

The Epitonium

Volume XXXI, Issue 5

www.houstonshellclub.com

February, 2024

February Meeting and Program

The next HCS meeting is scheduled for **Sunday, February 18, 2:00 p.m.**, at the Immanuel Lutheran Church. Please come and join us for Tina Petway's interesting program "Deep Water Rarities of the Gulf of Mexico." One of which is *Sthenorytis pernobilis*.



Tina will also be presenting the list of nominees for next year's officers. The vote will take place at the March meeting.

Don't forget to bring your shopping bag for the free table. We have some items that were donated by a lady who recently moved to a retirement facility. Bring your own snack and/or drink if you would like.

President's Message

I don't know about you, but I can hardly wait for Spring and seeing things turn green once again. Except for that one very cold snap, our winter has not been too bad, as yet. The groundhog didn't see his shadow, so maybe Spring will come early.

February is Valentine month, so be kind and loving to your spouses and your family members, especially those friends and family members that are in their Golden Years, if there are such things. Show your love and kindness; make that your goal this month.....and every month.

Our Auction committee is hard at work getting ready for the HCS annual auction scheduled for **March 2**. So, save a few coins and be sure to be there and spend freely. The money we raise goes to the operation our club and our grants.

As you already know, January was not a good month for the shelling world. We lost Alan Gettleman and Dr. Harry Lee, and several other COA members have been under the weather. My message to each of us is to take care of your health and get those regular checkups. Staying on top of your health should be job #1 for all of us.

The annual May outing at Monument Inn is confirmed for **May 18**. Continued on page 3

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President:

Da-

vid Green

Vice President:

Tina Pettway

Treasurer:

Angie Haneiko

Recording Secretary:

Rusti Stover

Corresponding Secretary:

Jerry Clampit

Visit HCS online at www.houstonshellclub.com

CALENDAR

1/21/24	HCS Meeting
2/18/24	HCS Meeting
3/2/24	HCS AUCTION
4/21/24	HCS Meeting
5/18/24	HCS Banquet
6/12/24	COA Melbourne, FL
7/13/25	COA Coupus Christi

HCS Annual Auction

Don't forget the auction is scheduled for **Saturday March 2** at the Immanuel Lutheran Church. A few pictures of beautiful oral auction items have been pictured in previous newsletters. The March newsletter will be coming out shortly after the February meeting with lots of pictures and more details.



January Minutes

Submitted byRusti Stover, Secretary

President Dave Green opened the meeting at 2:10 PM with all officers present. Mary Harris made a motion to approve the November 2023 minutes, Angie Haneiko seconded, all approved. Angie gave the treasurer's report.

Dave asked for a report on the tabled matter about the club giving grants again. Tina Petway suggested that we increase the \$1500.00 grant we give presently, to \$2,000, by increasing the club donation amount from \$1,000 to \$1500 dollars, and adding in the \$500 from Allison McHenry for a combined Connie Boone/Dr. John McHenry Grant of \$2,000 this year only. Lucy Clampit made the formal motion, Mary Harris seconded, motion was approved by all.

Under Old Business, Cathy Betley announced she had a lot of 30% off admission discount tickets from the Museum of Natural Science, that the Museum gave out for volunteers who helped with the Holiday Tree project in early December. The discounts are good until November 30th, 2024. Several people asked for the tickets, and Cathy will distribute.

Jerry Clampit asked if we could buy a "sound system" for the meetings, with a wireless microphone that can be passed around when people speak, as most of the club members are old enough that they have hearing problems. Jerry said a system might be around 300 dollars to purchase, and a club member would have to commit to bringing it to the meetings, because he and Lucy already bring the projector equipment for the programs. Paula Rutledge said a Karaoke Machine system would be less expensive and do the same thing. Dave Green asked Paula and Jerry to research getting a karaoke machine for the club, and we should have it by the February meeting. Dave said he would commit to transporting it to the meetings. Tina Petway made a motion to purchase, Frank Petway seconded, all approved.

VP/Program Chair Tina Petway announced that the program she was going to give at this meeting is not finished, and she would give it in February, about rare deepwater shells of the Gulf of Mexico. The program today is a slide show about a Hawaiian shelling trip by Charlotte Lloyd Thorpe.

Continued on page 3

President from page 1 COA will be June 12-16 in Melbourne, FL. The Texas Sheller's Jamboree, hosted by the San Antonio Shell Club, the SASC auction, and the Sea Shell Searchers Shell Show will be the weekend of October 18-20 at the Lake Jackson Civic Center. And there are a few shell shows coming up at Sanibel, St. Pete, and North Carolina. There are fun things on the horizon for all of us, so stay healthy so you can enjoy all of these events.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone at the **February 18** meeting, so stay healthy and we will see you soon.

