

**The Sheller's Library**

Contents	
The Sheller's Library: A Look at the Resources Behind Our Collections	1
Tide tables	3
SCUM XII information	7
Annual Holiday Party!!	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).

## The Sheller's Library: A Look at the Resources Behind Our Collections

by Phil Liff-Grieff

Early in our “careers” as shell enthusiasts, we tend to graduate from the status of collectors of pretty things to “serious amateurs”, thinking more deeply about the specimens in our collection. The basic question of “*Should I take this home?*” was replaced by questions such as “*What is it?*”, “*Where is it from?*”, “*What family does it belong to?*” and “*Where are others like this found?*”

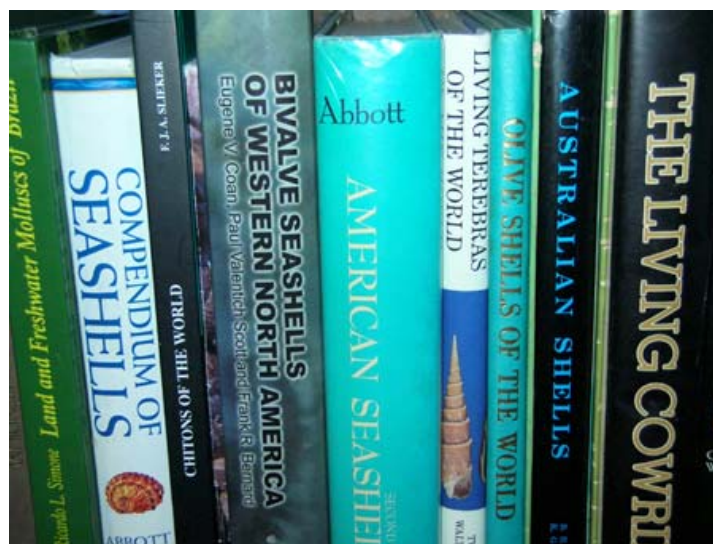
With such questions, we discover that no shell collection is complete without a complementary collection of shell literature. These references become the basic tools that we use to identify, sort, and even find our shells.

In this issue of *Las Conchas*, we will look at the sheller's library; What resources do we use, what are our favorites and how do we use them? This article is a result of a quick unscientific survey made of Pacific Conchological Club members asking them about their own libraries. A total of 15 responses were received so we have to be careful not to see this information as universal or definitive. Even so, this snapshot provides a good window for looking at the books and other resources that we use.

### THE SURVEY

Club members with email addresses were sent an internet-based survey asking them the following questions:

- 1) How long have you been collecting shells?



- 2) What do you specialize in?
- 3) Approximately how many shell references do you own?
- 4) What are your 10 favorite books?
- 5) Of these, which three do you like the best? Why?
- 6) What do you look for in a shell book?
- 7) What do you use your references for?
- 8) If you could purchase one additional shell book, what would it be?
- 9) What other type of resources do you use as references?

In the following pages, we will look at some of the responses to these questions and lessons learned (perhaps) from the information we've gathered.

(Continued from page 2)

**WHO RESPONDED?**

The respondents included three professionals and twelve amateurs. All have been collecting for at least fifteen years with the majority having collected shells for more than twenty five years (The average was actually 32 years!).

The areas of specialization varied greatly within this small sample. About half mentioned a focus on Eastern Pacific (Western US and Mexico) mollusks; the only other geographic specialization mentioned was Hawaiian. The families that were mentioned most frequently were Muricidae and Cypraeidae.

When asked how many references (books, monographs, journal reprints, etc.) they had,

- none had less than 10,
- 29% owned 10 to 24,
- 14% have 25 to 49 books,
- 14% had between 50 and 99 references and
- 43% own 100 or more!!



(Continued on page 4)

**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 December:

*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)*

**December, 2007**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Height</u>
Friday, December 7	2:21 pm	-0.3
Saturday, December 8	2:54 pm	-0.5
Sunday, December 9	3:27 pm	-0.6
Monday, December 10	4:03 pm	-0.6
Tuesday, December 11	4:40 pm	-0.5
Friday, December 21	1:36 pm	-1.1
Saturday, December 22	2:22 pm	-1.6
Sunday, December 23	3:08 pm	-1.8
Monday, December 24	3:53 pm	-1.8
Tuesday, December 25	4:38 pm	-1.5
Wednesday, December 26	5:22 pm	-1.1

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## THE REFERENCES

In all, 58 books were mentioned in the survey. While most of the books listed had one mention, there were sixteen books that were selected by two or more respondents.

