

Shell and Tell

The newsletter of the Gulf Coast Shell Club

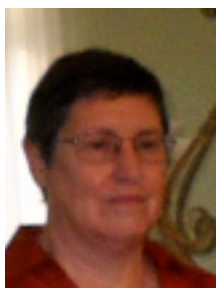


Argopecten irradians concentricus (Say, 1822)

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March - April 2023

President's Message



President
Phyllis Bernard

As everyone knows, due to circumstances beyond our control, our show has been postponed until October 21-22, 2023 with set up on the 20th. We are moving forward. Don and Charity Kotval are taking over for Susan who has personal commitments in the fall and cannot assume the chairmanship on these new dates. Our thanks go to the three of them and I am sure all members will continue to support this endeavor. We still need raffle items and volunteers for the show and exhibits, exhibits, exhibits!

Linda B. is still receiving exhibits and there is still room. Get yours in today! The new cut off is September 21.

The Editor

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Newsletter - Linda Brunner
Nametags - Ernie Bernard/D. J. Moore

**GULF COAST SHELL CLUB
2022 PROGRAMS AND REFRESHMENTS**

or
Ways to expand your mind and waistline simultaneously!

MONTH	PROGRAM	REFRESHMENTS
March	Ask the Experts	Members bring a snack to share
April	Open	Open
May	Open	Potts
June	Picnic	

Coming Events

North Carolina 2023 show will be held May 5,6,7 in Morehead City with set up on the 4th. Try to attend and/or exhibit.

The COA 2023 Convention is still on schedule for May 31 - June 4, 2023 in Wilmington, NC.

ALERT!

The official dates for the **2023 shell show are October 21-22, 2023 with set up on the 20th**. Just because you have some extra time to work on your exhibit don't put it off till the last minute, make your exhibit **GREAT!** Because of the change in dates Susan is unable to chair the show and Don and Charity Kotval have stepped in to take over her responsibilities. Don't count Susan out. She has worked very hard to make the show a success and had no control over the postponement. Thank her for all of her hard work and she will still be involved. We need all hands so try to clear your calendar for these days. Remember: New scientific entries should go to Linda Brunner (jili1043@comcast.net). Our scientific judges are the same. Due to allergies **NO NUTS** in any food you bring. Check all labels include mixes as, unknown to most consumers, this is a life and death allergy of one of our judges.



SPRING VISITORS

by Jim and Linda Brunner

The late winter and spring are generally good collecting months along the northern Gulf of Mexico. Large **Florida Horse Conchs** (*Triplofusus giganteus*) and **Lightning Whelks** (*Sinistrofulgur sinistrum*) move into shallow water in search of romance. Negative tides allow for the exploration of sand flats unseen during the summer. Add to that the high surf that is eroding away the replenishment sand placed on the beaches and whose loss exposes the shells that were pumped in with the sand. Good shelling is to be had!

That is especially true this year as late February and March found (*Physalia physalis*) **Portuguese Man O' War** being washed up on local beaches. While they are not mollusks, the parasites that get grounded with them are and thus get our attention.

The first of these is in the family Epitoniidae and the genus *Janthina*. Three species have been found during the uncommon occasions when these beaching's take place. *Janthina janthina* (Linnaeus 1758) is the largest of the three, reaching 20-40mm in adult size, and is also the most recognizable. The other two: *Janthina globosa* Swainson, 1822 and *Janthina pallida* Thompson, 1840 are smaller. All are pelagic, meaning they live in the water column rather than on the ocean floor. They do this by creating a small raft of bubbles which allows them to float on or near the surface and move in conjunction with the **Portuguese Man O' War** on which they are parasitic, receiving not only sustenance from them but also using the nematocysts (the stinging part of the jellyfish) to cover themselves as protection from predators.

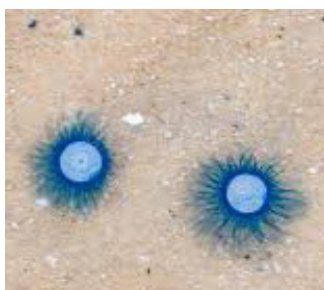
Before we get to the second mollusk we need to recognize two other species that get washed ashore during these times. One is a species we have featured before. *Porpita porpita*, the **Blue Button** is a small but beautiful species that is also an open water dweller. It is in the same family, Porpitidae, as the **By-the Wind Sailor** (*Velella velella*) which has a world wide distribution, and while I have never seen one in the northern Gulf of Mexico, it is within its range.

