

# Suncoast Shorelines

November- December 2017

PUBLISHED BY SUNCOAST CONCHOLOGISTS

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our calendars say "November," so that means two of our biggest holidays are "right around the corner." We've had two great meetings so far—if you weren't there, we do hope you can make it on the 7<sup>th</sup>!

A couple of weeks ago, our members traveled south to Venice and Caspersen Beach to search for Shark Teeth—not really the teeth, but fossils of the teeth. We wish more of you had joined us for this fun day!

In October, Suncoast Conchologists received two donations of shells. Joan Pierson, one of our Founding Members, has donated her collection to us. Plans will be made next year to have an auction, featuring the many shells collected over the years by Joan and her late husband Bob. The other shells were given to us by a Clearwater resident who read about Suncoast Conchologists on our internet website. We also have a new addition to our club's library thanks to Hugo and Anita Freudenthal who have donated a set of five educational DVD's. We are indeed most thankful to receive all of this wonderful support!

The details are in this issue regarding our Holiday Shellabration. We're looking forward to a different location this year to shellabrate the season! Be sure to sign up with Mary Ellen.

We have so very much to be thankful for at this time of year—no horrible hurricane damage in our area, the recent donations gifted to our club, and especially the friendship of everyone in our Suncoast family.

Earl and I wish you all a lovely Thanksgiving with family and friends, and the merriest holiday season of all. Be safe wherever you may travel!

*Carolyn*

## PLAN AHEAD

**Tuesday, November 7** 7:30 PM Suncoast Conchologists Meeting Carolyn Petrikin will present her program "Shelling in the Florida Keys".

Mini-Box Theme—Autumn Colors

**Tuesday, November 14** 7:30PM, SHELL ID NIGHT, at Carolyn Petrikin's home. 2550 Sweetgum Way West, Clearwater 796-4117

**Sunday, November 19** Florida Aquarium Field Trip 701 Channelside Drive, Tampa. We'll be inside at 10AM. Tickets are \$28.95 or \$26.95 for seniors.

**Monday, November 20**, 7:00 PM, Board Meeting at Carolyn Petrikin's home. All members are welcome.

**Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>** Early morning shelling at South Skyway Bridge. Low tide is 5:50 AM. We'll meet at the south rest area at 5:00 AM so we will have an hour or so before the tide begins to rise. Sunrise is not until 7:00 AM, so bring a flashlight. Buckets, shoes, gloves, and layers recommended. Contact John Jacobs with questions. [johncheryl@earthlink.net](mailto:johncheryl@earthlink.net)

**Tuesday, December 5** 6:00 PM Our annual **HOLIDAY SHELLABRATION** is being held at Perkins Restaurant. See article inside for details.

**Tuesday, January 9, 2018 NOTE! 2nd Tuesday!** 7:30 PM Suncoast Conchologists Meeting Anita Freudenthal will talk about "How Eating Food From the Sea Can Make You Sick."

Mini-Box Theme—Sea Life Other Than Shells

**Saturday, January 27** FUM—Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum, Sanibel (See article!)

## Suncoast Conchologists

(Founded in 1984)

P.O. Box 1564 Palm Harbor, Florida 34682-1564

Suncoast Shorelines is issued five times per year to all members. Annual Membership with emailed newsletters: \$20 Family, \$15 Individual, \$10 Junior. Lifetime membership is available. Add \$5 if you would like a printed copy of the newsletters. The club usually meets the first Tuesday of every month (except June, July, August, and December) at 7:30pm, at Grace Lutheran Church, 1812 N. Highland Avenue, Clearwater.

**Articles, comments and suggestions for publication are solicited and should be sent directly to the Editor:**  
[spgeiger2000@yahoo.com](mailto:spgeiger2000@yahoo.com)

**Closing Date for publication is the 15th of the month prior to the Sept, Nov, Jan, Mar, and May meetings.**

Permission is hereby granted to reprint articles published in the newsletter providing the original author is acknowledged, and a copy of the reprinted material is sent to Suncoast Conchologists.