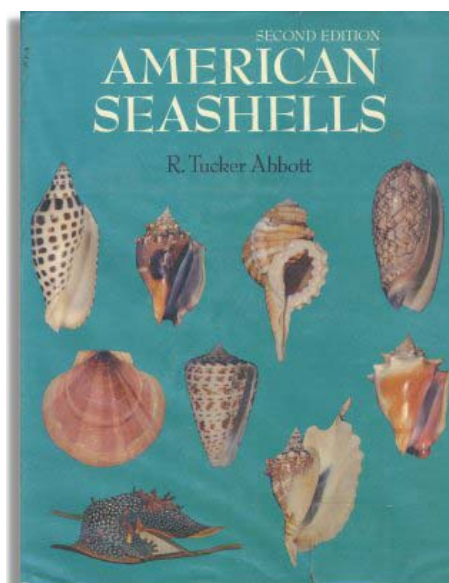
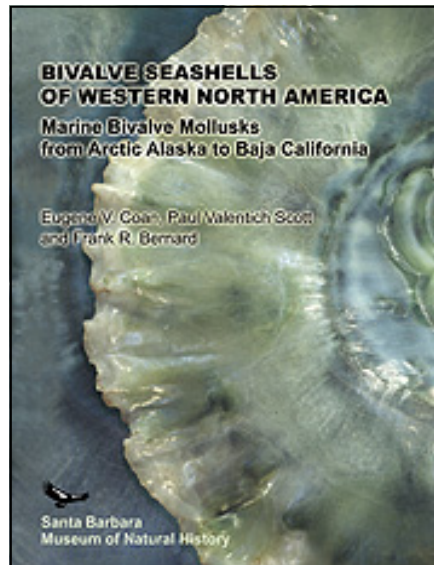
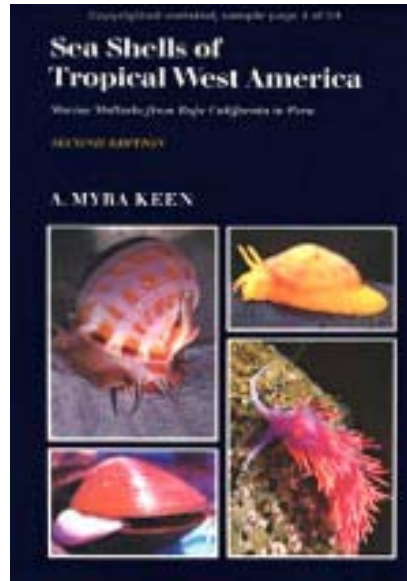
The literature that was most used by the respondents fell into three basic categories: regional references, books specific to a given taxon or family and general references. We will look at each of these categories below.

- 1) **Regional References**- dealing with mollusks of a particular region of locality. The preferences here were completely dependent on the collecting interests and travel habits of the collector. Since most of the respondents collect Western US and Mexican shells, it is not surprising that the following books were the most popular:

Myra Keen, James McLean, *Sea Shells of Tropical West America: Marine Mollusks from Baja California to Peru*. 2nd ed. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1971.

James H. McLean, *Marine Shells of Southern California*, Los Angeles: Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, Science Series 24, 1978

Coan, Eugene V., Paul Valentich Scott, and Frank R. Bernard *Bivalve Seashells of Western North America: Marine Bivalve Mollusks from Arctic Alaska to Baja California*, Santa Barbara: Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History Monographs, Number 2, 2000



The only non-local geographic references that stood out in the survey were:

R. Tucker Abbott, *American Seashells: The Marine Mollusks of the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts of North America*. 2nd ed. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1974.

E. Allison Kay, *Hawaiian Marine Shells; Reef and Shore Fauna of Hawaii, Section 4: Mollusca*, Bernice P. Bishop Museum Special Publication 64(4), Honolulu 1979

Clearly, Hawaiian shells have a place of prominence in the collections represented by our sampling.

- 2) **References for Specific Taxa**

Since Cowries and Muricids were most commonly represented as favorite families in the survey, it is not surprising to see this reflected in the choice of literature. The three family-specific books that were most mentioned were:

Felix Lorenz, Jr., and Alex Hubert, *A Guide to Worldwide Cowries*, Weisbaden: Christa Hemmen, 1993

Twila Bratcher and Walter O. Cernohorsky, *Living Terebras of the World*, Melbourne, FL: American Malacologists, 1987

Roland Houart, *Illustrated Catalogue of Recent Species of Muricidae Named Since 1971*, Wiesbaden: C. Hemmen, 1994

The trend in this category is exactly as expected: the land snail collector picks Pilsbry (1939-1948) as their favorite; the Latiaxis collector selects Kosuge (1985).

