



The Epitonium

President's Message

By Leslie Crnkovic

Hello Shellers! It is good to be back having meetings. We look forward to seeing you on the 20th.

Please mark your calendar for the HCS Auction on **Saturday March 19th**, ...and please invite some friends! We have our nominations for next year's officers and will vote on them at the business meeting at the Auction.

The HCS Banquet is tentatively set for **April 23rd, noon at Monument Inn**, \$33 per person. (Sorry inflation strikes hard) Please pay by cash or check at the meeting or auction.

COA 2022 Galveston. Please remember to reserve your room if you are staying at the Moody Gardens Hotel.

Thanks, and see you soon!

Election

It's time to nominate candidates for the March election. The Nominating Committee (Allison McHenry, John Haneiko and Leslie Crnkovic) present the following slate of officers: Leslie Crnkovic – President, Angela Doucette – Vice President/Programs, Rusti Stover – Recording Secretary, Angie Haneiko – Treasurer, and Jerry Clampit – Corresponding Secretary.

Nominations may be made from the floor at the February meeting.

February Meeting/Program

The next meeting will be at **2:00 pm on Sunday, February 20 at the Immanuel Lutheran Church**, 1441 Arlington St., Houston, TX.

On March 3-5 the Sanibel Shell Club will be celebrating its 85th birthday, so we are going to celebrate with them. The pandemic prevented them from having an in-person shell show last year, so they made several shell-related videos that were posted on their YouTube channel. We are going to watch some of them at our meeting, including a history of the shell show and "Live Mollusks and Their Shells" by Joyce Matthys.



If you have never been to a Sanibel Shell Show, you owe it to yourself to go. It is the longest running shell show in the US, and it is a marvelous experience for a sheller.



President:
Leslie Crnkovic

Vice President:
Angela Doucette

Treasurer:
Angie Haneiko

Recording Secretary:
Rusti Stover

Corresponding Secretary:
Lucy Clampit

Visit HCS online at
www.houstonshellclub.com

CALENDAR

2/20/22	HCS Meeting
3/19/22	HCS Auction
4/23/22	HCS Banquet?
5/31-6/4	2022 COA in Galveston
10/14 - 10/16	2022 Texas Jamboree & Shell Show

Happy Valentine's Day!

This lovely picture was posted on several Facebook pages. The editor does not know who the artist is, but it appears to have been originally posted on the "Just a Kiss Away" Facebook page.



Meeting Minutes

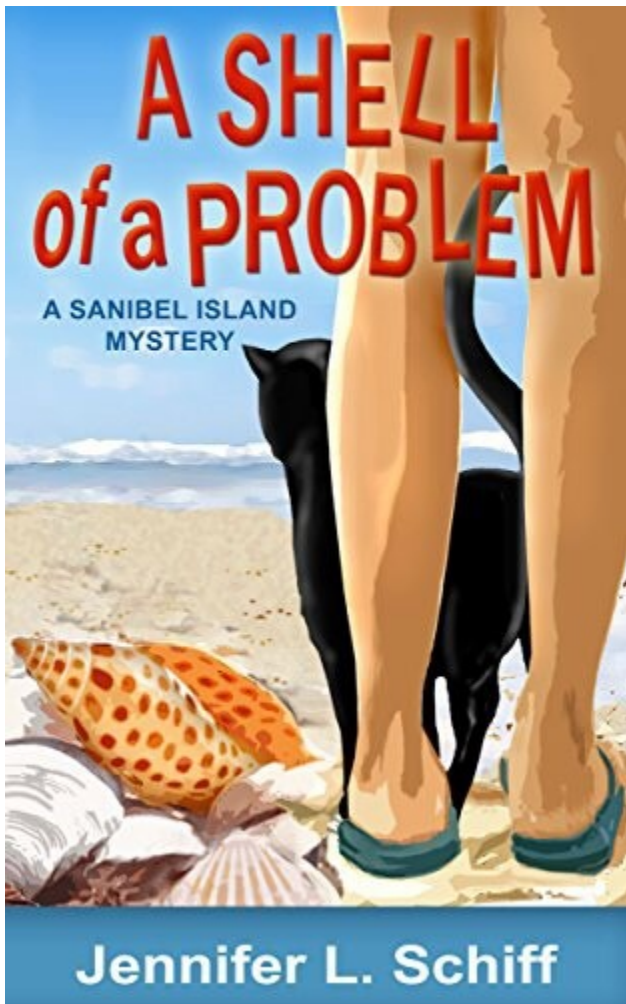
Since we did not have a meeting in December or January, we will need to approve the November minutes at the February meeting. You can read the minutes from the meeting on page 2 at: <https://www.houstonshellclub.com/Epitoniums/2022-01.pdf>.