Dave

Minutes from page 2 Saturday, March 2nd, is the annual Auction. Lucy Clampit mentioned for drinks, the club would only be providing bottled water. As far as food, members will be asked to bring packaged snacks, and Lucy asked for input about changing the usual cold sandwiches to a pizza delivery instead. Club members signaled by a show of hands that the pizza lunch would be great instead of the sandwiches. Dave Green asked Lucy if we had enough donations for the Oral Auction. Lucy said she thought we did. Dave said he wanted to donate a few more and will get with Lucy about that.

Dave mentioned the Annual Banquet will be held at the Monument Inn on Saturday, May 18, at noon.

Dave then asked for volunteers for the Nominating Committee, for a slate of officers to be announced at the February meeting, as the Election will be held during the Business Meeting portion of the Annual Auction on March 2nd. Tina Petway volunteered as chair, with Allison McHenry and Angela Doucette as committee members.

There being no further business, Leslie Crnkovic made a motion to end the meeting, Tina Petway seconded, all approved, and Dave Green adjourned the meeting at 2:46 PM.

Shell Guide

Southwest Florida Shells Guide Remodeled! The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum & Aquarium is proud to announce that, as of January 1, 2024, a new version of its Shell Guide has been released. The online guide was created and is maintained by the Museums' Science Director and Curator Dr José H. Leal. It currently features 401 species of shallow-water marine mollusks from the area between Tampa Bay and the Ten Thousand Islands. "Southwest Florida Shells" has been for many years the main identification resource used for the area by marine biologists, conservation and environmental scientists, students, and shell enthusiasts. The new version presents a revamped design, improved graphics, and added functionality. More importantly, the guide structure, created by Azalea Digital of Jacksonville, Florida, is based on a new platform that will be fully compatible with an upcoming version of the entire National Shell Museum website. Check the guide at https://www.shellmuseum.org/shell-guide.

Identification of Shells

By Russell Renka

Shell collectors traditionally rely on books, journals, clubs, and shell dealers to identify and catalogue their collections. Everyone has books and specimen labels, but often this is not enough. Club membership helps greatly with expert help and larger libraries, but finally you have to make a label by yourself. The internet can help you.

Assume that you have a good specimen with no label or one of unknown or doubtful quality. You want to create a proper label identifying the species, its genus, and its family. How do you proceed? I start with help from the Dutch. The Natural History Museum Rotterdam has Images From Malacology at malacology pictures, with URL at https://malacopics.nl/ replacing its old URL of www.nmr-pics.nl. It shows names with photographs of marine molluscs alongside land/freshwater molluscs, arranged alphabetically within each family from A to Z. Once there, it's easy to scroll through the species list, again using alphabetized genus and species. Some fossil items are included. The site is kept up to date with the rapidly changing official species names, shown below each species. The site lends itself to a visual scroll, mighty useful for spotting identification candidates. Other websites (cited below) have the same information, but do not permit scrolls like Rotterdam. Books by authors Abbott and Robin do lend to scrolling, but might miss your shell, get dated with obsolete names, and lack linkage to the next step.

That step is to highlight Rotterdam's species name, shown below each photograph, and right click for a search. Now find the World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS) at www.marinespecies.org/ for the officially accepted name of every recognized species. This should match your Rotterdam entry. If not, then it red lights that name as unaccepted while showing the accepted name. You'll get links to its family, subfamily, genus, and so forth; you get all recognized subspecies; and you get links to previously accepted names. You can then create or adjust specimen or group labels with high flexibility.

WoRMS also helps with internal searches. Every site has a Quick Search bar in upper left below the WoRMS name. That keeps you moving to other WoRMS site without using a broader and slower browser search. On upper right is usually a single photograph from the French MNHN/ Molluscs (IM) site, often with photographs from WoRMS or elsewhere. (Full name is Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle at https://www.mnhn.fr/en.) But suppose you want more photographs. Then I post the search on Google or Bing and pull up Images for another scroll. Two sites show up frequently.