(Continued on page 5)

- 3) **General References**— these cover a wide array of shell types and geographic regions. The book that was consistently selected from among this group is

**R. Tucker Abbott and S. Peter Dance, *Compendium of Seashells*, New York: E.P. Dutton, 1982**

**HOW THEY USE THEM: WHY THEY LIKE THEM**

We use our reference books to identify our shells— pure and simple. With that in mind, the most important aspects of those books were good quality pictures of specimens and (secondarily to our respondents) detailed species descriptions. The primacy of the picture is evident in my own reference library when I can use books that are written in Rumanian, Japanese, Hebrew or Spanish to identify certain shells. I may not be able to read the text but the pictures are good and (to repeat a quote overheard at a shell meeting) “the Latin names are in English.”

Other factors that weighed on the choice for favorite reference included:

1. “Comprehensive”- the more species covered in any given volume, the better
2. “easy to use”

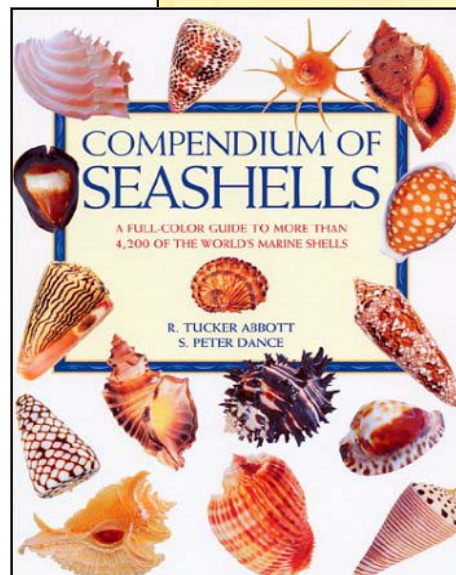
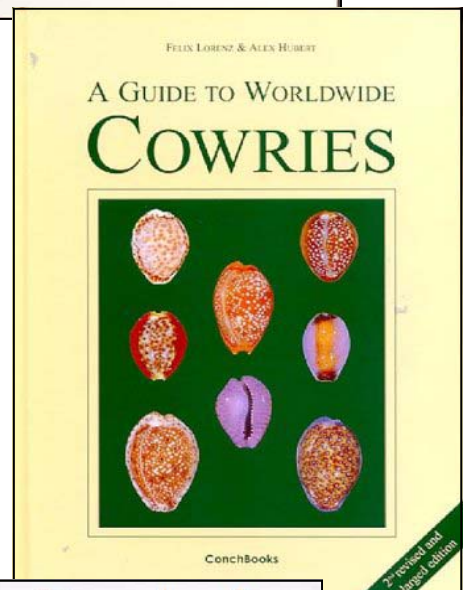
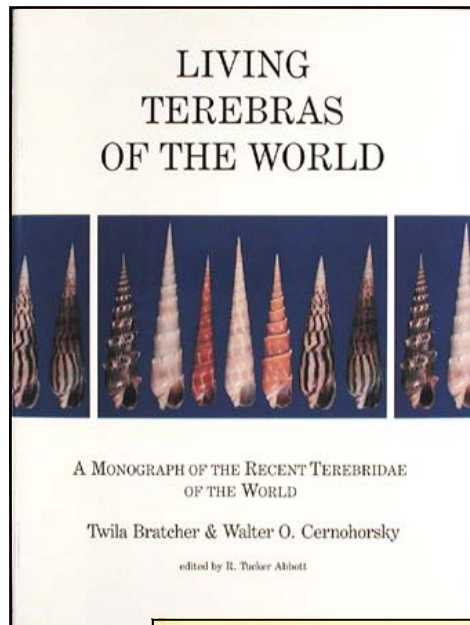
**LESSONS LEARNED**

It was clear from this very unscientific survey that we need our books (and lots of them) to complement our specimens. Even though almost half of the respondents own over 100 volumes, there is no doubt that the size of their library will continue to grow. As the knowledge of malacology and conchology continues to expand and interests deepen and change, new references become appealing and new editions of old favorites become absolutely necessary.

