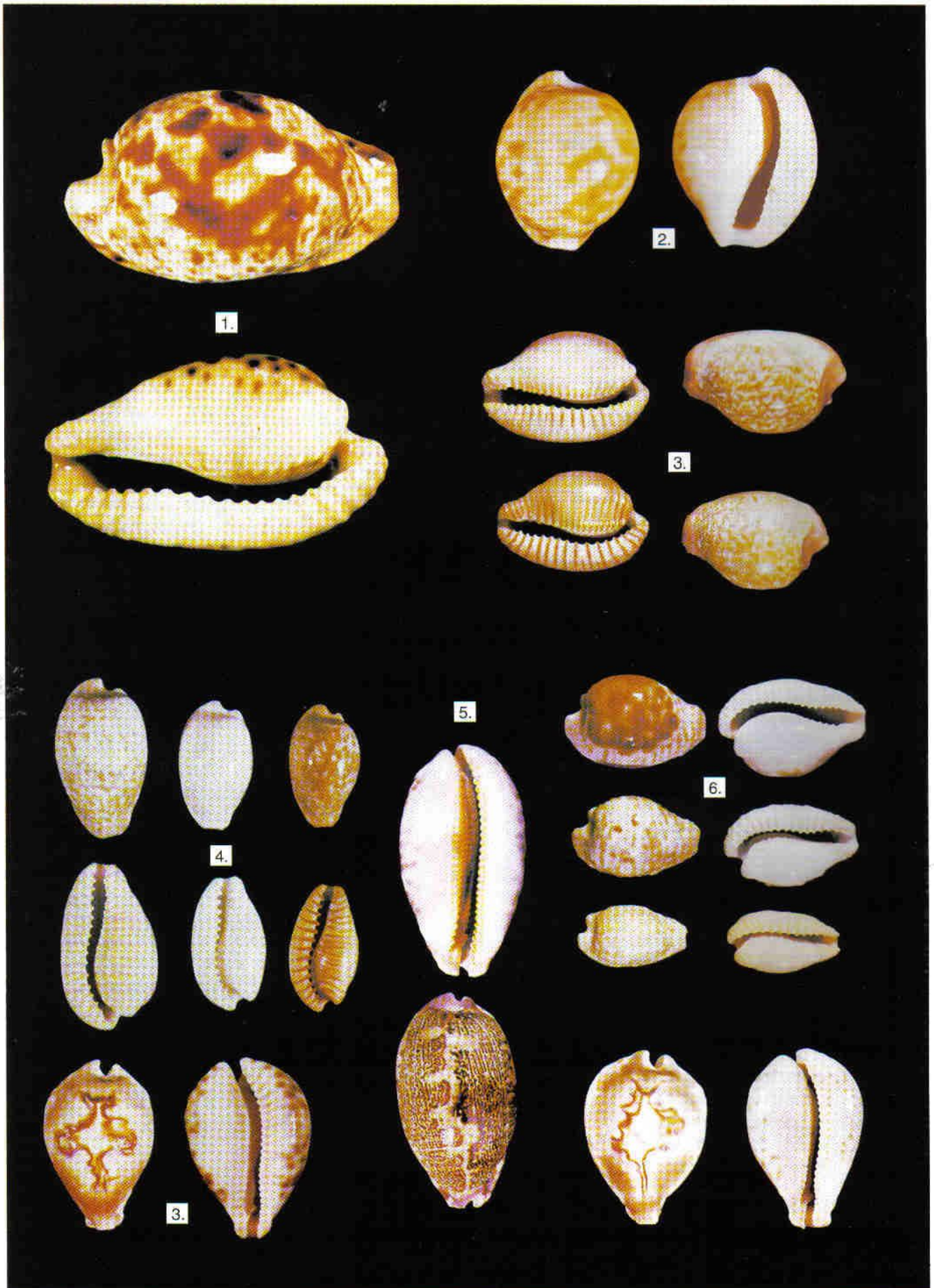
5. *Cypraea mappa rosea* Gray, 1824. This shell was collected off southern Natal at 35 metres. It differs from other *mappa* in that it has a distinctly purple base, very orange teeth and, especially in the Natal form, a very dark brown dorsum. It is considered moderately rare. The shell of *mappa* may be as large as 100 mm.

