

President's Message

I would like to take this opportunity to express how honored I am to represent this venerable organization. The PCC is the latest incarnation of a club that was founded in 1902 – which makes this oldest continuously meeting shell club in America, if not the world. The PCC is the merger of the *Conchological Club of Southern California* and the *Pacific Shell Club* (which was founded in 1945). In one sense, this is sort of a family reunion. The CCSC has long been associated with the Museum of Natural

History in LA County and the PSC originated there, sponsored by Dr. Howard R. Hill, Curator of Marine Biology.

It's evident that the nature of shell collecting and shell clubs has changed over the years. At the turn of the 20th century, people formed clubs for civic duty, entertainment and enlightenment. Lectures by scientists, explorers and writers were one way for people to learn about new ideas, discoveries and places most were unable to visit for themselves. In that less-jaded time, those

lucky enough to live near the seashore or travel, found and collected seashells. Some "amateur collectors" became authorities in the field. Many well known authorities of yesterday and today were and are members of this club.

During WWII, as servicemen collected exotic seashells from equally exotic tropical islands. They and their families sought information from museums and formed clubs to share and learn about their souvenirs. At that time distance was an issue. Because our freeway system was still undeveloped and driving was relatively expensive, shell clubs were often local affairs. At that time 3 shell clubs met in the LA area: CCSC, PSC and the Long Beach Shell Club (which sadly disbanded last year). Newsletters were a forum for far-flung members who couldn't meet in person. Letters and articles kept members in touch. After the war that new invention, the aqua-lung, made it possible for ordinary people to explore the marine environment. Naturally, seashells were collected as curiosities and trophies.

Here at the turn of the 21st century, people don't form clubs and meet the way they once did; there's an overabundance of entertainments and distractions. This may seem like a bad time for shell clubs but I think it's one of the best! For one thing, our membership is still strong and we have managed to attract new members. I believe

shell collecting is more active than ever, for example just logon to *eBay* and go to ...*Rocks, Fossils, Minerals > Shells*, there will be about 2500+ listing each week! Someone is apparently interested. More and better reference books are being produced each year. The Internet can be one of the distractions I mentioned but it has opened up the world of shell collecting like nothing else: greater access to dealers, shell guides, club sites, bulletin boards, auctions and more all in

one place. Where gas rationing and distance kept up apart, we now belong to a larger community.

Where does that leave us as a club? I believe all the motives that made our founders form a club and meet still obtain. Internet and bulletin boards notwithstanding, there's nothing like "being there". There's nothing like sharing your finds with others in person or actually holding that rare specimen in your hands. Our association with the Natural History

Museum has given amateurs direct contact with professionals in Malacology, Paleontology and... Likewise, professionals need amateurs; several of our members aid the museum as Research Associates. I'm glad to say that our membership embraces "Conchological Diversity", it's not just about seashells, land and tree snails have developed an enthusiastic following and fossil hunting has it's devotees as well.

This year I'd like to resurrect our web-site and use it to broaden our *virtual* membership. And speaking of membership, I'd like to see us open our scope to include others who are not primarily shell collectors (i.e., divers, travel enthusiasts, craftsmen, etc.) to see how our interests intersect.

Terry Rutkas
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Cypraea moneta, live specimen on coral, Hawaii.

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Las Conchas is a publication of the Pacific Conchological Club

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The Pacific Conchological Club was organized in 2003 as a result of the merger between the Pacific Shell Club and the Conchological Club of Southern California. Its mission is to further the interest in shell collecting and malacology and to provide a forum for individuals who love shells and other marine life. The Club meets on the second Sunday of each month from October through June at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History (900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles).

Shelling on Maui *or* Making the Most of it

Phil Liff-Grieff

Ten days on Maui. Condo on the beach, dive gear, collecting gear and underwater camera at the ready; beaches selected for perfect combinations of snorkeling (for my wife), sun bathing (my daughter's request) and shore diving (for my son and I). What could be better?

Our recent family vacation to Hawaii was set up to be a wonderful mix of relaxation, quality family time, diving and, for me, some serious shell collecting. Unfortunately, the southern and western swells decreased underwater visibility to the point where photography was out of the question, night diving was impossible and most dive sites were not worth getting one's feet wet.

So, how do you make the most of a less-than-optimal situation? Without all of my anticipated "good spots", I had to figure out other ways to spend time collecting Hawaiian shells. This, then, is a story about Hawaiian collecting when the snorkeling and diving is miserable.

