Shell and Tell

The newsletter of the Gulf Coast Shell Club

Argopecten irradians concentricus (Say, 1822)

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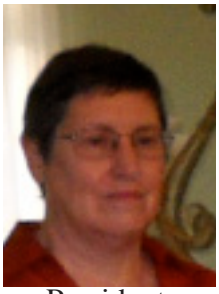


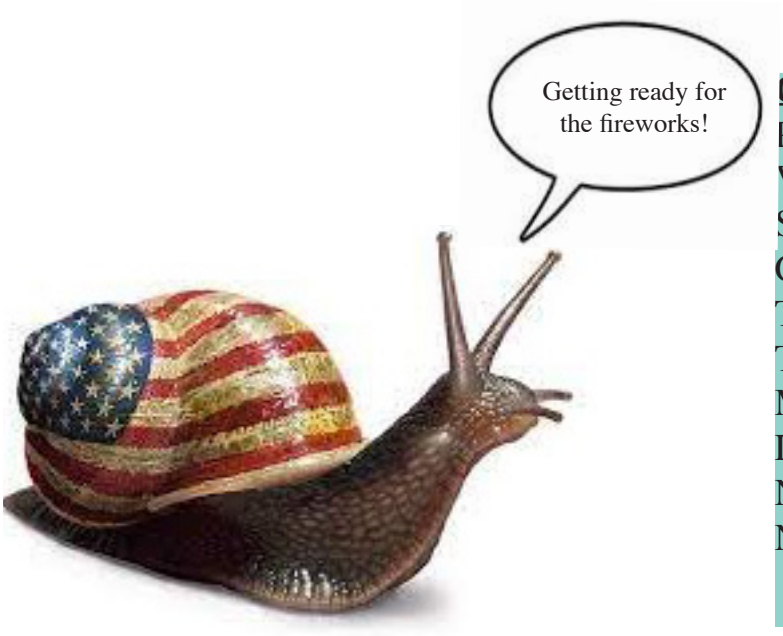
President
Phyllis Bernard

President's Message

Linda called and said it was time for another newsletter. We had a good time at the June picnic, good food, great company but we missed the members who could not attend. I would like to thank Deborah Gabris for opening her home for the shell club picnic.
Due to scheduling problems with the library please remember the club meeting will be July 10th at regular time. Speaking of scheduling problems our shell show is in October and we need to be thinking about getting our displays out and checking them over for correct spelling and a neat, spacious lay out. In general checking them over so they will be ready for the show. Enjoy the rest of your summer and grab you hat, sun screen and go to your favorite beach to find that shell you've been looking for.

Phyllis

Inside



Club Officers:
President - Phyllis Bernard
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Corresponding Secretary - Luke Cooley
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Tides - Scott Dilbeck
Membership - Phyllis Bernard
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Newsletter - Linda Brunner
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GULF COAST SHELL CLUB
2022 PROGRAMS AND REFRESHMENTS
or
Ways to expand your mind and waistline simultaneously!

MONTH	PROGRAM	REFRESHMENTS
July	Lost Horizons	Everyone bring something to share
August	Open	Ernie Bernard
September	Open	Jim Brunner
October	Shell show	Don & Charity Kotval
November	Open	DJ and Charyl

Coming Events

Remember that the July meeting will be on the 10th at the regular time. Do not come on the 11 and expect to have a meeting; it will be over.

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, nut flours are often in mixes. This is a life and death allergy of one of our judges.

Show food for workers, dealers and exhibitors.

If you can bring a dish please see Phyllis Bernard. Phyllis has volunteered to head up the kitchen. Remember NO NUTS! Additional food allergies include coconut, black beans, lima beans, kidney beans and others as well as squash and zucchini. Safe vegetables include green beans, broccoli and asparagus. We need food for lunch on Saturday. Jim Brunner brings doughnuts for breakfast and Phyllis makes coffee. On Sunday the club will supply meat but we need sides and deserts. Fruit is welcome. Just remember to check with Phyllis so she can plan accordingly.

ARE THERE MANGROVES IN OUR FUTURE?

by Jim and Linda Brunner

If you have done any traveling to south Florida collecting spots or even onward into the Caribbean, you have undoubtably encountered mangrove forests. These natives to marshes and shoreline locales are noted for their virtual impenetrability to humans. Traditionally these plants have been thought to favor warm weather environments. But like many other flora and fauna, warming climatic conditions have allowed them to migrate northward. Their presence has been noted on the Atlantic coast as far north as Jacksonville, Florida and on into Georgia and South Carolina.