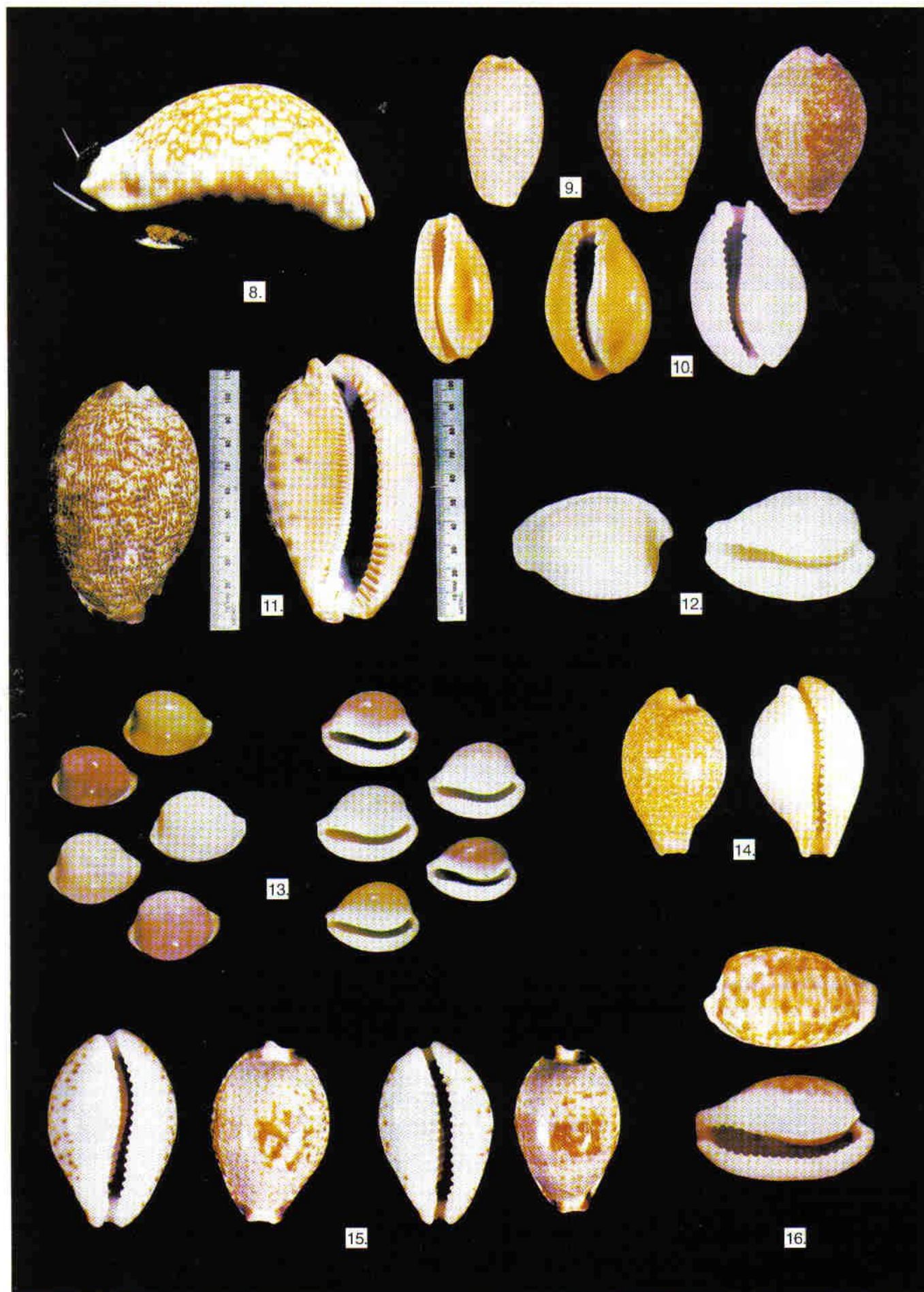
6. *Cypraea coronata* (Schilder 1930). Once again to demonstrate variability, as well as the so-called new form, "*Cypraea coronata gabriellii*". The latter is smaller and narrower, and somewhat reminiscent of *fuscudentata*, although it does differ from that species in so far as it has a tuberculated margin and a different teeth structure. Specimens of *coronata* grow to just over 30 mm.