Sanibel Island Mystery Books

Do you like seashells and Sanibel Island? Are you tired of the cold February weather? Do you like to read cozy mysteries? The editor has been reading the Sanibel Island Mystery series. They aren't literary masterpieces, but they allow you to escape to the beautiful, warm Sanibel beaches and collect seashells with the protagonist, **and** help her solve some mysteries.

Guinivere Jones is an investigative reporter, a recent divorcee, and unemployed, so she decides to leave dreary New England and move to Sanibel. A rare Golden Junonia, the star of the annual Shell Show, disappears, so our heroine sets out to find the shell. Along the way she discovers a dead body, collects buckets of shells, and finds a little romance.

The author is Jennifer Lonoff Schiff. At this time there are 7 books in the series. The first book is [A Shell of a Problem](#). The author will be signing books at the March Sanibel Shell Show. If you can't go to the Shell Show, you can read the books and pretend you are there. Enjoy!



(Book cover picture from Amazon.)

Field Trip

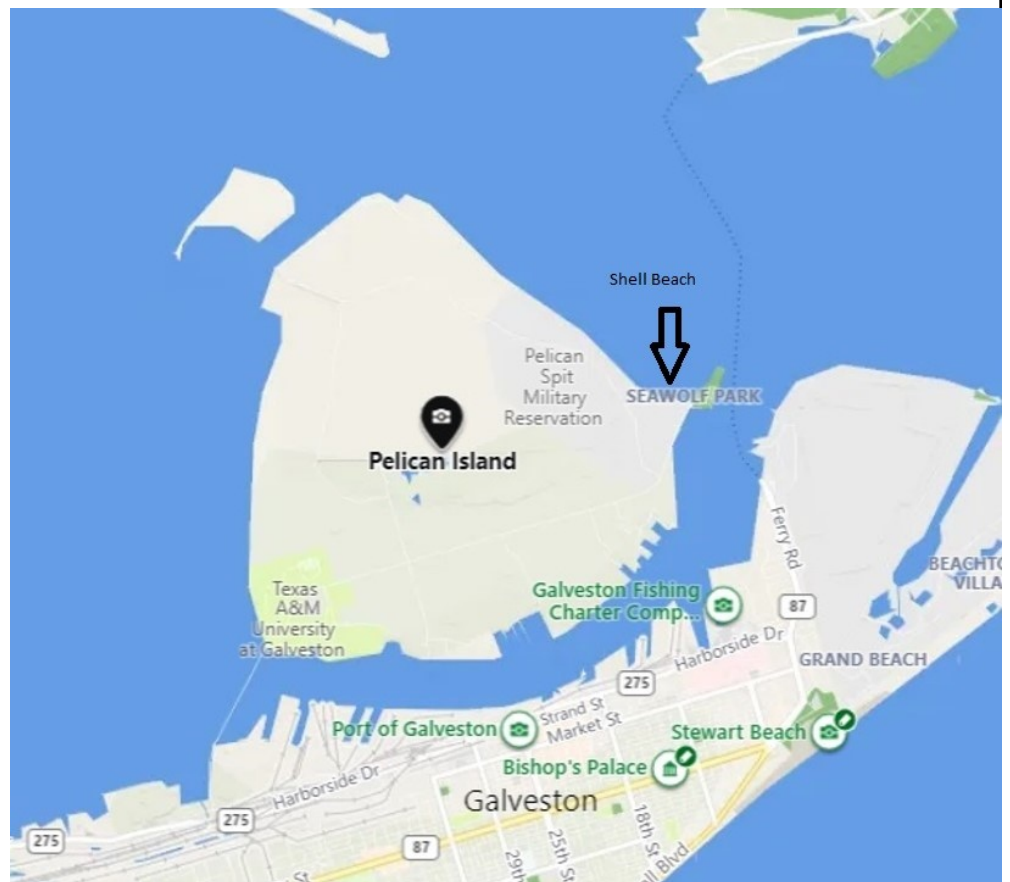
By cb

On Saturday, January 29, 2022, as announced in the January Newsletter, two HCS members set off early for a beach field trip to Patty's Beach Home. Victoria and Cathy took 288 South, enjoyed the fingernail moon, a very bright Venus star and the sun glow as the dawn broke in the east over the farm fields between Houston and Lake Jackson. The extreme low tide in the grass flats north of the beach was quite evident as we drove over the high Freeport/Surfside intercostal bridge. There was no surf at Surfside and no surfers but someone in Surfside does want to BE YOUR VALENTINE. The gulf waters were quite bright and clear.

