

President's Message

I would like to start off by saying that I am honored to serve as president of the Pacific Conchological Club for the next year's term. My goal as president is to explore all aspects of conchology through the club's programs and events. I must admit I am no professional, but I am always trying to learn as much as I can about all mollusks. Over the last several years I have seen some wonderful programs presented by the shell club. I've learned about micro-shells, nudibranchs, chitons, landsnails and many other fascinating mollusks I had previously known little about. I hope you find this next year's presentations just as wonderful and helpful.

I have been involved in the club for a little over three years now and have enjoyed every minute of it. I was first made aware of the club through Ralph Ferguson's shell store, "Ferguson's Marine Specialties" in Wilmington. It was there I met a kind young lady named Lupe. After several visits to the shell store, she asked me if I had heard about the Pacific Conchological Club's annual auction. At that point, I didn't even know what the PCC was. She informed me of some of the club's events that took place throughout the year and I was very interested.

The very next weekend my father and I attended the 2005 PCC auction. It was a wonderful experience buying shells, meeting new people with the same interests, and learning more about shells. Later that day my fa-

ther and I signed up as club members and we have attended nearly all of the meetings since then.

I hope all of you had a great summer break and did some shell collecting. One of my favorite finds this summer was during a one day excursion to San Diego. Most of my western American research has been done in Los Angeles, Orange and northern San Diego Counties. I decided to search further south in San Diego in order to grasp a better idea of the fauna there. I've recently found that the fauna can change dramatically from area to area even if they are a short distance away from each other. In this particular instance, I was right. I found several small shells that caught my eye. When I returned home and researched my finds, I was excited to find a beautiful micro-turrid I had never seen before. With a little research, I



A beautiful
Clathromangelia rhyssa (Dall, 1919)
found during the summer of 2007

found out that it was a beautiful specimen of *Clathromangelia rhyssa* (Dall, 1919). This was by far my most prized specimen of the summer.

Finally, I would once again like to encourage the club members to write for the "Los Conchas" publication. Topics can include recent excursions describing specimen found during a trip, how you began collecting shells, some of your favorite shells in your collection, a favorite place to collect and some prized shells from there, the ways you organize/catalog your collection or anything else related to collecting shells.

Happy Shelling,
Shawn Wiedrick

Contents	
COA - A Shelling Community Gathers in Portland	2
Abalone Farm: Environmentally Friendly Aquaculture	4
Book Review: Terebridae, A Collectors Guide	6
Upcoming meeting information	8

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).

Annual dues are \$10 for an individual and \$12 for a family membership. Checks can be mailed to Treasurer, Kathy Kalohi (13901 Wilkie Avenue, Gardena, CA 90249).

COA: A Shelling Community Gathers in Portland Oregon

by Phil Liff-Grieff

Every summer, hundreds of shell collectors from around the world converge on the Conchologists of America (COA) Convention. This year's confab took place in Portland Oregon, making it all the more attractive for West Coast shellers to attend. PCC members Terry and Kathy Rutkas, Harry Bedell, Paul Kanner, Phil Liff-Grieff and Hank Chaney were present.

Looking back at the experience, I can say that COA



Terry and Kathy Rutkas at the welcome reception.
photo by Fabio Moretzsohn

offered a rich opportunity to connect with people, learn, and (most significantly) acquire new shells. In these pages, I will try to give a brief pictorial overview of each of these.

The schedule of events consisted of a mix of social events, workshops and speakers, silent auctions, a voice auction, all culminating with the "Bourse" - a dizzying opportunity to purchase shells from 44 dealers coming from 17 different countries.

The four days of the convention were preceded by two days of field trips that included an early morning trek to the Oregon coast. Unfortunately, a problem with the bus company delayed the start of the trip by 4 hours but there were apparently still shells to be had.