7. *Cypraea fultoni* Sowerby III 1903. This specimen is from southern Mozambique, and shells of this form were denoted *massieri* by Lorenz in 1991 or *mozambicana* by Raybaudi-Massilia. Most *fultoni* are found in the stomach of the musselcracker fish, *Cymatoceps nasutus*, with at least



The musselcracker, *Cymatoceps nasutus*, grows to a metre in length and lives over rocky reefs. It eats crabs, crayfish, sea urchins, molluscs and other shelled creatures.





one live specimen known from dredging. Various other forms of the shells have been proposed (see *Strandloper* No. 239, Sept 1994, for further information). *C. fultoni* is generally between 50 and 80 mm in length.

8. *Cypraea broderipi* Sowerby II 1832. This rare and beautiful shell was once known only from damaged specimens recovered from the stomach of musselcrackers caught off Natal. However, in recent years its range has been extended to Somalia (where a small-sized variation occurs) and Reunion. It has been found live by divers in undersea grottos at depths at 40 metres. The photograph is by Gerald Smith of Durban. Some specimens of the beautiful species reach over 100 mm in length.

9. *Cypraea citrina* Gray, 1825. The two shells shown were collected *ex pisce* off Natal. One of the specimens is quite unusual it is extremely narrow but still has adult development. Live *citrina* are occasionally found in the intertidal range along the Transkei coast, but the most common source of reasonable specimens is the stomach of the slinger fish, *Chrysoblephus puniceus*. Burgess reports that it does not occur north of Inhaca Island. Adult shells of this species are about 30 mm in length.

10. *Cypraea marginalis* Dillwyn, 1827. Like *C. owenii*, this is another uncommon species restricted to the western Indian Ocean. It has been reported to occur in quite shallow water. The specimen shown was found off southern Natal. Usual size range is 16 to 37 mm.

11. *Cypraea arabica immanis* (Schilder and Schilder, 1939). These shells were taken off Durban. The south east African shells are often much larger than *arabica* from elsewhere, and were given the subspecific name *immanis* (Latin for 'large').

12. *Cypraea algoensis* Gray 1825. *C. algoensis* is extremely variable in shell and mantle, shape and colour. An albino form from the Betty's Bay area of the southern Cape is figured, as well as the so-called *C. mikeharti*

(Lorenz 1985) form of *algoensis*. Shells vary from 12 to 33 mm.

13. see 2.

14. *Cypraea barclayi* Reeve 1857. Specimens of this rare and valuable cowrie are occasionally found *ex pisce* from northern Natal through to Mozambique and the central Indian Ocean. Live specimens have been dredged at depths of between 100 and 200 m. The shells vary in length between 11 and 32 mm.

15. *Cypraea owenii* Sowerby, 1837. These two shells were collected *ex pisce* off Natal. The type figured is regarded as a distinct sub-species by Lorenz and Hubert, the authors of *A Guide to Worldwide Cowries*. Characterised by a more oval-rhomboidal shape and a darker, more mottled dorsum than the normal *owenii*, it has been called *Cypraea owenii vasta* Schilder and Schilder 1938. Burgess' book *Cowries of the World* shows that *C. owenii* also occurs up to Tanzania, the Maldives and Mauritius, but is uncommon over its range. It is however occasionally found in quite shallow water on coral reefs. It is rather a small cowrie, and is normally between 10 and 27 mm long.