We visited with Patty for a while in Freeport and then made our way to a few beach stops headed towards San Luis Pass - very few shells to find but some sticks and roots and plenty of shore birds. Due to the very low tides, the pass had many exposed sand flats. We checked the beach opposite the San Luis Water Tower (same again - no shells) and then made our way to what some natives may call "Shell Beach".

Shell Beach is located on Pelican Island and if you

like oyster shells, wood pieces, debris from fishing attempts and trash to recycle, this might be your shelling place. To get to Pelican Island take 45 south, exit at Harborside Drive, and go left under the bridge. Driving towards the east you will soon see a traffic light. Make a left at the traffic light on the Pelican Island Causeway and you will soon be on Pelican Island which is the home of some private businesses on the north side of the Galveston Ship Channel and Texas A & M Galveston. The road stretches out and ends at Seawolf Park which has fishing piers, picnic sites, a playground, the Galveston Naval Museum that includes the WWII submarine the USS CavaIla and the destroyer S.S. Stewart. The remains of the WWI tanker S.S. Selma, the largest concrete ship constructed, can be seen



northwest of the park's fishing pier. There are a lot of no parking signs as you approach the park office structure but look to your left and you will see the crescent shaped Shell Beach. The park entry fee is \$6 per car & it's best to pay, park close to the entry structure and walk to Shell Beach. It is the shortest trip from your car to the beach. Google Sea Wolf Park for more information. On the included Google map of the area. It's quite interesting to see how many land structures are so close to the entry of the Houston Ship Channel: the Galveston Ferry Terminal, the Bolivar Ferry Terminal, the tip of the Texas City Dike, and Pelican Island. One can only imagine what treasures might land on Shell Beach if/when there is another Ike-like storm surge into and past the Galveston Jetties and Galveston Ship Channel.

As we made our way back to Patty's home, we could see the tidal bore of the rising tide below the Pelican Island Causeway. Wanda and one year old great grandson Ryan joined us in Patty's most comfortable living room. It was terrific to visit and catch up. Ryan was so entertaining in his new baby trainer shoes, and he recovered from his little falls very quickly.

Peek-a-boo and lots of couch pillows with sea pictures were also of great interest to this little lad. Some small beach finds included about 15 small red plastic balls and one weight from fishing debris and several very beautiful small oyster valves for craft.

COA Convention 2022 – Galveston

The convention, scheduled for **May 31-June 4**, will be here soon, so make your Moody Gardens hotel reservation. The hotel number is: 409-744-4673. Tell them that you want the COA 2022 discounted rate.

The registration form, along with other convention forms, is available at: <https://conchologistsofamerica.org/conventions/>.

The editor highly recommends that you take advantage of the special \$56 Moody Gardens Attractions Pass. It allows you **unlimited** access, during the convention, to the Discovery Museum, Rainforest, and Aquarium Pyramids, along with the MG 3D and 4D Theaters, and other attractions on the resort grounds. After having taken several family members to see the attractions, it is a bargain.

Here is a link to Dave Green's presentation about the Convention: [COA 2022 Logo \(conchologistsofamerica.org\)](https://conchologistsofamerica.org)



HCS Auction

The auction committee is busy preparing a great auction for **Saturday, March 19** at the **Immanuel Lutheran Church**, 1441 Arlington St. We hope you have marked your calendar and plan to be there. A silent auction will begin at **10:00 am** and will be followed by an oral auction which will be followed by another silent auction and another oral auction.