Now comes an article by Dr. Randall Hughes in the WFSU Ecology Blog entitled "Black Mangroves: Strangers in a St Joe Bay marsh." Overlooked until a few years ago, it is now evident that they have established themselves at several locations in the St Joe Bay marshes. Look for small shrub like bushes standing in marshy grass flats. Dr. Hughes notes that he has seen no significant die back during the last five winters, even during some hard freezes. That suggests that the common wisdom regarding their hardiness needs revision. The Black Mangrove (Avicennia germinans) is not the only visitor. The Red Mangrove (Rizophora mangle) has also been spotted, although much less frequently. It is less tolerant of the cold and may not flourish here in the near term. Perhaps one reason they have been overlooked is that the Black Mangrove lacks the "support roots" that we commonly associate with the family, opting instead for "air roots" that grow up through the sand or mud surrounding the plant (just high enough to trip the unwary).

So why do we care? Actually, for a lot of reasons. Mangroves build up the land under themselves at a rate significantly faster than other types of coastal vegetation. Their rugged root system makes them resistant to wave and storm action thus cutting down on or eliminating erosion. Finally, they provide a favorable habitat for the growth of marine animals, including mollusks, during the vulnerable period between hatching and obtaining sufficient size to move into more open environments. From personal experience in the Caribbean, I know that certain species can only be found by searching around mangrove roots. For these and possibly other reasons, mangroves are protected species in Florida with steep fines and penalties for cutting them down.

Be on the lookout for these species in St Andrews Sound and St Andrews Bay marshy areas. You may find beached propagules (seed pods) during your walks. To my eye, they look like skinny brown or green stringbeans up to 8 inches in length. If they are in St Joe Bay, it seems reasonable that the plants would be established here also.

CLIMBING FOR SEASHELLS

(Pins, Picks and Patience)

by Don Kittsmiller

When I first moved to Washington, D.C. in 1974 from Key West, Florida, I was anxious to do more shelling. I had been bitten by the Shell Bug compliments of the U.S. Navy.

My first trip in this new area was to Chesapeake Bay, Maryland as it was the closest prospective area. I wasn't expecting to find much and was not disappointed. I found a few bivalves and lots of sand and mud. I walked about a half mile down the bay along the ominous 100-foot cliffs which are similar to Sunset Cliffs in San Diego, California but without the heavy surf. There were no shells of interest, but I noticed a great deal of shell fragments along the shoreline and began to look them over. I was picking through a large pile of bivalve fragments when I spotted my first partial ecphora. Upon taking a closer look I knew I had something unusual. It was different from anything I had ever seen before. After this find, I doubled my efforts and came up with fragments of a cone, turritellas, an olive and pieces of coral. I remember telling myself that if there are bleached and broken beach shells here, there have to be live goodies around this area. Then it hit me..... coral in Maryland!! A few minutes later I spotted a black shark's tooth and the mystery was over. I had seen fossil sharks teeth from Florida before.

On my second trip there I discovered where the shells came from. Half way up the cliff was a ten foot wide row of shells just waiting for someone to climb up and start collecting. This is when I began my cliff climbing for sea shells.

From then on I experimented with different techniques for extracting the shells from the cliffs. I soon found out that the shells could not be so easily gathered. It's one thing to find them and another to preserve them. The shells were as soft as marshmallows. A slip, a jar or too much pressure and your rare specimen lay at your feet looking like a pile of dust never to have form again. After this happened a few times I got angry and discouraged and started working at ways to beat the odds. With hints from other collectors and a few of my own ideas, success started coming my way.

I found my shells by gently digging and brushing an area while clinging to the cliffs. Then I would dig out a large matrix around the shells to hold it firmly so I could get it home intact. When I get home I baked the blocks to get the shells and sand thoroughly dry. My wife really liked this idea. I next start separating the shells from the sand with pins, picks and patience. Without patience as your main tool, you can forget this hobby.

If the shells were difficult when soft at the beach, now when they were dry, it was like removing sand from around a shell made of baby powder. I worked on shells for two or three days before I could say I had a specimen. I used Super Glue on my shells so I could harden an exposed area of the shell in a matter of seconds allowing me to continue my work. I spent many hours extracting these shells knowing that if I got careless or impatient I would have nothing for my labors.