16. *Cypraea verhoefi* Burgess, 1982. Shells of this appearance are also known as *C. castanea* (Higgins 1868). This very rare species is evidently closely related to *C. fuscorubra*

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Flotsam

Society matters

Copies of the Society's constitution or the Treasurer's report for 94/95 are available to any member. Please write to either the Secretary or the Editor of the *Strandloper* (addresses elsewhere in this issue).

30 years young

The Western Australian Shell Club (C/-4 McKay Str., Bentley WA 6102, Australia) celebrated its 30th anniversary in March. The Society wishes them every success with their next 30 years.

Giant *Argonauta argo* !

A newspaper clipping sent to me reports that a Ms Veronica Orne found an extremely large and fine *Argonauta argo* egg case near Amiston recently. The prize specimen is 28 cm across and 18 cm high ! Does anybody know if this is a world record?

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, Wordstar, or ASCII formats. Photographs and line drawings are especially welcome. Please address correspondence and submissions to

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More on little-known Muricidae

text & sketches by the Ed.

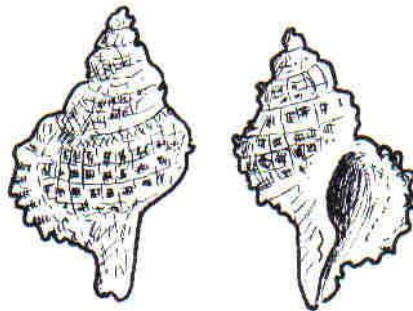
Readers interested in following on from Laurie Smith's article on *Murexsul kieneri* (Reeve, 1842) and *Murexsul nothokieneri* Vokes 1978 in *Strandloper* No. 241, may find a recent article¹ by Felix Lorenz in the magazine *La Conchiglia* interesting. In it Lorenz reviews South African *Murexsul* and other tiny muricidae. He reports that the single live-taken specimen of *nothokieneri* in his possession was found in a crayfish trap set at 100 m depth off Port Alfred. The species is however quite common in beach drift.

According to Lorenz, the shell identified in Deirdre Richards' book² as *Ocenebra babingtoni* (Sowerby 1892) is not that shell, and the real *babingtoni* is probably the inflated form of *Ocenebra scrobiculata* (Philippi, 1846) that is found along the Transkei coast. However, *Ocenebra aedicularum* (Barnard 1969), which comes from deep water and which is somewhat slimmer than *scrobiculata*, is considered a valid species. Finally, he has identified another little shell, also found in crayfish traps, as a new species, belonging either in the sub-families Trophoninae or Ocenebrinae. The new shell has been named *Ocenebra hayesi* Lorenz 1995, after member Brian Hayes, who supplied the specimens.

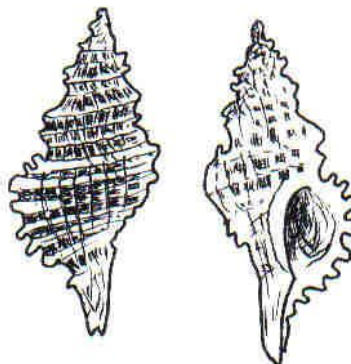
The South African Ocenebrinae and kin may therefore include the species *Favartia natalensis* (E.A. Smith, 1906), *Murexsul nothokieneri* Vokes 1978, *Ocenebra fenestrata* (Gould, 1862), *Ocenebra scrobiculata* (Philippi, 1846), *Ocenebra purpuroides* (Reeve, 1845) (all figured in Kilburn & Rippey³), *Murexsul kieneri* (Reeve 1842) (shown in *Strandloper* 241), *Ocenebra sperata* (Cossmann, 1921) (no.482 in Kensley's book⁴), *Ocenebra aedicularum* (Barnard 1969) and now *Ocenebra hayesi* Lorenz 1995.