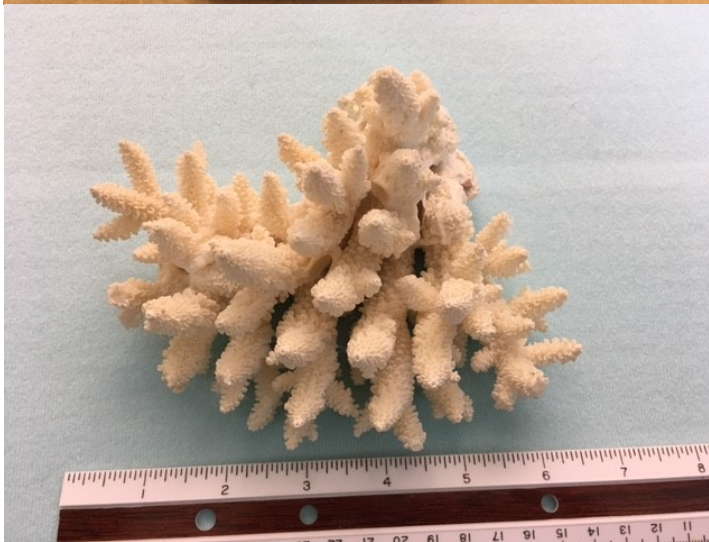
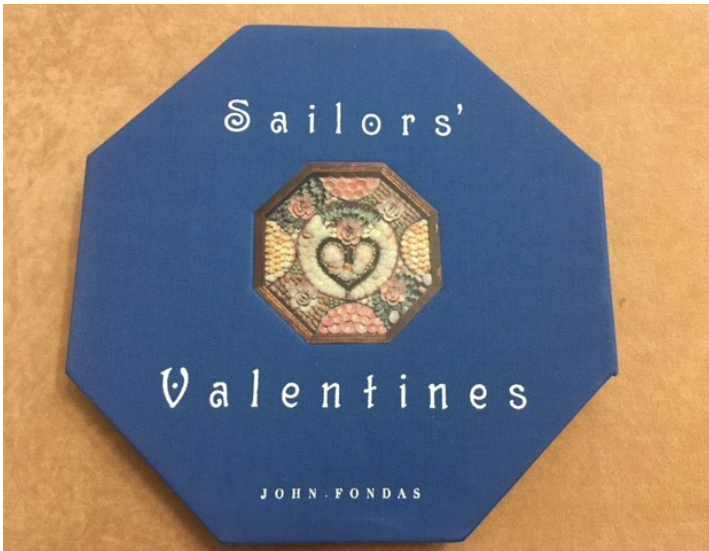
We have been fortunate to receive generous donations that include many cones, cowries, murex and volutes, along with specimens from other families. In addition to shells, there will be books, coral, and home décor items that include some of Gary Olson's collection of glass shells and animals. Some of the items are pictured in this newsletter.

Remember that we can only accept cash or checks – NO credit cards.

Come and enjoy!



Sailor's Valentine





Spikes And Spines Suit Me Just Fine

By Tina Petway

(Editor: This article originally appeared on the HMNS Malacology Department blog. It is used with their permission.)

What is so great about a Mollusk shell having spines or spikes? We could say they are pretty and even spectacular, and that would be true. However, they actually have a very specific purpose in the life of mollusks. Let us imagine we are a Clam (Bivalve). We do not have hands or tentacles that could be used to hold on to things around us such as rocks or coral growths. Now let us suppose we lived in shallow habitats under the surface of our sandy or muddy environment, knowing that there are always tides and currents that could rip us out of our snug home. What would aid in remaining where we are safe and healthy? The growth of spines or spikes on our outer shell would give us an anchor to remain in place and stay buried in our habitat. One good example of this type of modification to the shell is the *Pitar lupanaria* from the west coasts of Mexico through Peru. (Figure 1.)

Is it possible for these fragile shells to be moved about by waves and currents without breaking these spines? It is possible for such spines to remain unbroken, and some species bearing spines or spikes can repair or regrow them. These mollusks have adapted spines that are actually hollow, allowing parts of the living animal to lay down new growth of calcium carbonate to repair and regrow these structures. A beautiful exam-



ple of a species capable of such repairs is the delicate *Murex pecten*, (aka “The Venus Comb Murex”) from much of the South Pacific such as the Philippine Islands and as far as Madagascar (Figure 2). Sailors of old would occasionally find these shells washed up on rocks or beaches and they believed the shells were used by Mermaids to comb their long hair. Thus, the name “Venus Comb”, has been handed down to us and is still commonly used to refer to this species.



The Family MURICIDAE is one of the largest Family of mollusks. Many species in this Family produce spines, frilly webbing or stout spikes such as the *Hexaplex fulvescens*, (aka “The Giant Eastern Murex”) which lives along Texas’ beaches and from South Carolina to Florida. (Figure 3). The MURICIDAE, (commonly called Murex) are predators in their habitats and move about searching for their prey using their large, muscular foot much as the snails in your garden move. So why do you think these predators capable of moving around would need to develop such appendages as spines or spikes? In the ocean there are always larger predators looking for a meal. Since Murex are capable of moving around to search for their prey they can be seen more easily by other predators. For protection, such sharp, hard projections provide great armor against such attackers.

Now, the list of reasons for developing spines or spikes includes:

Anchorage in habitats.

Armor against predators.