However, the inspiration for this article was a visit by Tami and Hal Newman, who reported seeing a *Glaucus atlanticus* Foster, 1777, (the **Blue Glaucus** or **Blue Dragon** or **Sea Swallow** or **Sea Angel**)* which had washed ashore. This small nudibranch (60mm) is the first addition to our species list in several years. Like all the other species in this article it is pelagic and is a predator that preys on *Physalia physalis* and *Velella velella*. You also need to take care in handling them as they recycle the stinging cells of their prey for their own protection.

For a visual of these let's look at pictures.



Physalia physalis



Porpita porpita



Velella velella



Glaucus atlanticus

We have previously discussed *Physalia physalis* and *Porpita porpita* so this article will focus on information about *Glaucus atlanticus* because this is what we have been finding. This very small species can live through the entire water column. It can swallow air and keep a bubble in its stomach which allows to float. It often

* Scientific names are the best way to communicate a species for common names vary and you do not always communicate precisely

floats on its back for camouflage. Because its belly is a bright blue it tends to blend with the ocean waters somewhat blinding airborne predators to its existence. Its back is grayish and blends with the bright surface making it hard to detect to creatures below. This is known as countershading. It helps the animal to avoid predators above and below as it floats in open water. Janthina use a similar behavior.

As mentioned above *Glaucus atlanticus* gathers the stinging nematocysts from its primary prey and reuses them against its predators. It not only gathers and stores these stinging cells but it is able to concentrate them making them more potent than when they were part of the **Portuguese- Man-'O-War**. Touch cautiously.

All living things have a means of reproduction. *Glaucus atlanticus* is hermaphroditic. Each produces both eggs and sperm. However it cannot fertilize its own eggs with its own sperm and pairs must still mate. Eggs and sperm float freely in the water or stick to other objects. Not being a scientists I assume fertilization is randomly accidental, whenever egg and sperm collide. Blue glaucuses often lay eggs on the carcasses of their prey.

Groups of animals often have names such as a murder of crows, a flock of sheep or a school of fish. A group of blue glaucuses is call a blue fleet and can sting people swimming in the water. So, beware of the "blue fleet"!

Some sources for this article include: WoRMS, Factanimal, and Wikipedia



My Favorite Green Shell

Turbo marmoratus Linnaeus, 1758

The Great Green Turban shell is impressive. It is the largest species in the family Turbinidae. Larger than most fists it is a Pacific herbivorous marine snail that is coveted by many collectors and has various artistic and practical uses. It is used for inlay, buttons and food. It has also been carved into decorative objects and inlaid with jewels. It has a large, dense, white operculum.





Again we gathered for one of our favorite field trips.....Cedar Key. This year our numbers increased and, although we had some disappointments, we had a great time, good food, creative shopping and fantastic fellowship! Let's get the disappointment over first: our boat trip to Seahorse Key was cancelled. The cancellation was due to weather. It is better to be safe than sorry and we appreciate the concern of the boat captain. There will be a next time!

What did we do? We drove. We ate. We shelled. We met and talked over coffee. We shopped. We ate. We shelled. We ate and drove home tired and well fed.

We were joined by a group of UF students and their professors who were there doing research. See photo by Susan Cole.

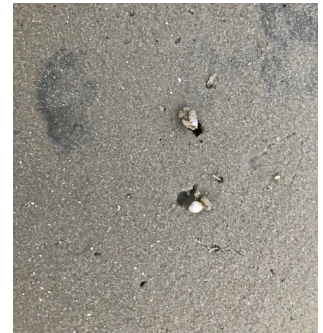
It was a good time even if we did not make it to Seahorse Key.



We are ready!



Early birds are waaaaay out.
Slowpokes are near.



Small bivalves popping out of sand when tide turns.



The ubiquitous
Neoterebra dislocata (Say, 1822)



Lots of stranded starfish.



Bottom left: UF students on shore, diehard shellers demonstrating the shelling stoop.

Bottom center: Most of the group at dinner.



Birthday Shells

For every month, much like birthday stones there are birthday shells. Since this is the March-April issue we will show the birth shells for those two months.

March

The shell for this month is the Olive.

Olives have glossy shells with folds on the columella. The foot and mantle almost completely cover the shell helping to keep it shiny. Olives are carnivorous.



April

The shell for this month is a Wentletrap.

Wentletraps are said to favor living near or around sea anemones. They lay a string of eggs that hatch in about 9 days. When threatened they may exude a purple dye. Wentletraps are quite variable.



Check this out! This is a sea slug. Its name is *Elysia chlorotica*.

Google it.