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Ocenebra hayesi Lorenz, 1995,
circa 10 mm



Ocenebra aedicularum (Barnard,
1969) circa 10 mm

CAPENSIS SEA SHELLS

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Mr B. Hayes, 10 Munro St., Millard
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041-53-3511

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Bonnie Doon, East London 5241.
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Ds. H van der Walt, 191 Church
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051-47-5825

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Mr L. Smith, 7 Jan Booyesen Rd,
Annlin, Pretoria 0182. 012-57-5543

SOUTHERN NATAL

Mr G. Wallace, PO Box 513, Port
Shepstone 4240. 0391-51-100

CAPE TOWN

Mr V. Millard, PO Box 27208, Rhine
Rd., Cape Town 8050.
021-61-4613

A very big shell from Mozambique

An article in *La Conchiglia*¹ describes *Turbinella laffertyi* Kilburn 1992, a spectacular shell from Mozambique. (The name was however mistyped as *lafayetti* in the article, but the species was actually named in honour of Mr B. Lafferty). Although the other members of the genus (for example *T. angulata*, *T. laevigata* and *T. pyrum*) are big shells, ranging up to 340 mm in the case of *T. angulata*, *Turbinella laffertyi* is a monster, with the specimen figured in the article being 395 mm in length! If you're confused at this point it may be because you know this genus as *Xancus*. Readers may recall that sinistral specimens of *T. pyrum* are famous as the 'sacred chank shell' of southern India.

The article in *La Conchiglia* does not give any details regarding the collection of the shell, but a phone call to Dr Dick Kilburn, our President, confirmed that the first specimens were collected in the seventies by trawlers fishing for prawns north of Beira. The dredging programme of the Natal Museum (see *Strandloper* #241) has also collected some specimens off northern Zululand in 43 to 72 m, while a diver has brought in a dead specimen from about 8 m in Sodwana Bay. Curiously, *T. mekranica* Vredenburg, 1923 a fossil shell from the Miocene period of India, has quite similar features to *T. laffertyi*, and may well be its ancestor².

The shell is dull white, the aperture white to pinkish, and the periostracum, if present, is said to be thick and grey. The operculum is quite strongly curved, like a banana. If you should be lucky enough to come across *T. laffertyi*, it should be immediately recognisable by virtue of its size, locality and profile.

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The holotype of *T. laffertyi*, photo courtesy of the Natal Museum.

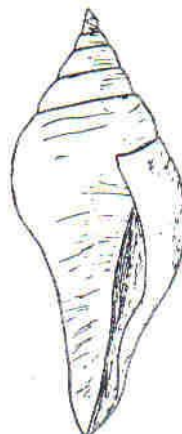
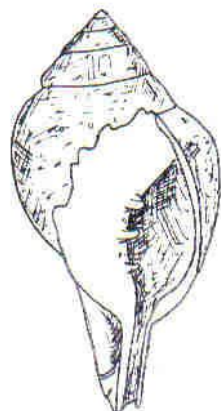
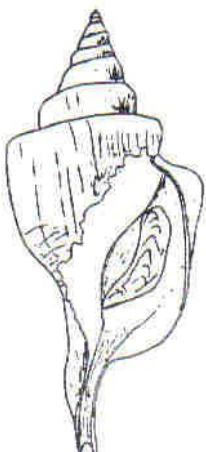


T. laffertyi, Northern Natal & Mozambique, up to 395 mm

T. pyrum, Indian Ocean, up to 150 mm

T. laevigata, Brazil, up to 130 mm

T. angulata, Caribbean, up to 340 mm



Rough sketches of the four known species of *Turbinella* showing their characteristic profiles



It is probable that the name of Harold Walter Bell-Marley (1873-1946) will be known to few modern shell-collectors. Yet this man should probably rank as one of the most important South African naturalists of this century, if he is judged by the quantities of scientifically priceless specimens that he presented to museums both in this country and overseas. In particular, he discovered numerous new fishes and insects, many of which were named in his honour. As far as molluscs are concerned, Bell-Marley was the first to fully exploit the potential of obtaining shells in quantity from trawlers and line-boats. In fact, until a few decades ago, he was probably the only collector ever to have obtained examples of *Cypraea fultoni* (to this day most of the few specimens of this in South African museums were received from Bell-Marley).