What other reasons could have caused some mollusks to develop such spiny or spikey extensions to their calcium carbonate shells? Camouflage is an important part of the lives of many prey species. One great examples of this adaptation is found in the Family of bivalves called *Spondylus* (aka “Thorney Oysters”); which are not oysters at all since they are members of the Super Family of PECTINIDAE (Scallops). How can these spines be used to provide camouflage? While providing armor against predators, these extensions of the shell also provide homes for sponges, algae and other organisms to attach and grow thus hiding the animal in its shell almost completely. One example found locally along the Texas coast to Florida that uses these spines to provide camouflage is *Spondylus americanus* (Figure 4). These beautiful mollusks live permanently attached to rocks, pilings, Oil Rig supports and even sunken boats. Since they live their whole lives in one place and are visible to passing, hungry fish; Camouflage is most valuable to survival. Now the list of uses includes Camouflage from



predators.



Another commonly asked question is “Do these mollusks use their spikes or spines to pry open the shells of their intended meal”? Yes, some have developed a specialized, single tooth-like projection that is capable of assisting in opening the shells of their prey. In the Family FASCIO-LARIDAE there is a striking example that uses its single, long spike for this purpose. *Opeatostoma pseudodon* (Figure 5) known as the “Banded Tooth Latirus” illustrates the sharp spike used by this species to help

open the shells of bivalves or other prey items such as barnacles. Other Families of mollusks as well make use of such adaptations and they serve much the same purpose.

As widely varied as the previous reasons are, another valuable reason for producing spines is to aid in reproduction. This is perhaps most easily seen in the Genus *Lambis* of the Family Strombidae. These mollusks produce long or short spines along the outer edge of their shells and can vary between the male and female of certain species. These spines may be used by the male to move the female into position to accomplish the production of the next generations of their species. (Figure 6).



As you visit the Strake Hall of Malacology, see how many of these spectacular shells produced by mollusks you can find. In each case, imagine the uses for the lovely, delicate or strong spines and spikes visible on the shells. Nature is remarkable in its millions of adaptations for success in our amazing Natural World.

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Permission is granted for reprinting articles, provided credit is given to *The Epitonium*, the writer, and the Houston Conchology Society and a copy of the reprint is sent to the editor of the newsletter.

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The Society holds regular meetings on the third Tuesday of September, October, November, January, February and April. There are seasonal events and a yearly shell auction scheduled in the other months.

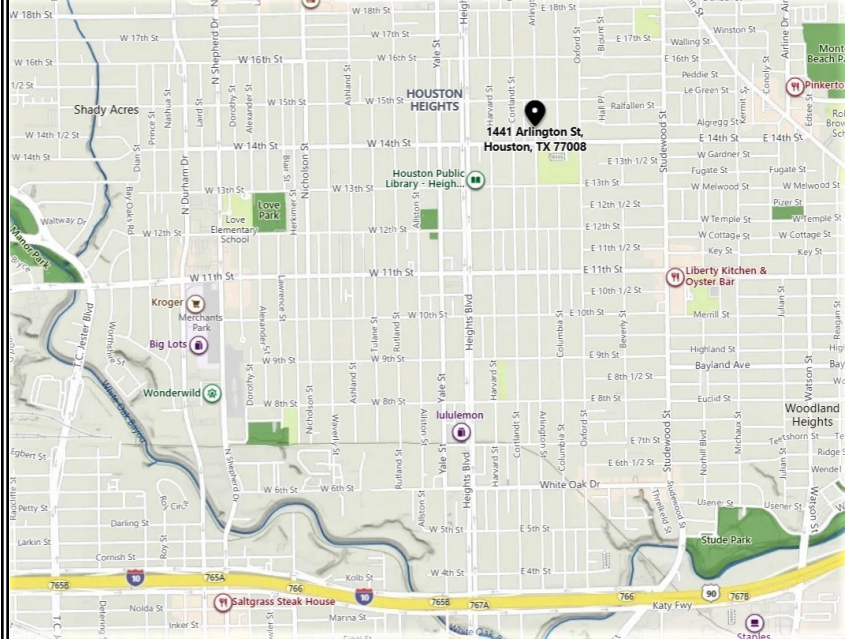
VISITORS WELCOME!!!

Membership year extends from June 1 through May 31.

Annual membership dues: Family \$12; Single \$10; Junior (under 18) \$6.

Make checks payable to Houston Conchology Society and send to Angie Haneiko, 11407 Blackhawk Blvd., Houston, TX 77089.

Immanuel Lutheran Church 1441 Arlington Street, Houston, TX



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