### 2017-2018 Officers

President, Carolyn Petrikin

First Vice President, Sharlene Totten

Second Vice President, John Jacobs

Recording Secretary, Board: Mary Ellen Akers

Club: Anita Freudenthal

Treasurer, Katherine Smith

Corresponding Secretary, Elda Thomas

**E-Mail:** [Suncoastshells@aol.com](mailto:Suncoastshells@aol.com)

**Website:** [www.suncoastconchologists.org](http://www.suncoastconchologists.org)

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🎂🎂 *Happy Birthday* 🎂🎂

### NOVEMBER

9—Carolyn Petrikin

27—Elda Thomas

28—Ursula Munkittrick

29—Betty Scheetz

### DECEMBER

31—Nellie Kellogg

### TIDES (WOW!)

**NEGATIVE** Low tides for St. Petersburg

November 2017

Sat 4 -0.12 8:56 AM

Sun 5 -0.26 8:42 AM

Mon 6 -0.32 9:33 AM

Sat 18 -0.14 8:02 AM

Sun 19 -0.20 08:35 AM

December Lows

Sat 2 -0.42 7:04 AM

Sun 3 -0.61 7:51 AM

Tue 4 -0.71 9:30 AM

Sat 16 -0.40 7:19 AM

Sun 17 -0.48 7:53 AM

Sat 30 -0.54 6:07 AM

Sun 31 -0.77 6:58 AM

January 2018 Lows

Mon 1<sup>st</sup> -0.95 7:49 AM

But remember, the low at Egmont occurs almost 2½ hours before the low at St. Petersburg...

[http://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/tide\\_predictions.html](http://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/tide_predictions.html)

## HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

*You'll be blue if you don't renew*

*As this will be the last issue to you!*



Shirley Anderson – from Caspersen Beach

## Florida United Malacologists FUM—January 27, 2018

The ninth meeting of Florida United Malacologists (FUM) will take place on Saturday, January 27, 2018, at the Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum on Sanibel Island. This one-day gathering aims at enhancing communication among researchers, collectors, citizen scientists, and students interested in a broad swath of mollusk related topics.

FUM follows the pattern of similar gatherings such as BAM (Bay Area Malacologists), SCUM (Southern California United Malacologists), MAM (Mid-Atlantic Malacologists), and OVUM (Ohio Valley United Malacologists). There is no formal membership, and there are no dues or officers. Presentations are limited to fifteen minutes plus five minutes for questions. Presenters are required to submit a simple abstract limited to 150 words or less. The event is free to pre-registered participants. Seating is limited.

Deadline for registrations and abstract submissions is December 31, 2017. Registration information can be found on the Museum's website.

Visits to the Shell Museum's upstairs collection and library will be limited to two days prior to the gathering, Thursday, January 25, and Friday, January 26. That collection area will be closed during the event; main floor exhibits will remain open. Courtesy box lunches and beverages will be provided to all participants. After the FUM events, be sure you join the group dinner at a local seafood restaurant (your own expense).

I hope to see you at FUM 2018!

José H. Leal, Ph.D.  
Science Director and Curator  
Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum

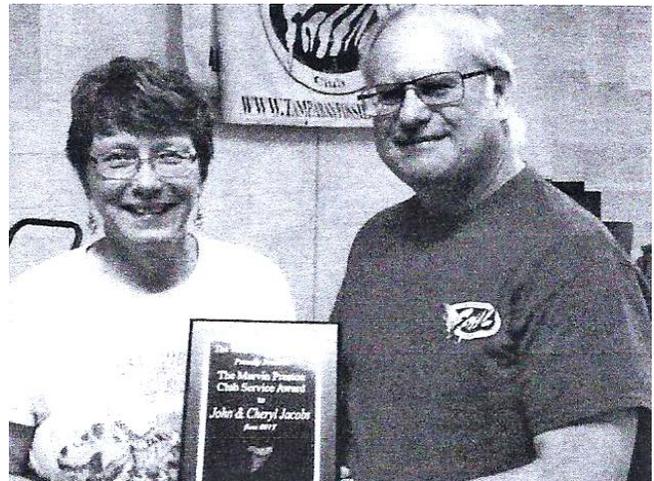


Stingray mouth plates from Caspersen Beach

## Congratulations Cheryl and John!

The October issue of the *Tampa Bay Fossil Chronicles*, publication of the Tampa Bay Fossil Club, featured an article announcing that “our” John and Cheryl have been awarded their club's special Club Service Award. John and Cheryl are the first non-board members to receive this award, presented annually by the Tampa Bay Fossil Club! They were recognized especially for welcoming members as well as their outstanding contributions at club meetings.

We know what a wonderful job John and Cheryl do for our meetings—come early, move tables, set-up chairs—helping when and wherever needed. We know that John and Cheryl's award is well-deserved!



