



Nov.-Dec., 2020

Volume 61 (no. 6)

Report on the October 3 shell cleaning & ID'ing event

JSC President Paul Jones hosted the third shell cleaning and ID'ing event of the year outside his home ca. 11:00 AM Saturday, October 3rd, at 3609 Crazy Horse Trail Augustine, Florida 32086. There were eight members and two guests in attendance – all adhering to strict COVID precautions.

Much good work and fellowship transpired despite threatening weather so common for early autumn 2020. Beside prosecuting the tasks at hand, we addressed two topics: a donation of \$1,000.00 to the Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum, which was passed unanimously (receipt acknowledged by Acting Director, Dr. Jose Leal) and the planning of the winter 2020-2021 reprise of our club's annual collecting trip to Cedar Key [R] to coincide with the spring tides of the season. Paul will be solidifying the details and has, from experience, become a facilitator with lodging, boat rental, dining, etc. He plans to send out email updates to all regional JSC members soon. While keeping the homefires burning at (904) 347-7254 and jonesp0854@gmail.com, he encourages inquires as well. The December Xmas party has been cancelled.



Upcoming meetings (see also p. 2)



The **November** meeting of the JSC **may** be held on the **third** Thursday (the 19th) due to the pre-emption by Thanksgiving at the Southeast Branch, Jax Public Library <https://www.jaxpubliclibrary.org/locations/southeast-regional>. The venue continues to be Function Room D, and President Jones will rap the gavel at 7:00 PM. Harry Lee will present the Shell-of-the-Month, *Orectospira babelica* (Dall, 1905) [L; credit USNM]. The monotype of *Orectospira* Dall, 1925, it is a one to two inch deepwater Japonic marine snail with a murky systematic placement. Rick and Roz Edwards are back from a Caribbean cruise COVID-19-free and able to share their shelling experiences with us. They went go ashore in Labadee, Haiti; St. Thomas; and St. Martin, where Rick assembled an impressive collection of beach shells. Many of his species cannot be found here, so be prepared for some Antillean novelties.

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The club meets monthly at the Southeast Branch of the Jacksonville Public Library, 10599 Deerwood Park Blvd., Jacksonville, Florida <<https://www.jaxpubliclibrary.org/locations/southeast-regional>>. Please address any correspondence to the club's address above. Annual membership dues are \$15.00 individual, \$20.00 family (domestic) and \$25.00 (overseas). Lifetime membership is available. Please remit payment for dues to the address below and make checks payable to the Jacksonville Shell Club. The club's newsletter and scientific journal, the *Shell-O-Gram* (ISSN 2472-2774) is issued bimonthly and mailed to an average of 15 regular members and friends by specific request and no less than ten scientific institutions with permanent libraries. An electronic (pdf) version, identical except for "live" URL's and color (vs. B&W) images, is issued the next day and sent to about 200 individuals who have demonstrated an interest in malacological research. These pdf's (ISSN 2472-2782) have also been posted to <<http://jaxshells.org/letters.htm>> since November, 1998. We encourage members and friends to submit articles for publication. Closing date for manuscript submission is two weeks before each month of publication. Articles appearing in the *Shell-O-Gram* may be republished provided credit is given the author and *Shell-O-Gram* Editor-in-Chief. As a courtesy, the editor and author should receive a copy of the republication. Contents of the *Shell-O-Gram* are intended to enter the permanent scientific record.

Upcoming meetings (cont'd)



Our second autumn meeting of the year **may** be **on Thursday October 22** at the customary time and place. We'll first hear from Paul Jones, who has selected *Asaphis deflorata* (Linnaeus, 1758) on the **L** [credit Femorale Shells] as his Shell-of-the-Month. As with many of the shells Rick presented at the preceding meeting, this 2-3 inch variably-colored clam is found only south of us on the Florida coast and points beyond. Paul has been an outspoken proponent of bivalve collecting, and he intends to show us why. Harry Lee will present a discussion of the valid species proposed in 1786 by Rev. John Lightfoot. The

topical publication, an auction catalogue of curios left behind by the late Dutchess of Portland (U.K.), has a long and somewhat tortured history in the annals on molluscan taxonomy and nomenclature. There is a general consensus as to the validity of 53 nominal species in this publication, but a couple more, with more contentious standing, will receive fuller treatment by Harry. The array of specimens on the **R** belong to Kristi Hathaway, who collected them in the Indian R. near Jupiter, FL.