The Setting

We stayed in the Maalaea area, a location equidistant from the best beaches of West Maui and the southern coast (see map). Kapalua, Black Rock at Kaanapali, Olawalu Beach, Maalaea Bay, Wailea and Makena all proved to have good beaches that offered either shallow-water sand habitats, reef platforms, rocky tidepool environments or all three. In this report, we will look at how collecting turned out when the conditions were lousy.

The Snorkeling

With so much wave action, it was hard to see much and snorkeling over the reef platforms or close to the



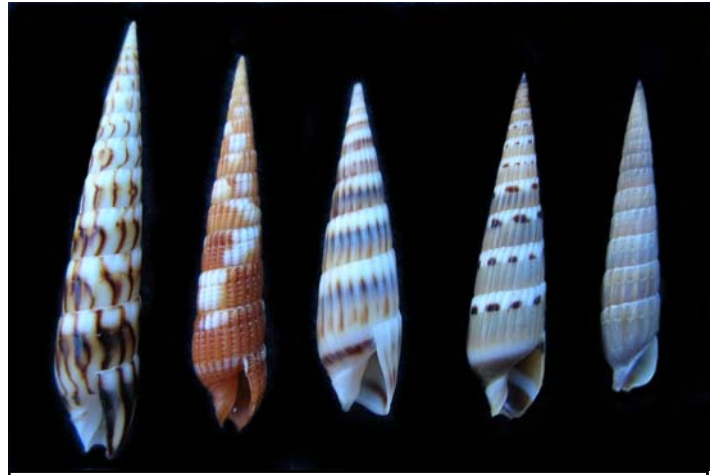
West and South Maui

lava rock walls proved somewhat hazardous. Even so, many common Cones were to be found with *Conus lividus*, *flavidus*, and *abbreviatus* being the most abundant. Other Cones we encountered while snorkeling on this trip were *C. imperialis*, *textile*, *miles*, *cattus*, *rattus*, *distans*, *chaldeus* and, in the sand, *Conus pulicarius* and a dead *C. leopardus*. While snorkeling in Kapalua Bay, we also encountered a large *Charonia tritonis* tucked into the rocks at about 15 feet. We regrettably left it in the sand. Other finds while snorkeling include *Thais intermedia*, *Muricodrupa funiculatus*, *Cypraea teres*, *Cypraea helvola*, *Drupa morum* and *Bursa granulatis*.

The Diving

Okay, so we tried diving anyway. Hawaii has quite a few interesting Terebras and other sand dwellers but, with strong currents, it was impossible to see any trails in the sand. We discovered, however that by slowly cruising above the bottom while “raking” our fingers through the sand, we were able to locate many specimens of *Terebra maculata*, *T. nebulosa*, *T. affinis*, *T. felina*, *Duplicaria gouldi*, *D. strigilata*, *Hastula pencillata*, *H. nitida* and *H. inconstans*.

Also encountered while diving were a few nice dead-collected specimens of *Mitra mitra*, *Strigatella pelliserpentis*, *Vexillum modestum* and *Pyramidella terebellum*.



Hastula pencillata, *Terebra nebulosa*, *Hastula inconstans*, *H. strigata* and *H. nitidans*— all in sand from 8 to 20 feet.



Mitra mitra dead collected at 20 feet at Maluaka Beach, Makena, Maui (upper specimen 62.5 mm)



Seminella smithi, a 3 mm Columbellid common on the underside of intertidal rocks at Ulua Beach, Kapalua and Maalaea Bay.

The Rocks

At low tide, tidepools and rocky beaches proved to be a great resource for collecting Hawaiian shells. Standing in two feet of water, I busied myself with picking up rocks and examining their undersides. I’m sure that I got more than a few stares from the beach-goers as I busied myself with picking micro-mollusks and chitons off the bottom of

rocks balanced on my knee.

Shells as small as 2 mm were fairly abundant on the undersides of rocks and in algae mats. Columbellids were common (*Anachis miser*, *Seminella smithi*, *Euplicia livescens*,

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Rocky area at Ulua Beach in Wailea. At low tide, each rock had a variety of shelled mollusks hiding underneath it.



Close-up of tidepool area pictured at left— plenty of rocks to turn over

Cowries: *The "moneta"-group*

Terry Rutkas

Some time ago, I wrote about "the commonest cowries imaginable". I was speaking, of course, about what Felix Lorenz called the "*moneta*"-group in his book, *A Guide to Worldwide Cowries*: "oval-rhomboidal shells... The animals have translucent mantles with attractive zebra-markings... Three living species (*annulus*, *moneta*, *obvelata*; Indo-Pacific to Galapaogos)". The point of that article was as much about the nature of collecting as the shells themselves; that is, putting together a great collection on-the-cheap.