What a feeling of accomplishment when success has been reached! My largest *Ecphora quadricostata* (Say, 1824), took me six days to retrieve and is my most prized shell. (**Editor's note**: Since this article was written the name of this species has been changed to *Ecphora gardnerae gardnerae* Wilson, 1987. It is the official state shell of Maryland.) After doing some research on ecphora, I zeroed in on this species. Besides being an index fossil and looking like no other modern-day shell I know of, this species retains its coloration which is unusual for fossils. (**Editor's** note: Index fossils, also known as guide fossils, are the remains of plants or animals that lived during a specific time period. They are sometimes referred to as "markers")

I was stationed in Washington, D.C. for only seven months but in that time I collected 97 different species including varieties of *Fissuridea, Calliostoma, Architectonica, Turritella, Epitonium, Crucibulum, Crepidula, Sinum, Polinices, Ecophora, Lynatia, Ecphora, Busycon, Airinia, Oliva, Terebra, Conus*, numerous bivalves, bones, teeth and corals.

Those who don't collect fossils and have the opportunely to do so, are missing a very interesting part of shell collecting. Besides finding shells that been extinct for millions of years, it can be interesting comparing those fossils that did not survive with their present-day counterparts. Maryland fossils are very plentiful for those who want to brave the cliffs and have the patience to extract them from the elements. You don't have to worry

about over collecting because the damage was done long ago by nature. My fossils were in the neighborhood of 26 million years which intrigues me. How about you?

The photos below are the ecphora I collected.

Ecphora gardnerae gardnerae Wilson, 1987

This shell was named in honor of Julia Gardner, the same Julia Gardner who did the monumental work on our local fossils in Calhoun County.

Melanie Smith, Brett Howard and Sophie Howard. Three fourths of the visitors from northern Georgia. Missing was Kirstan Brunner Howard.

Picnic 2023

On June 17 the club gathered for a purely social event. Well, there was a silent shell auction but the rest was good food, fellowship and visitors! Deborah Gabris graciously opened her home to us for the relaxing food filled day! Thanks to all the cooks, Deborah, and Luke for going the extra mile to order and transport the barbecue!

Serious conversation.

Say cheese!

Decisions, decisions!

A good day!

Picnic photos by Brant Holman. Thank you.

Birthday Shells

For every month, much like birthstones there are birthday shells. Since this is the May - June issue we will show the birth shells for those two months. I am adding July in case I am late with the next issue.

May

Juno Volute
Scaphella junonia (Lamarck,

June

Florida Horse Conch
Triplofusus giganteus (Kiener, 1840)

July

Northern Lion's Paw
Nodipecten fragosus (Conrad, 1849)

Shells and Hurricanes

Dr. Jose Leal, Science Director and Curator of the Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum gave us some information as to what can happen to mollusks during and after a hurricane. While many animals may sense weather changes before the event, mollusks do not. As a result their population mortality can take longer to rebound. Some of these factors include the following. Storm surges cause sand, sediment and costal waters to shift and bury many mollusks deeper that their normal depth. In other words, they can be suffocated and/or their food supply diminished. Some of these sediments remain suspended in the water inhibiting the filter feeding bivalves ability to feed. A third problem that mollusks have after a hurricane is from man-made chemicals that combine with the water from structures, cars and boats. This prevents the exchange of oxygen between the air-water interface.

COA 2023 in Pictures

Brant Holman, Dave Clausen, Luke Cooley, Kathy O'Brien, Jim and Linda Brunner, Vicky Wall and, of course, our Texas contingent, Steven and Wanda Coker represented the GCSC at the 2023 Convention in Wilmingtom, NC. We went on field trips, attended programs, ate good food, cruised and chose shells to purchase at the auctions and the bourse. In case you don't know a bourse is a kind of market. This one was stocked with seashells and shell related items. Our members lost many bids at the silent and oral auctions but were lucky with others. If you are looking for a specific specimen you could probably find it at the bourse but not always. The following were taken by Brant Holman and Linda Brunner.

The hotel

The river

The ship

Shellers are so fashionable.

Luke is ready to go!

Brant, I don't believe you found that in the parking lot!

Brant's other finds!

Jim and Linda in a familar pose.

The bourse begins.

Get ready for 2024.

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COA 2024
SHELL-OLYMPICS

Hilton Melbourne
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PRE CONVENTION FIELD TRIPS:
June 11
PROGRAMS: June 12-14
BOURSE June 15-16

The sky may be Carolina Blue but our sand is prettier!