**IF I COULD HAVE ONE MORE BOOK.....**

If you could purchase one additional shell book, what would it be? This question elicited a range of responses but there was an interesting trend among the respondents. Half of those who answered this question didn’t know the title of the book they wanted to purchase so they simply described it as “Dr. McLean’s upcoming book on the shelled gastropods of the West Coast of North America.” Jim, the anticipation is high.....

So, where can I buy these books? Turn to page 6 for some ideas.



## Finding Shell Literature– Where do all those great books come from?

**B**uilding a reference library takes time, creativity and, of course, some money. Many of the references we seek are out of print or otherwise difficult to find. Listed below are a number of good sources for shell books, reprints and similar reference material.

### Used Book Stores

In larger used book stores, you can usually find interesting volumes in the “Nature”, “Oceans”, “Animals”, “Science”, “Fish”, “Natural History” or similar sections. It is quite remarkable to see how much shell literature is sitting on the shelves of these establishments.

### Museums

It is amazing (and not uncommon) to find old Occasional Papers and other Museum-published references still available. Always check with the museum first before you turn to dealers.

### General Book Sellers on the Internet

The traditional booksellers on the internet are a tremendous source for this literature. Since they draw upon booksellers across the country, they have access to a wide range of material. Use search terms like “Shells”, “Seashells”, “Mollusks” as well as book and author names to search sites like

**Amazon.com**  
**Half.eBay.com**  
**alibris.com**  
**Abebooks.com**  
**eBay.com**

### Natural History and Shell Book Dealers

These include:

**Backhuys Publishers-** <http://www.euronet.nl/users/backhuys/>  
**Conchbooks-** <http://www.conchbooks.de/startseite/startseite.html>  
**Mal de Mer-** <http://www.shop.mdmbooks.com/main.sc>  
**Mollus-** <http://www.mollus.nl/AFrame1Bron1.htm>  
**Naturama-** (their inventory can be searched through [abebooks.com/home/shellbook/](http://abebooks.com/home/shellbook/) or you can email them for a catalogue at [naturama@tin.it](mailto:naturama@tin.it)).

This list is the tip of the iceberg but, hopefully, you can find something interesting among these sources.

Good luck!!

## **Southern California Unified Malacologists XII: SCUM returns to Los Angeles !**

**January 19<sup>th</sup> 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 (2<sup>nd</sup> 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.**

SCUM also provides a wonderful opportunity for the amateur to get to know professionals who are working daily with mollusks in a wide range of settings.

### **Tentative Schedule:**

8:00 AM - 9:00 AM: Meet and greet with coffee, tea, and pastry items

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM: Announcements, introductions, and short informal presentations

12:00 PM: Group photo (weather permitting) on the east or south steps of the museum,  
or in front of the 'Dueling Dinosaurs' sculpture on the north side of the museum.

12:15 PM - 1:30 PM: Lunch break

1:30 PM - 3:30 PM: More presentations

3:30 PM -- ?? : Malacology collection access/tours

**Please RSVP to Lindsey Groves at**

**lgroves@nhm.org**

**213-763-3376 (voice)**

**213-746-2999 (fax)**

**HOLD THE  
DATE**  
Meeting dates  
for 2007-2008

**December 9,  
2007**

*Holiday party*

**January 13,  
2008**

**February 10**

**March 9**

**April 13**

**May 4**

**June 8**  
*Auction and party*

**December Meeting: SUNDAY, December 9, 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm**  
(please note the earlier start time)

**PROGRAM:** Annual Holiday Party

**LOCATION:** Home of Judy Kirkup  
1333 Via Margarita  
Palos Verdes Estates

**DIRECTIONS:** From the San Diego Freeway in the South Bay, exit on Crenshaw Boulevard and head south about 6 miles, past Pacific Coast Highway, to Rolling Hills Road. Turn right on Rolling Hills and drive about 1/2 mile to Hawthorne Blvd.. Turn left on Hawthorne and drive 3 miles to Granvia Altamira. Drive 3/10 mile to Coronel Plaza. Turn on Coronel Plz and immediately right on Via Margarita

Bring a wrapped shell-related gift of approximately \$10-\$15 in value for the annual gift "exchange". If you bring a shell, be sure that it is fully labeled. (The ensuing gift exchange activity is a lot of fun but, be warned, it can get ugly!!)

**Refreshments are potluck (the club will provide chicken).**

**RSVP to Janice Abdulian at (818) 981-8533 or**  
**jab56@earthlink.net**

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, Inc.



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**DATED MATERIAL**