At the time, I thought I'd collected a pretty good variety, but since then I've added these shells and a few more. I always say I'm not interested in "freaks"; It seems I've relaxed my standards but who am I to reject an "interesting" specimen when all the *C. moneta* pictured here are considered normal! For all their variation, these species have very few accepted sub-species or forms. The notable exception pictured here is the recently named *Cypraea (Erosaria) annulus sublitorea (f)*, Lorenz, F. Jr., 1997. Endemic to Western Samoa.



© S. O'Neill

Cypraea moneta and *Spondalys linguafelis*. Nice Photo of live specimens from Hawaii by S. O'Neill.



C. obvelata, Tairarapu, Tahiti. My favorite cowry species! Larger shell top of photo 25 mm., smallest 16 mm.



C. moneta, Samoa. 19 & 18 mm. Same species as the photo above. Very different without the striped mantle extended.



Top: *C. annulus*, Calituban Is., PI., 24 mm. Unusual raised band.
Bottom: *C. moneta*, Camotes Is. PI., 19 mm. Rostrate extremities.



C. annulus, Pemba Is. Tanzania. Largest 25 mm. These are described as "Bunnies and Hookers" by Felix Lorenz.



C. annulus. Calituban Is., PI. Shell on the left is almost triangular and humped. Shell on the right is starting a double ring.



C. annulus. Larger shells: Basilan Is. PI. 28 & 31 mm. Smaller shell: *C. sublitorea*, Vaisala, Samoa. 12 mm.



C. annulus, Surigao, PI. 25 mm. Calituban, PI. 21 mm. Both have prominent spires, very unusual for these species.



C. moneta, Kwajalein, Marshall Is. 15-20 mm. Rhomboidal with tubercles (bumps). Compare with *moneta* on facing page.



Bittium zebrum 6 mm, common in a variety of color forms under intertidal rocks at Kapalua Bay



Gyryneum pusillum, 11 mm under rocks at Ulua Beach at low tide



Balcis acicula, 7 mm
This specimen was dead collected

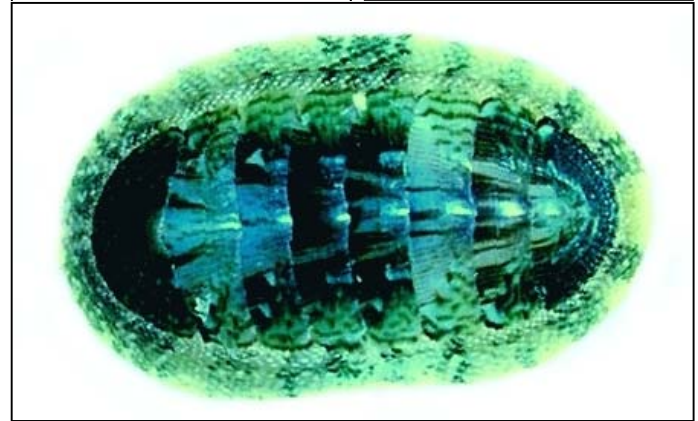
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among others) and small Turbinids (including *Leptothyra verruca* and *Leptothyra candida*) abounded. Rissoidae (including *Rissoina ambigua* and *Schwartzziella triticea*), Ceriths (most notably *Bittium zebrum*), Turrids (*Kermia pumila* and *Lovellona atramentosa*), small Miters (including *Strigatella litterata*, *Strigatella typha* and *Vexillum lautum*) and specimens of the tiny Muricid, *Aspella producta* were also among the shells under these intertidal rocks. One of the more interesting finds was a specimen of the tiny Cyprid, *Gyryneum pusillum* (pictured, above right).

Underneath rocks at low tide, one also encounters a good number of Holothurians (sea cucumbers) and attached to some were the small Eulimid, *Balcis acicula*.

During day time collecting, a number of chiton species were also to be found under intertidal rocks. While most

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Rhyssoplax linsleyi 14 mm juvenile?
on the underside of intertidal rocks, Kapalua Bay

Low tides provide great conditions for observing mollusks and other marine life on Southern Californian shores. Listed below are some extremely low tides that occur during daylight hours:

(Please be sure that you are familiar with the CA Dept. of Fish and Game regulations regarding the collecting of live mollusks.)