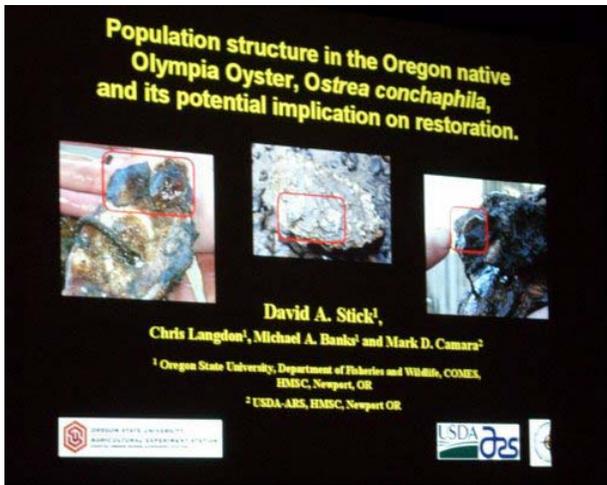


Pre-convention field trip to the Oregon Coast
photo by Fabio Moretzsohn

Opportunity to Learn: The Presentations

Twenty one short presentations took place over the four day period, covering a fascinating range of topics. Some were extremely technical (*Odontophore Diversity in Cowries* presented by Fabio Moretzsohn), some were focused on shelling experiences around the world (*Shelling in Lembeh Strait, Sulawesi, Molucca Sea, Indonesia* by Gene Everson; *Moai to Microshells* [Easter Island] by Bret Raines), some were practical presentations for collectors (*Identifying Cowries and How to Tell Fakes* by Felix Lorenz; *Who gets all this when you go?* by Hank Chaney), others were specific to the Pacific Northwest (*Fossils of the Astoria Formation in Oregon Beach Rock* by Ray Wilson; *Shellfish Culture in the Pacific Northwest—A Dirty Job!* By Bill Dewey).

Almost every kind of collector could find something of interest in these sessions. For this collector, the lack of presentations about land snails (or chitons, for that matter) was unfortunate but there still proved to be plenty to attract my interest.



The title slide from a presentations on local oysters
photo by Fabio Moretzsohn

NEW SHELLS

Some of the people I met had shells with them to exchange . But, even without trade shells, there were many opportunities to get new shells Seven silent auctions took place during the course of the four-day convention. Thursday night’s oral auction offered a remarkable array of specimens, literature and shell-related items.

A COA silent auction table



Making Connections

Basically, it happened like this: “You collect landsnails? You should meet Bob, he’s a real land snail nut! (*editor’s note– we land snail collectors are usually described in terms of some sort of mental illness*). There he is– I’ll introduce you”.

Whether this exchange took place at the welcome reception, over dinner at the final banquet, while hanging out in the lobby of the hotel or a dealer’s hotel room, the “What do you collect?” question was an early part of every conversation. As a result, it was easy to network with collectors with similar interests. These conversations also ended up, in many cases, in a discussion about possible exchanges, either at COA or at a later time. So, the activity of making new friends also resulted in the acquisition of new shells. What could be better?



Fossil Volute from Oregon’s Astoria Formation- from the Oral Auction

(Continued on page 6)

Minus low tides provide great conditions for observing mollusks and other marine life on Southern California shores. Listed below are some minus low tides that occur during daylight hours in the summer months:

Please be sure that you are familiar with the California Dept. of Fish and Game regulations regarding the collecting of live mollusks– for details see *Las Conchas*, vol. 33, no. 3)

October, 2007

Date	Time	Height
Wednesday, October 24	2:42 pm	-0.1
Thursday, October 25	3:27 pm	-0.7
Friday, October 26	4:14 pm	-1.0
Saturday, October 27	5:05 pm	-1.1

November, 2007

Date	Time	Height
Friday, November 9	3:00 pm	-0.1
Saturday, November 11	3:33 pm	-0.2
Sunday, November 11	4:10 pm	-0.1
Wednesday, November 21	12:50 pm	0.0
Thursday, November 22	1:36 pm	-0.7
Friday, November 23	2:23 pm	-1.3
Saturday, November	3:11 pm	-1.6
Sunday, November 25	4:00 pm	-1.6
Monday, November 26	4:53 pm	-1.4
Tuesday, November 27	5:48 pm	-1.0

Abalone Farm: Environmentally Friendly Aquaculture

by Terry Rutkas

Consider the Red Abalone, *Haliotis rufescens*, once abundant, now a scarce resource. There is currently a moratorium on taking any abalone south of San Francisco. Over-fishing, poach-



ing and environmental insult have reduced all *Haliotis* species to endangered status, but scarcity has driven prices up to the point where farming makes sense. Cleaned abalone steaks retail for \$115 a pound. In my opinion, *Haliotis* is the king of California mollusks; certainly the largest and most colorful. Abalone for lunch sounds great but my motivation is to see live abalone.

For several years now, I've wanted to visit the *Abalone Farm*, the largest and oldest (1968) producer of California Red Abalone. They are located on a private ranch and not open to the public. They can offer a limited number of group tours to school and non-profit organizations—but you'll need to arrange your tour at least a month in advance.

We arranged to meet Brad Buckley, Sales & Marketing, for our tour. Located just north of Cayucos, Abalone Farm sits on bluff overlooking the Pacific. The view alone was worth the trip! The farm is strictly business, part farm, part industrial park. Over 700 concrete tanks are arrayed across the 15 acre property. As we



waited for Brad to join us, we peeked into some of the tanks and were amazed to see hundreds of *rufescens* clinging to the walls. When Brad joined us, he directed our attention to the large round tanks and machinery at the top of the hill. Sea water is continually pumped up, filtered and piped down to the abalone tanks. Periodically compressed air is pumped into the tanks to provide the aeration and turbulence the abalone require. We were looking at

the “grow-out tanks”, nearly the last phase in the farming process. Our next stop was the “hatchery”, to see how it all begins.