JSC members find of an Atlantic Geoduck by Paul Jones

On July 3, 2020, the Jacksonville Shell Club scheduled what turned out to be a very memorable shelling field trip indeed! Our destination was a familiar one – the west bank of Matanzas Inlet, Florida. In recent years, this location has yielded so very many amazing shell finds just from walking and wading during the New and Full Moon minus tides. Our endeavor that day was to be no less productive in a surprising and unexpected way!

We started out as usual walking the granite jetties and tidepools on the west bank and found many of the usual univalves that are so common there: *Stramonita floridana* (Conrad, 1837), *Gemophos tinctus* (Conrad, 1846), *Nerita fulgurans* Gmelin, 1791, and the lovely orange color form of *Cinctura hunteria* (G. Perry, 1811). In addition, a couple of the commoner bivalve species showed up also: *Dallocardia muricata* (Linnaeus, 1758), *Semele proficua* (Pulteney, 1799), and, of course, the ever-present *Mercenaria mercenaria* (Linnaeus, 1758).

Our next destination was an exposed sand/mud bar/flat in the Helen Mellon Schmidt County Park, immediately south of the main inlet itself. This area is actually a narrow tidal creek flowing south from the inlet, dubbed by the locals as: The “Summerhaven River.” Large parts of this creek come out of the water, and flats are exposed at the lowest of the tides. It can be a lucrative collecting area as well, especially for tellins, venus clams, and cockles. On an earlier excursion to the area, I had seen a few live *Strombus alatus* (Gmelin, 1791) on that flat, and we wanted to see if they were still there.

Consequently four of us proceeded to traverse the waist deep water in the slough over to the exposed sandbar in the middle of the creek, hoping to see and observe this small Florida Fighting Conch colony and whatever else decided to show up for us.

When we got there, initially we could only find two small, live, juvenile conchs, so we decided to walk around the perimeter of the exposed bank to try and locate more of them. We never did see any more of the conchs, however, on the other side of the bank we spotted something odd protruding out of a small, round hole in the muddy sand.

We thought at first that it might be the siphon of an Angelwing, *Cyrtopleura costata* (Linnaeus, 1758), so we started digging down. We all pitched in on the digging effort, and, after carefully going down almost two feet into the sand/mud substrate, I finally touched a shell with my finger. After having “dug” several Angelwings over the years, I could tell it did NOT feel at all like one! By this time, we were all rapt with attention and anticipation. We worked together and carefully pulled out a live, perfect specimen of *Panopea bitruncata* (Conrad, 1872), the Atlantic Geoduck [p. 4, top]. We were all stunned and speechless!

It measures 121 mm (almost five inches) across! It is the first one I have ever seen or found in the wild in Florida in over forty years of local collecting! We saved the entire mollusk. A Facebook friend had previously told and shown me how to prepare and cook Angelwings to eat, so I decided to give it a try later on.

The culinary aspect of our rare find of the Atlantic Geoduck is quite another subject altogether. I was not able to immediately delve into the preparation and cooking of the mollusk from the shell the day we found it, so I (unwisely, as it turned out) had to freeze the mollusk for a couple of days before getting to it.



When I finally did, I chose to prepare for consumption the long, fleshy siphon of the mollusk, similar to the way an Angel Wing would be prepared. I simply cut the siphon part away from the rest of the mollusk after it thawed out enough [R]. Then I sliced it into smaller, edible-sized strips (about one-inch long). This is where I made another mistake and learned from experience that if the mollusk is frozen first, it really needs to be pounded to tenderize, much the way previously frozen conch meat is prepared. Without doing this, the strips ended up being a bit on tough and chewy side.

In a frying pan on medium heat, I crushed a garlic clove in a couple tablespoons of olive oil and allowed it to brown, then I removed it. Next, I poured in about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of white wine and allowed it to reduce in volume by about $\frac{1}{2}$ over about 5 minutes. Into the pan next came the prepared strips of the geoduck. I allowed them to saute in the olive oil and white wine mixture for a few minutes on low-medium heat, stirring them occasionally. Then I transferred them to a plate, let them cool some, and gave them a try.



Although the geoduck strips were a bit chewier than I had planned, the rich, succulent flavor they had was amazing indeed [**below**]! They taste quite unlike anything else except Angel Wings, which I have also had. There is no fishy taste to them whatsoever. The strips also impart a wonderful to flavor the cooking mixture and I highly recommend having some good crusty French or Italian bread handy to dip in the fabulous sauce mixture!!