### IN MEMORIAM

Very sadly, we just recently learned of the passing of a Lifetime Member, Abe Levine, at his home in Quebec last July 30th. Abe and his wife Anita joined November 1984 at Suncoast Conchologists second meeting. He was determined we were going to succeed, and was very aware that our new treasury was quite lacking in funds. He soon contacted a dealer friend in the Philippines, and received a donation worth about \$80-\$90—a beautiful Golden Cowrie, then *Cypraea aurantium*—now *Lyncina aurantium*. This large, orange cowrie was destined for a raffle, but just not any raffle! Our cowrie was featured at the next three meetings with chances \$5 each. Yes—our treasury certainly received a huge boost!

Abe donated his sizable shell collection to the Redpath Museum at McGill University in Montreal. This collection of shells is titled “Conchologycitus—The Abe Levine Shells,” forever commemorating Abe's lifelong passion.

## *Orthoceras - A Fossil Cephalopod* by John Jacobs

Orthoceras fossils date back to the Paleozoic Era, about 400 million years ago (early Ordovician up to the Triassic). They were a conical straight nautiloid that could reach up to 14 feet long. The name means straight (ortho) horn (ceras).



Like modern nautiloids, the shell consists of chambers connected by a siphuncle in the center of each septa wall. The animal would have lived in the last chamber at the end of the shell. Unfortunately, no preserved soft parts are known for these wonderful animals, so we don't know for sure what the animal looked like. They are often depicted looking more like an octopus in a shell, but this is speculation only.



Most people are familiar with the highly polished specimens from Morocco that are bought as decorative pieces. Rarely are they seen for sale in a natural state. So, when I saw these two specimens for sale at the Tampa Bay Fossil Club's annual Fossil Fest in 2016, I couldn't resist them.



Caspersen Beach – Photo by John

**THE STORIES BEHIND OUR HOLIDAY SONG  
SUNCOAST CONCHOLOGISTS' TWELVE DAYS OF  
CHRISTMAS**

On the first day of Christmas,  
our shell club gave to me...  
A bite from a vicious sand flea!  
(2nd day) Two Angel Wings (and)  
(3rd day) Three low tides  
(4th day) Four Fighting Conchs  
(5th day) Five stinking shells!  
(6th day) Six soggy sneakers  
(7th day) Seven ancient fossils  
(8th day) Eight chronic backaches  
(9th day) Nine snork'ling lessons  
(10th day) Ten scallop dump trips  
(11th day) Eleven slimy tree snails  
(12th day) Twelve Golden Cowries!

About every 15 years, I'll attempt to write a parody to a familiar tune for some particular occasion; the foregoing is my "take" on the gifts and experiences Suncoast Conchologists has brought into our lives. The challenge is not only to find fitting words, but to find them of the same number of syllables and accents per line as in the original song. Try it sometime; when it works, it's great fun.

Now as to the particulars of this tongue-in-cheek sing-along:

**"A bite from a vicious sand flea!"** - Have you ever experienced this wee beast? It is so notorious on Sanibel Island that T-shirts honor the critter. I remember enduring 173 bites one visit; a family friend, an elderly gent, graciously offered to do a certified public accounting of my itchy bod!

**"Two Angel Wings"** - One of our Club's first field trips was an overnighter to Cedar Key to excavate (down to armpit level and deeper) the lovely *Cyrtopleura costata*. I remember Carolyn Petrikin demonstrating how to "dispatch" the animal by boiling it in a pot, wrapped in rags so that its delicate edges would not chip bouncing around in the water.

**"Three low tides"** - Early on, we learned the efficacy of paying attention to tides – best in early mornings in the winter, and in mid-evenings in the summer. When the water is "out" is a marvelous opportunity to explore the normally underwater habitats of mollusks, to see them in action, and perhaps to collect one for your Florida collection.

**"Four Fighting Conchs"** - The common name of our Club's emblem shell, *Strombus alatus*, a feisty little mollusk who wields his operculum like a saber!

**"Five stinking shells!"** - This line seems to be the climax, and merits some whimsy. If you've ever collected a shell with a live mollusk inside (or, unwittingly, one housing a hermit crab or with barnacles on it), and haven't gotten all of the animal totally removed, it's not long before a distinctive (or would that be di-STINK-tive?) aroma permeates the house. Some refer to it as "putrifying flesh," and indeed, you must rinse and soak and flush until "it" is all gone, or you risk eviction!

**"Six soggy sneakers"** - You certainly cannot prowl the sand and broken shell debris and seagrasses without sturdy footwear. Many members save an old pair designated for this purpose. Of course, they'll be soggy!