“In this tank”—Brad was pointing to one of two very large plastic tanks—“we place mature breeding females and in the other we place the mature males.” When the females begin to release eggs some of the *product* is poured into the male's tank which stimulates them to produce sperm. Eggs are collected by filtering the water from the female's tank through a microscopically fine mesh screen. Sperm from the male's tank is collected in a similar manner. The two are combined in a third tank and 30 million eggs are the result. The mortality rate in these controlled conditions is significantly less than it would be in nature.

Brad takes us into another building with hundreds of more tanks arrayed in rows and columns two levels deep. “This is the nursery”. He lifts the screen off one tank and tells us: “The hatchlings are transferred here after they start to develop a shell.”

At first we see what looks like a handful of sand in the bottom



of a very large tank *then* we realize that these are abalone, only a millimeter or two across! The abalone spend 6 to 8 months here in filtered, aerated seawater. Here is also where they start to get a diet of fresh kelp. The kelp is collected by a custom built harvesting boat which provides all the food the abalone need throughout their lifespan on the farm.

After they reach about ½ inch across they are transferred to baskets of plastic netting which float in outdoor concrete tanks. As we looked down into the tanks all we see is kelp floating on the surface. Brad reached down and pulled out a section of plastic pipe—covered inside-and-out with 1 to 2 inch abalone. There are about 8 sections of pipe in each basket; the abalone require something hard to cling to. Within moments the tiny abalone were scurrying around to the shady side of the pipe. They can



survive out of water for some time but prefer not to.

Although great care is taken to keep the tank environment clean, fresh and pollution-free, visitors can hitch a ride in the harvested kelp. Most are benign like the Sea Lemon, *Archidoris montereyensis*, a nudibranch, which Brad pulled from the tank looking more like a lump of yellow jelly. Some are predators, such as crabs, that arrive as eggs or larvae and grow in the tanks. When this happens the staff is alerted when they see abalone trying to crawl out of the tanks, and take care of the problem right away.



At 1 ½ to 2 inches the abalone are again transferred to the larger tanks that we saw when we arrived. They will grow there for another 4 to 5 years until they reach 3 ½ to 4 ½ inches. After this the growth rate decreases; keeping them much longer wouldn't produce significantly larger abalone. I was amazed to find out that the Abalone Farm ships 1,000 to 3,000 pounds of abalone per week! Live abalone and prepared meat are shipped overnight



to locations in Asia and the US. Special packing methods assure that live abalone arrive in good condition.

As you can imagine there are a lot of shells. The shells are cleaned, oiled, and when there are at least 1000 pounds they are packed and sold to a wholesaler. Some find their way to the Shell Shop in Morro Bay. Brad graciously allowed us to take quite a few, and it didn't make a dent in the pile. Abalone Farm also donates shells to many universities around the country for the study of the properties of mother-of-pearl.

To learn more, visit the following web sites:

Abalone Farm web site: www.abalonefarm.com

Abalone shell research: www.physorg.com/news2694.html

UC Davis Abalone page: seafood.ucdavis.edu/pubs/abalone.htm

Distribution: www.uct.ac.za/depts/zoology/abnet/namer.html

Abalone brochure: www.dfg.ca.gov/marine/pdfs/abalone_brochure.pdf

(Continued from page 3)

There was an overwhelming selection of shells to be had at the International Bourse. Dealers from Australia and Viet Nam, South Africa and Brazil, Greece and Indonesia offered a wide array of specimens. California specimens were offered by Malibu Seashells (our own Harry Bedell and Paul Kanner, below).



Interested in shells from someplace else? Whether one collects Volutes or freshwater mussels, specimens were available at the Bourse. The dealers were open for business for seven hours on Saturday and an additional four hours on Sunday.

The best way to convey this room full of dealers and their wares is with a few photos. See anything you like?



Next year's COA Convention will take place July 5-10, 2008 in San Antonio, Texas. Based on my experience in Portland, I'm already making plans to attend.