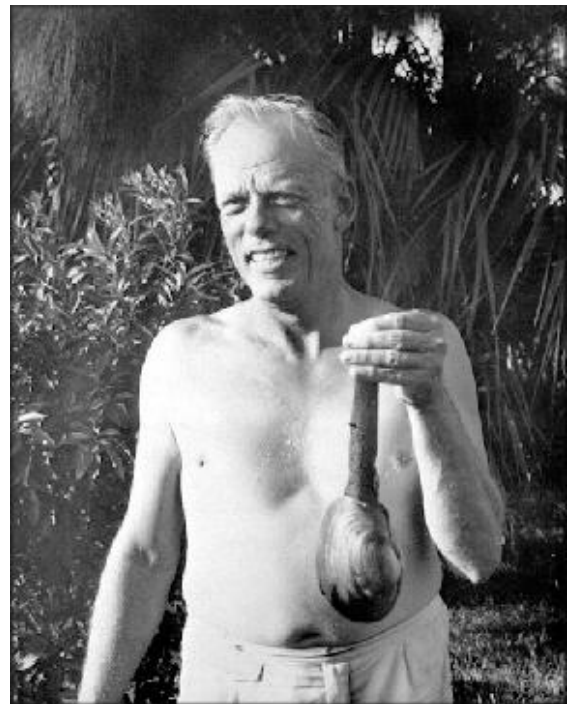


If I am ever lucky enough to find another geoduck, I will try hard to prepare and cook it fresh, prior to freezing them. If frozen however, I strongly advise to give the flesh a good pounding first to tenderize them. Otherwise, they are a culinary delight hard to match with just about any other type of seafood...;o). For an oriental flare, they can also be prepared in soy sauce with some ginger.

Pope poses with prodigious *Panopea*

I [ed.] know of only three other finds of a live geoduck in northeast FL waters. Late JSC members, Mason Stevens (Ft. George area) and Lorraine Ridge (somewhere near downtown St. Augustine). Both events occurred ca. 1970. The details have always been hazy, and I suspect resultant to deliberate secretion of these data in an attempt to limit any reprise to the finders. Further, there is no documentary record of the actual find. Not so with Mr. Verle Allyn Pope (1903-1973) of St. Augustine [**R**].

First, a word about the man. Born to two deaf parents who were in the first graduating class of the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind in St. Augustine, he left school at age 14 to join the army. Shortly the ruse was discovered, and he was sent



home. Possessed of a booming voice, he excelled in both oratory and athletics in high school and attended the University of Florida, where his quest to be a football star was stymied by a serious knee injury that plagued him for years thereafter. In the 1930's he began a career in politics, which was interrupted only by his (re)enlistment in the US Army to join the WWII effort. Thereafter he served in the Florida senate for 24 years, serving as its president from 1966-1968 and winning wide recognition from his colleagues. Most say he was on track to be Governor, but his wife's failing health derailed those plans. His funeral was attended by many prominent FL politicians, including Fuller Warren, Farris Bryant, Haydon Burns, LeRoy Collins, Lawton Chiles, and Reubin Askew.

Verle Pope was also an outdoorsman, enjoying hunting, fishing, and golf. I suppose the "The Lion of St. Johns" may have been fishing at the time of the discovery. Although the photo of him with the geoduck dates to September, 1954 *fide* Florida State Archives <<https://floridamemory.com/items/show/126273>>, the actual specimen, apparently placed in a preservative (then or later 70% ethanol) and deposited in the Florida Museum of Natural History (FLMNH), then the Florida State Museum, in Gainesville. It is, of course, still there, catalogued as UFIZ258115, and its retrievable metadata are at <<http://specifyportal.flmnh.ufl.edu/iz/>>. These attributes include Pope as the collector, "St. Augustine near Flagler Hospital Matanzas Bay mud flats," and the date "1954-06-30." Was that the date of collection or deposit? While unlikely both authorities are correct, I put more trust in the FLMNH. If they're both accurate, could he have been posing with an ethanol-preserved corpse? **Spooky!**

Strange, stranger, *Strangesta*

As hinted immediately above, this being arguably the Halloween, 2020 *Shell-O-Gram*, I [ed.] thought the following intersections of **strange**, sinister, macabre, and coincidental conchology might be suitable fare.