February, 2005

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Ht.</u>
Friday, February 4	12:33 pm	-0.5
Saturday, February 5	01:20 pm	-1.1
Sunday, February 6	02:02 pm	-1.6
Monday, February 7	02:43 pm	-1.8
Tuesday, February 8	03:21 pm	-1.8
Wednesday, February 9	03:58 pm	-1.5
Thursday, February 10	04:34 pm	-1.0
Friday, February 11	05:08 pm	-0.4
Saturday, February 19	01:37 pm	-0.4
Sunday, February 20	02:07 pm	-0.5
Monday, February 21	02:32 pm	-0.6
Tuesday, February 22	02:56 pm	-0.6
Wednesday, Feb. 23	03:19 pm	-0.6
Thursday, February 24	03:41 pm	-0.4
Friday, February 25	04:02 pm	-0.1

March, 2005

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Ht.</u>
Saturday, March 05	12:16 pm	-0.6
Sunday, March 06	01:01 pm	-1.1
Monday, March 07	01:40 pm	-1.4
Tuesday, March 08	02:16 pm	-1.4
Wednesday, March 09	02:50 pm	-1.2
Thursday, March 10	03:22 pm	-0.8
Friday, March 11	03:53 pm	-0.3
Sunday, March 20	01:00 pm	-0.2
Monday, March 21	01:27 pm	-0.3
Tuesday, March 22	01:51 pm	-0.3

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of the specimens I encountered seemed to be juveniles, I frequently saw *Stenoplax petaloides*, *Acanthochiton viridis* and *Rhysoplax linsleyi* crawling about on the sides and under-sides of intertidal rocks.

Nighttime Tidepooling

When a minus low tide occurred at night, I grabbed my diving light and checked out the rocks and tidepools after dark. In Maalaea Bay, rocky spots at night became the domain of a very active group of local shell collectors— hermit crabs! The rocks were covered with and surrounded by thousands of crabs inhabiting shells of *Peristernia chlorostoma*, *Morula foliacea*, *Anachis miser*, *Nerita picea*, *Nassarius gaudiosus*, *Balcis cumingii*, *Epitonium perplexus*, etc.. The huge number of hermit crabs made it easy to select the very best of the crabbed shells.

The next night, I explored the tidepools in front of the Grand Wailea hotel and found that the daytime residents *Cypraea caputserpentis* and *Nerita picea* are joined at night by *Cypraea mauritiana*, *Cypraea isabella* and *Nerita polita*. In addition, specimens of *Cerithium nesioticum* and *Trochus intextus* were also to be found everywhere crawling along the edges of the tidepools. Even the Acanthochitons had come out and they were to be found grazing along the tops of rocks exposed by the low tide.

Rocks and tidepools were also the night-time home for a number of different eels. It was quite surprising to encounter a large brown moray eel slithering between the rocks in less than a foot of water in Wailea and a snowflake eel in similar conditions at Maalaea. I can only speculate that the hunting was good in these closed-in spaces.

So, is there a lesson here? Perhaps it is that there are



Peristernia chlorostoma, 19 mm crabbed
Maalaea Bay, on rocks at night



Epitonium perplexus, the largest is 25 mm crabbed
Maalaea Bay, on rocks at night



Hydatina amplustre, 13 mm crabbed
Maalaea Bay, on rocks at night



Cerithium nesioticum, 15 mm
This species is extremely common in all of the rocky sites collected. The specimen pictured is actually from Midway Islands.

shells everywhere— if we resort to unorthodox methods (“finger raking”) and train our eye to look closer, being prepared for specimens that fit better in a tiny vial than in a large bag, there are worlds of shell collecting that open up for us.

But, I still have dozens of species to identify and catalogue so, coming up in our next issue will be a more definitive faunal list from these wonderful Maui beaches.

Hold the Date

2004 –2005
PCC meeting dates

February 13

March 13

April 10

May 15

June 12

Unless otherwise noted, all
meetings begin at 1:30 pm

February Meeting: SUNDAY, February 13, 2005

1:30 pm — 4:00 pm

PROGRAM: Underwater Marine Life of British Columbia

During the 1990's, Kathy and Joe Kalohi made over 8 diving trips to the Pacific Northwest. Their favorite area was in the vicinity of Vancouver Island, BC. Kathy will present underwater photographs and specimens that tell the story of this rich marine environment.

March Meeting: SUNDAY, March 13, 2005

1:30 pm — 4:00 pm

PROGRAM: A Costa Rica Shelling Story, Shawn Wiedrich

Location: Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

900 Exposition Boulevard, Los Angeles (Exposition exit from the 110 Freeway– follow the signs). Park in the west parking lot or, if it is filled, in the pay lot immediately west of the museum (the pay lot will cost \$5).

Enter at the staff entrance which is located at the bottom level of the museum, on the left side of the main Museum entrance on Exposition Boulevard. The security guard can direct you to the Times-Mirror Room.

Refreshments are potluck

Articles of interest to shell collectors are solicited for publication in this newsletter. Contents may be reprinted with credit being given to the Pacific Conchological Club.

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