Book review: **Terebridae: A Collectors Guide**

(A Collectors Guide to Recent Terebridae)

Terebridae: A Collectors Guide by Yves Terryn

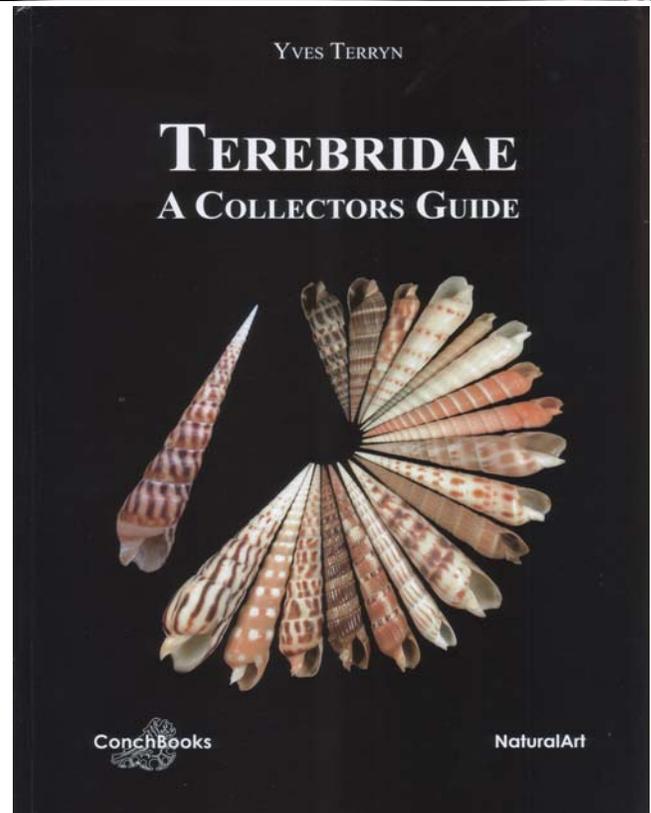
57 pages text, 65 colour plates.
2007, [ConchBooks](#)
ISBN 978-3-939767-01-05

In 1987, Bratcher and Cernohorsky published *Living Terebras of the World*, the first comprehensive identification guide of *Terebridae* for scientists and collectors in the 20th century. Twenty years later, Yves Terryn gives us another look at the family, this time with 65 pages of color plates. B&C was rich in information about the natural history and the systematics of the family with many illustrations, black-and-white plates but only a handful of color plates. Terryn doesn't add much to the specifics but as he explains in the introduction:

The present guide serves as a pictorial handbook for the collector and curator ... It is recommended that the present guide is used in combination with the basic work by Bratcher & Cernohorsky as for the time being they are complementary...

Terryn dedicates this book to B&C for their pioneering work but later states that much more is known now than in 1987. B&C described 268 species and the current work lists ("describes" is too strong a word) 313 species. He proposes that many more species will be added to the list in the not-too-distant future.

His introduction provides a brief survey of the recent research. Half the book identifies the illustrations with some commentary; one page on the differences with respect to B&C, Acknowledgements and a Bibliography. The other half the book consists of the color plates.



The plates are beautifully illustrated with digital images, taken mostly by Terryn. These are among the best shell photographs I've seen; the clarity and color are spectacular. This is bound to be on the wish lists of every *Terebra* specialist as well as shell lovers in general.

Reviewed by Terry Rutkas

Southern California Unified Malacologists XII: SCUM returns to L.A. !

January 19th 2008
8:00 AM – 3:30 PM

Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County
900 Exposition Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90007

The twelfth annual meeting of the *Southern California Unified Malacologists (SCUM)* will convene in the Education Department classroom (2nd floor) of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. SCUM is an informal association of professional, student, and amateur Malacologists and Molluscan Paleontologists who are active or interested in mollusk research. The purpose of the annual gatherings is to facilitate contact and keep one another informed of research activities and opportunities. There are no dues, no officers, and no publications.

HOLD THE DATE
Meeting dates for
2007-2008

October 14, 2007

Shell Collecting in the Pacific
Northwest

November 11

December 9

Holiday party

January 13, 2008

February 10

March 9

April 13

May 4

June 8

Auction and party

October Meeting: SUNDAY, October 14, 1:30 pm - 4:00 pm
Presenter: Phil Liff-Grieff

Shell "Collecting" in the Pacific Northwest: A Collecting Adventure at the Conchologists of America Convention in Portland

The COA Convention in Portland, Oregon provided an opportunity to collect shells using the three most common "collecting methods": trading, buying and field collecting. This presentation will describe some of the opportunities for all three that presented themselves to the speaker this past summer and the range of shells that resulted from this adventure.

November Meeting: SUNDAY, November 11, 1:30 pm - 4:00 pm

Stay tuned for details!

PLEASE NOTE: Exposition Blvd. is currently torn up for MetroRail construction from Figueroa Street to USC Watt Way and both east and westbound traffic may be diverted to the eastbound (south) side of Exposition by the time of the October 14th meeting. This diversion may cause problems turning onto Menlo Ave. It might be a good idea to exit at Martin Luther King Blvd. instead of Exposition Blvd. and travel west to Menlo Ave. (the second light past Figueroa) and turn right (north) to the museum lots.

Refreshments are potluck. Please bring a snack, drink or dessert item to the meeting.

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



2447 Kemper Avenue
La Crescenta, CA 91214

DATED MATERIAL