**"Seven ancient fossils"** - In the early years of our club, there were functioning quarries where fossilized shells were dredged up to be washed, broken down to a size useful for gravel driveways, or around landscaping, or mixed with asphalt for parking lots. The nearest quarry for us was right off Interstate 75, just north of Fruitville Road in Sarasota. You could drive there on Saturdays and certain weekdays, to help yourself to whatever you wanted. You paid \$3 and had to wear a hard-hat and work in appointed areas away from the machinery, a good 20 feet below ground level. That was below the water table, and the area was continually being pumped out. [The "pits" are now closed, the water has filled in the quarry; you can see the site through the trees as you head south on I-75.] The shells were mostly from the Pliocene Era, but rarely you might find something Miocene. They were packed solid, shell-touching shell, in profusion another 20 feet deep, in the easiest matrix—sandy dirt. It was a thrill to pluck out a shell, usually in good condition, that had awaited your touch for 3+ million years! A number are extinct! Our Club has visited over five different fossil sites over the years; but most are closed, and those that are occasionally open with special guides, now have pre-dug-up piles for your perusal.

**"Eight chronic backaches"** - The proverbial "Sanibel Stoop" (or Clearwater, Sand Key, Dunedin Causeway Stoop)! Backaches still besiege shellers, both on the hunt and for hours afterward. And for those of us more "seasoned" members, while squatting and kneeling are not impossible, the getting back up is! Trifocals help, but you still need to be close to discover the littlest treasures.

**"Nine snork'ling lessons"** - Did you know that Bob and June Haller (now shelling in the Great Beyond) allowed us to use their swimming pool for snorkel

lessons? This introduced us to still another method of exploring and collecting the critters.

**“Ten scallop dump trips”** - Even before the days of our Club, folks drove to Port Canaveral to poke through hills of shells dumped for landfill. The piles had been dredged by fishing companies in search of scallops. Tons and tons of everything on the sea floor were pulled up; anything non-scallop of a given size was simply tossed. In subsequent processing, more valuable specimens (like yellow Lions’ Paws and Junonias) were culled from the conveyor belts (after the company discovered why these crazy people were pawing through the “refuse”). Fish and other shells were amongst the unclaimed treasures. The nifty thing was that the shells were trawled from water beyond the reefs and wouldn’t normally wash ashore. Those in the know suggested to cut open the bellies of bottom-grazing fish in the piles. I tried it on a batfish, and did discover one 1/4-inch bivalve. Of course the scallop boat companies moaned that there are no longer any scallop beds off Canaveral anymore. No wonder; they pulled up everything.

**“Eleven slimy tree snails”** - Mollusks are not confined to marine environments. You’ll find ‘em in rivers, lakes, ponds, and on land, even in your yard. We once had a field trip to Big Cypress Swamp (abutting the Everglades), led by our late Honorary Member Archie Jones, THE knowledgeable authority on *Liguus fasciatus*, the Florida tree snail, a charming species with 50+ color variations. Different color varieties live in individual hammocks; they particularly like to (literally) hang out on *Gumbo limbo* trees. We secured permits from the authorities and had to file collection reports individually, noting how many live or dead or estivating (sort of hibernating) specimens we found, including their color sub-species names. The last was challenging because the hammocks we visited featured cross-breeds; obviously, we were not going to be escorted to the hammocks where the most rare forms were situated. [By the way, Archie and cohorts recreated one of the supposedly extinct color specimens by cross-mating snails from different hammocks.] Subsequently, while it was still legit, I found some “Ligs” on trees on Key Largo; there are other Keys which support these beautiful snails, but accessibility is a problem. For the specimens high in the trees, we used extension poles with an empty frozen orange juice container taped to the top, with cotton at the bottom of the can to soften the landing of the snail as it was disjoined from its foothold on the tree bark. I kept some Ligs alive for awhile in a clear plastic container with air holes in the lid. [There were rumors of other members’ Lig pets escaping and crawling around their

living rooms!] My guys survived for a number of weeks on damp, tough brown paper towels and cornmeal. They liked, well, tolerated crawling around on my arms; they have cool bodies, literally and figuratively. I still have a jar full of some Big Cypress Ligs pickling in alcohol after all these years. Hic!