One is the advanced Femorale Archive of shells at www.femorale.com/shellphotos/, from Femorale - Since 1989. This has 8000 or more species, easily accessed with a Search window. If you are a buyer or price checker, use the "Available shells" entry. If you seek photographs, do "Photo gallery" and click on the family name. Remarkably comprehensive material comes forth, such as 1640 species of Conidae alone (per 22 June 2023). And pay mind to Species Updates at http://www.femorale.com/shells/sspupdates.asp to help with identification updates. Great site; but scrolling is very slow. That's why I start with Rotterdam. Another frequent flyer on Image compilations is Hardy's Internet Guide to Marine Gastropods,

at https://conchology.be/?t=261. The right side has "Search Gastropods" with the usual magnifying glass. Option list is huge, as their numerical circulars show. I simplify searches by using Family and Species entries while omitting Genus. The reason is that Poppe uses many genus and subgenus combinations on families like Conidae and Volutidae, so one can miss many valid species. Avoid that problem by using just the two. With Volutidae, the alphabetized list shows every combination of Volutidae with Subfamily and Tribe; very useful for some ends, but not for simply navigating to, say, Amoria benthalis. For that, just do the two entries, and you get two genus designations, one being the correct Amoria. Easy to use. Then you get its Taxonomy alongside three photographs, all similar and correct. But some Taxonomy entries show numerous photographs, some being correct and others clearly not. That's the price for producing such comprehensive material. (Note also that Poppe's sale lists do not exhibit any such problem.) Also, no Bivalvia are shown; Eddie's commendable work is restricted to Gastropoda. For bivalves, return to Rotterdam and Femorale.

If you both buyer and seller be, try adding "for sale" to the species name at Images. That captures online shell dealers and auction sites. Leading dealer sites provide quality photographs and accurate specimen information; for example, see Rich Goldberg's https://www.worldwideconchology.com/worldwide/content.shtml under search name Worldwide Specimen Shells. Major auction sites are also eminently worthwhile, per the "Italian Shell Auction" site at https://www.shellauction.net/login.php. It's a vast monthly array of sale entries, a great place for viewing, and a good teacher for students of the worldwide shelling market's behavior. And then there is eBay. Do not assume photographic or other descriptive accuracy here, as sellers range from professional and accurate, to amateur and even deceitful. For prospective buyers, be aware that prices are often excessive, identifications are doubtful, and sellers are a varied lot. Trust, but verify. In 20 years I have never yet bought a shell from eBay, but others have thrived there. Bargains there are, but usually it's a single specimen, so buying it requires you to bear the shipping tab. I believe eBay is best left to experienced collectors only.

Many more sites await your search and discovery. Olivier Caro's <u>Collection of worlwide seashells</u> at http://www.idscaro.net/sci/01_coll/index.htm has high quality photographs, grouped by Family and Genus. That can be extremely useful for deciding which species you have within a known Genus. But finding a Family requires knowledge of its Order and Superfamily, so go back to WoRMS, Quick search that Family, and read its Classification entries for Order and Superfamily. For example, Family <u>Olividae Latreille</u>, 1825 at https://www.marinespecies.org/aphia.php?p=taxdetails&id=23082 resides in Neogastropoda (Order) and Olivoidea (Superfamily). Use that to find Olives in Caro's site. Then you can sort some olives and make correct labels, but it's not a comprehensive list of species. Would that it be so, as telling Olives apart is a real challenge.

Florida shellers are among world leaders in providing pertinent information on marine, land, fresh water, and fossil shells. See Marlo's Krisberg's decades of fine work entitled Let's Talk Seashells, at https://olram9.wixsite.com/letstalkseashells, for extensive photographs, descriptions, and discussion of Florida shells. Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum has https://www.shellmuseum.org/shell-guide showing more than 500 Southwest Florida Shells; also, refer to its https://webportal.specifycloud.org/shellmuseum/ for advanced searches. Jacksonville Shells - WWW.JAXSHELLS.ORG, at www.jaxshells.org has a wide array of links, in Florida

and beyond to worldwide sources.

And now a word on old labels against new and current ones. Shell naming history affirms that "the more we know, the more we split" with new species added to an already-massive list. The same goes for genus and family names. New names are added, old names replaced, and collectors everywhere are sorely annoyed in trying to keep current with the innovators. Those who resist are sometimes called lumpers, often in dismissal by those chasing the new and current WoRMS names. The rapid expansion of species is shown at MolluscaBase, URL being https:// www.molluscabase.org/ in calendar 2024. New family, genus, and species names are often justified by proper scientific inquiry resulting in better classification. For example, the Morum genus was once in family Cassidae (helmets) until DNA research moved it to family Harpidae (harps). But there's another side to naming new things. It is closely associated with high prices under a "new species" label; I recall from the 2016 COA Bourse being offered a beautiful deep water Apple Murex (*Phyllonotus pomum* (Gmelin, 1791)) as a rare new species at about \$100 or so. I had about a dozen of these from deep water off the Dry Tortugas, so declined this generous offer. And it lends itself to enthusiastic splits of an established species into two or even several new names. Experienced collectors know that WoRMS is highly vulnerable to this. I'm losing count on how often this crops up. Be cautious with your Euros, your dollars, and your acceptance of "new species" proclamations.