Bell-Marley was a retiring man, shunning publicity and publishing nothing, so that little is recorded of his activities and experiences and no satisfactory portrait seems to exist. For background information I am largely indebted to Clive Quickelberge, who kindly provided copies of obituaries and other relevant material. These I have supplemented by drawing on the correspondence between Bell-Marley and Henry Burnup, housed at the Natal Museum.

Bell-Marley was born in London, and first came to South Africa on active service during the Anglo-Boer War. He later returned to settle in Durban, where he took up employment in a shipping agency. In 1911 he first made contact with Burnup, then the foremost South African expert on molluscs, and began to submit shells to him for identification. Initially these

H.W. Bell-Marley, Pioneer South African Collector

by R.N. Kilburn
Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg

were mainly land snails, but in 1918 Bell-Marley joined the Natal provincial services as Principal Fisheries Officer, and began to take an interest in marine life, which continued until his retirement in 1937. At the suggestion of Dr Ernest Warren (first director of the Natal Museum), he offered "inducements" to the crew of line-fishing boats, in an attempt to obtain shells from fish stomachs. (In those days musselcracker were of course abundant, and fishermen did not need to travel far from Durban to find exploitable reefs.) Bell-Marley received his first *ex pisce* shells in 1919, and in the following year he made friends with the skipper of a trawler in the hopes of obtaining shells from this source also. Although he frequently complained about fluctuations in the supply, he sometimes obtained shells in quantity (*Amalda contusa* was particularly abundant). In that blissfully non-commercialised era of collecting he of course obtained many rarities, such as *Cypraea fultoni*, *C. broderipi* and *Lyria ponsonbyi*. For example, in a letter (28/3/1923) to Burnup, he reported "I had 3 perfect *V. [=Lyria] ponsonbyi* and 2 *V. africana* with their opercula complete".

Although Bell-Marley frequently sent shells to Burnup for identification, his finds were never studied by a professional malacologist and nothing was published on his discoveries. Some of the latter were new species that were to be described only long after his death, such as *Latiaxis [=Toxicionella] elstoni* (1962), *Babylonia pintado* (1971) and *Conus typhon* (1975).

As indicated above Bell-Marley was a benefactor to various museums, and appears initially to have divided up all his finds between the Natal and Durban Museums, but in about 1920 he began to assemble a private shell collection. Unfortunately, his interest in shells eventually waned (probably coinciding with the death in 1928 of

his conchological mentor, Burnup), and he decided to present his main shell collection to the Durban Museum, although distributing oddments to at least six other South African museums (some shells also went to the British Museum). Lamentably, most (if not all) of his main collection has now disappeared, although fortunately a small set of some of the more interesting *ex pisce* shells was acquired by the late Percy Elston (died 1969), who bequeathed his collection to the Natal Museum.

Bell-Marley was an old-fashioned, all-round naturalist, and shells were certainly not his first love, his main interests being fishes, bird's eggs, insects (particularly beetles) and plants. He is perhaps most famous for his extensive collection of marine fishes, and for the paintings of these which he executed from life. His fish specimens were sent to an ichthyologist at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, but his water-colour paintings were bequeathed to the Natal Museum, and have now been presented to the J.L.B. Smith Institute of Ichthyology in Grahamstown.

Until his death Bell-Marley remained an active field worker and in later years used to spend about six weeks annually collecting in northern Zululand, then an extremely unhealthy region to visit. It was while on such a collecting trip that he contracted malaria, which was to prove fatal.

RARE SHELLS

RAYBAUDI

**FAX 6-5430104
ITALY**