Finally, **“Twelve Golden Cowries”** - The coveted *Cypraea aurantia* was, in the early years of our Club, a still rather rare shell in non-institution collections. Then, it cost c. \$150-\$300; now you can purchase a decent one from a dealer for less than a third of that, depending upon size, color, and condition. Charter and Life Members Abe and Anita Levine, of Montreal, Quebec, had a winter condo in Countryside. Abe was great friends with the late Carlos Leobrera, a dealer and entrepreneur from the Philippines, whom we subsequently made an Honorary Member. Our newly-formed club’s coffers were non-existent; to help raise some funds to get us going, Abe enlisted Carlos to donate a scrumptious large Golden Cowrie to our Club. We made it a raffle item and sold tickets for three meetings. It was ultimately won by a visitor who never returned! Abe, whose marvelous collection now resides at McGill University, had three shell passions, the Hebrew Volute, *Voluta ebraea*; aberrant or misshaped shells, also known unkindly as “freaks,” (he entered exhibits of these two topics at shell shows and won awards); and especially the Golden Cowrie, *Cypraea aurantium*. In gratitude, I drew a cartoon of Abe as the infamous “Golden Cowrie Flasher!” There he was, trenchcoat flung open, sporting heart-decorated skivvies and his renowned Golden Cowrie T-Shirt! Even his beloved bald head shone like the Golden Cowrie on his shirt!

So these are the happenings that are recounted in our Club’s *Twelve Days of Christmas* gifts. Unfortunately, fossil pits have closed and are only rarely accessible (like this coming April!) for prowling pre-excavated piles of ancient shells (still exciting). Tree snails are now totally protected and like the Queen Conch, *verboten*. The Scallop Dump landfills at Port Canaveral now are hidden out of sight in the areas between the cruise ship docks. However, all other “presents” may still be received and treasured, compliments of Suncoast Conchologists – the backaches, the stinky critters, the sand flea feasting, as well as the continuing lure and challenges and mysteries of our other molluscan friends. To spare your sanity, we promise, as always, that we will sing this ditty beginning with the Twelfth Day of Christmas!

Mary Ellen Akers



Jennifer, Shirley and Cheryl : Photo by Betty



Shirley, Cheryl and Carolyn



John : Photo by Carolyn



Shark Teeth : Photo by Betty

## **HOLIDAY SHELLABRATION \* DECEMBER 5!**

Come join us to Shellabrate the holidays ending 2017!

**WHEN:** Tuesday, December 5, 2017 (our regular meeting night). Arrive at 6 p.m. for “shell-attitude adjustment” activities, with dinner to follow.

**WHERE:** Perkins Restaurant, 2626 Gulf to Bay Blvd., in Clearwater (the northeast corner of US 19 North and Gulf to Bay). Entry to parking: a) westbound Gulf to Bay, and b) northbound on US 19 service road almost immediately north of intersection. Restaurant entrance faces Gulf to Bay, with 3 handicapped parking places nearby; other parking to east and north of restaurant. We’ve reserved the north dining room!

**RESERVATIONS:** A must, so that we may plan your place-settings, favors, dessert, prizes, etc. Sign up: a) at our November 7 regular meeting, or b) contact Mary Ellen [531-0897], before Tuesday, November 28. If it is necessary to cancel, please advise a.s.a.p., or even until noon December 5, so that we don’t hold up activities while awaiting your arrival. We appreciate these courtesies. Thanks!

**COST:** DUTCH TREAT and variable. Remember to add tip, please; it will not be included on your tab. Prices run from c. \$6 - \$13.

**LIQUOR:** Optional beer and wine.

**MENU:** Regular and seasonal menus. Go to [PerkinsRestaurants.com](http://PerkinsRestaurants.com) to explore options; although prices are not listed on the site, calories are! Wide selections – from breakfast anytime, appetizers, salads, fancy sandwiches and burgers, some combos, regular entrees, and “over-55” specials.

**DESSERT:** Suncoast Conchologists will provide a holiday cake!

**OPTIONAL GIFT EXCHANGE:** If you’d like to participate, please bring a wrapped shell or marine-related gift valued at a \$10 minimum. If your gift is male or female-oriented, please so note on the package.

**OPTIONAL CHARITY:** In the spirit of the season, we’ll have a basket available for cash donations to Religious Community Services (RCS), a non-denominational, non-profit, local charity which provides food, clothing, and temporary shelter for those in need. Traditionally, Suncoast Conchologists matches your donations.

**QUESTIONS? COMMENTS? SUGGESTIONS?** Contact Mary Ellen (number above).

Our annual fete to the Holly-Daze is a fun and well-loved way to “**SHELLABRATE THE SEA-SUN!**” All of us look forward to your being there!

Mea

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