So here are two simple rules for using WoRMS well. First, you can keep existing labels so long as WoRMS tracks it to the current name. And second, be very wary of following every WoRMS new entry as the final word. Go back to Images using each new split to compare to the original (lumped) species name. Sometimes their distinctions vanish before your eyes. Now DNA can indeed tell species apart, but it isn't always employed to find that two or three species masquerade as just one. The skeptic's rule follows; if they look the same, maybe the split lacks justification. And eventually, WoRMS will correct this problem.

Russell Renka, 5 January 2024





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Shelling in 'the Land of the Long White Cloud'

by Sharon Grimes and Judy Lewis

In February 2019, Judy Lewis, my husband Steve, and I had the opportunity to tour New Zealand from top to bottom. Steve and I rented a camper van in Auckland and began our exploration of the North Island. The trip was not planned as a 'shelling' trip, but we took every opportunity to collect.

New Zealand is much like the National Parks in the Northwest USA all condensed into a much smaller area. New Zealand is also very 'camper van' friendly. Not only are there campgrounds everywhere with full hookups, most have a community kitchen with several cubbies of sink, oven, microwave, pots & pans, dishes, and silverware. On the North Island we experienced boiling beaches, sand dunes, rain forests, waterfalls, geysers, geothermal pools, boiling mud, redwood forests, Lord of the Rings tours, great museums and aquariums, and white-water rafting down the highest commercially rafted waterfall in the world. Regarding all the ge-

othermal activity, there are actually steam vents in peoples' yards. While strolling along the beach at Mt. Maunganui, the little wentletrap, *Epitonium zelebori*, pictured below, washed right up at my feet.

At one museum, I noticed that some seashells were mislabeled. It looked like the labels got scrambled somehow and someone just randomly put them back. I did take the opportunity to tell the lady in





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the gift shop, but who knows if they ever got corrected.

On the South Island, we experienced penguins coming out of the sea, glow worm caves, taking a helicopter to the top of a

glacier, more Lord of the Rings tours, more white-water rafting, and the best pizza in the whole world! Judy joined us in Queenstown and we headed southeast to the town of Invercargill. From there we took the ferry to Stewart Island, the most

southern part on New Zealand. That is when the shelling really got started. We were thrilled to find Southern Ostrich Foot, *Struthiolaria papulose gigas*, Swainson's Volute, *Alcithoe swainsoni*, Austral Abalone, *Haliotis australis*, and brachiopods, *Terebratella sanguinea*, with both valves, to name just a few. The water is too cold to even stick your foot in, so all our shelling was beachcombing.

We headed north, driving up the coast, and stopped at several beaches. At the museum in Takaka, we found another seashell display with shells that were truly mis-identified. Judy and I debated telling them and decided not to. Our camper van trip ended in Christchurch. Unfortunately, we arrived just a few hours before the mass shooting at a mosque, killing 51 people. The city was shut down and our activity was limited to what we could walk to.

From Christchurch, we flew back to Auckland. Judy's husband, John, joined us there. We rented a car and headed to the east coast, and then as far north as we could go. We found both valves of Jingle Shells, *Anomia walteri*, at the Bay of Islands. Judy was collecting grit to look for miniatures when a local couple asked what she was doing. Once she explained, they walked

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to their car and came back with a plastic storage container for her, since her baggie wasn't working too well.

We spent a couple of nights at Pahia Beach. It was the second most productive beach for shelling, after Stewart Island in the South. We went to the most northern point of the North Island and then headed back south along the west coast. We stayed at a beach side cabin in Awanui, the Ninety Mile Beach Holiday Park. There we collected enough New Zealand Little Neck Clams, *Austrovenus stutchburi*, to cook ourselves a nice dinner. We also found terebra and turritella species there. Then it was time to return to Auckland and end our New Zealand adventure.

New Zealand is so long that it has more than one province with shells unique to the province. So, while you might not find a lot of species in one place, almost all are endemic to New Zealand. Judy has been to beaches recommended by the Wellington Shell Club that remind her of Sanibel with huge numbers of species washing in.

It was a great trip with lots of amazing things to see and do. Judy will tell you that I will drive miles off of the route to see a waterfall. The best pizza is in Dunedin at Etrusco.



Judy's Covid project was to identify all the shells we found. Her list is attached, along with a few photos.



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subrostratum burchardi	melanotragus	zeiandica	lineolata	papulosa	novaelandiae	costata	scobina	radians	stellifera	ornata	smaragda	sulcata	haustorium	sp?	lutulentis	aethiops	smargada	glandiforms	virgata	adspersa	liliana	stutchburyi	roseus	subrosea	roseus	symmetricus	viridis	opalus	nigerrimum
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23 Pahia Beach, North Island 14 Pahia Beach, North Island	3 Pahia Beach, North Island	7 Whangapoua Beach, North Island	 Whangapoua Beach, North Island 	1 Whangapoua Beach, North Island	6 Whangapoua Beach, North Island	2 Whangapoua Beach, North Island	3 Whangapoua Beach, North Island	3 Whangapoua Beach, North Island	1 Whangapoua Beach, North Island	1 Whangapoua Beach, North Island	1 Whangapoua Beach, North Island	10 Whangapoua Beach, North Island	4 Whangapoua Beach, North Island	1 Tuck's Bay, North Island	 Tuck's Bay, North Island 	10 Tuck's Bay, North Island	5 Tuck's Bay, North Island	Tuck's Bay, North Island	10 Tuck's Bay, North Island	Tuck's Bay, North Island	4 Tuck's Bay, North Island	5 Tuck's Bay, North Island	2 Ruakaka Beach, North Island	4 Ruakaka Beach, North Island	2 Horseshoe Bay, Stewart Island	18 Horseshoe Bay, Stewart Island	3 Horseshoe Bay, Stewart Island	14 Horseshoe Bay, Stewart Island	1 Horseshoe Bay, Stewart Island
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Aupourian	N	1 Tapotupotu Beach, North Island	(Grav in Wood, 182) Mesodesmatidae	(Grav in Wood, 1	subtriangulata	Paphies	70 1
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Aupourian	NZ	ma Tapotupotu Beach, North Island	Spirulidae	(Linne, 1758)	spirula	Spirula	67 ii
Aupourian	ZN	5 Pahia Beach, North Island	, 18 Olivide	(G. B. Sowerby II, 18 Olivide	nova ezelandia	Amalda	66 hh
Aupourian	NZ	1 Pahia Beach, North Island) Terebridae	(Deshayes, 1859) Terebridae	tristis	Euterebra	65 hh
Aupourian	NZ	4 Pahia Beach, North Island	Mangeliidae	(Murdoch, 1905)	lyallensis	Neoguraleus	64 hh
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Aupourian	NZ	ma Pahia Beach, North Island	Mangeliidae	(Gillies, 1882)	sinclairi	Neoguraleus	62 hh
Aupourian	Z	6 Pahia Beach, North Island	Marginellidae	Marshall, 2004	koma	Mesoginella	61 hh
Aupourian	ZN	1 Pahia Beach, North Island	18 Trochidae	Quoy & Gaimard 18 Trochidae	tiaratus	Coelotrochus	60 hh
Aupourian	ZN	ma Pahia Beach, North Island	Muricidae	(Hutton, 1873)	plebeius	Xymene	59 hh
Aupourian	ZN	1 Pahia Beach, North Island	Littorinidae	(Hutton, 1873)	varia	Risellopsis	58 hh
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Aupourian	NZ	? Pahia Beach, North Island	Buccinidae	Powell, 1940	mariae	Buccinulum	56 hh

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Camper Van North Island

Auckland

Coromandel

Mr. Maunganui

Rotorua

Taupo

Napier

Wellington

Ferry to South Island

Picton

Nelson

Abel Tasman National Park

Panakaikai

Fox Glacier

Wanaka

Queenstown

TeAnau

Invercargil

Ferry to Stewart Island

Timaru

Dunedin

Christchurch

Fly back to Auckland and Rent Car

Whangarei

Paihia

Cape Reinga

90 Mile Beach

Orewa

Ferry Back to Auckland

Google the expandable map below of New Zealand to see these places in detail: https://www.google.co.nz/maps/@-41.6848449,163.4679346,5.44z?entry=ttu

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Editor: Lucy Clampit

10532 Hammerly Blvd., Houston, TX 77043

E-mail: lclampit@comcast.net

The Society holds regular meetings on the third Sunday 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



Immanuel Lutheran Church 306 E. 15th Street

HOUSTON CONCHOLOGY SOCIETY

Lucy Clampit, Corresponding Secretary 10532 Hammerly Blvd.