Recently, in preparation of Stanisic *et al.* (2018) Australian malacologist John Stanisic was surprised to discover that the only known specimen of a one inch land snail described from New South Wales, the holotype of *Helix namoinensis* Cox, 1868, was actually a rather well-known American species, *Mesomphix cupreus* (Rafinesque, 1831), the Copper Button (Stanisic, 2018). What a **strange** fate for a taxon on its sesquicentennial – it and its new synonym poised athwart an infraordinal taxonomic chasm: Rhytidoidei and Limacoidei, respectively.

In the Twentieth Century, the **strangeness** of the smooth shell of *Helix namoinensis*, coupled with lack of available material impelled a few Australian malacologists to speculate on its placement within the family Rhytididae. Iredale (1933) realized the difference between it and otherwise similar Australian rhytidid shells, so he created its own (monotypic) subgenus, which he placed in the genus *Murphitella* Iredale, 1933, erected in the same paper. That makes some sense.

Here's where it gets **stranger**: Smith (1992) moved the novel subgenus to ***Strangesta*** Iredale, 1933 and synonymized our species with ***Strangesta strangei*** (L. Pfeiffer, 1849). Neither the generic reassignment nor species synonymy is correct. Cox himself (1868 [not 1968 as in the Stanisic (2018) bibliography]: 25 <<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/1034505>> placed *Helix strangei* Pfeiffer, 1849 in the synonymy of *H. capillacea* Férussac, 1832 (pl. 82, fig. 5), a valid species now placed in the rhytidid genus *Austrorhytida* B.J. Smith, 1987 (see <<http://www.molluscabase.org/aphia.php?p=taxdetails&id=851140>>), of which it is the type

species. *Strangesta* Iredale, 1937 is also a valid rhytidid genus, the type being *Helix confusa* L. Pfeiffer, 1855 (see <http://molluscabase.org/aphia.php?p=taxdetails&id=818574>). Unfortunately Schileyko (200: 734-735; fig. 954) followed Smith's synonymy, thus (incorrectly) adding *H. strangei* Pfeiffer as figured in Cox (1868: pl. 18 [not 17 as presented by BHL]: fig. 17 <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/1034564>) to the synonymy of *Mesomphix (Omphalina) cupreus* (Rafinesque, 1831), which happens also to be the original monotype of *Omphalina* Rafinesque, 1831.



Now, I make no secret of fancying the more outré and **sinister** of gastropod shell (left-handed ones), and it so happens that Australia is home to several sinistral pupilloid species, five of which are treated by Cox (1868: 78-81), and all well-represented in my collection. One such is *Gastrocopta strangeana* Iredale, 1937 [L; credit: Guido & Philippe Poppe], a replacement name for *Pupa strangei* L. Pfeiffer, 1854 not of Benson. The Benson species, by a **strange** coincidence, is also normally left-handed, but happens to be a terrestrial prosobranch (operculate). It has now known as *Velepalaina strangei* (Benson, 1853) [R; credit: John Stanisic]. Thus the **Strange** name wasn't at all **strange** to me – well before this recent **strange** saga involving our Copper Button!



So at least four taxa of Australian land snails honor Frederick **Strange**, whose short life did not belie his surname; from Hedley (1910: 335-336):

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The name of Strange is one that occurs frequently as a collector of type specimens of Queensland shells. Frederick Strange was a native of Aylsham, Norfolk, England. He was an early visitor to Brisbane, a friend and probably pupil of MacGillivray. He collected vigorously round Moreton Bay. In June, 1852, he returned to England after fourteen years' absence, and sold the large natural history collection he had gathered. The shells were purchased by Cuming. On his return to Brisbane he renewed his zoological work by fitting out a small vessel to collect along the Barrier Reef. On 15th October, 1854, he landed on Percy Island No. II., in company with Mr. Spurling, a conchologist, and Mr. Walter Hill, afterwards Director of the Botanic Gardens of Brisbane, and first Colonial Botanist of Queensland. Hill

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PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS—SECTION D.

pushed into the interior for plants, while his companions strayed along the beach for shells. On his return, Hill found the bodies of his comrades, murdered by the aboriginals.

Boo!

Benson, W., 1853. Additional character of the shell of the cyclostomatous genus *Alycæus* of Gray, with descriptions of its animal inhabitant,—of a fourth species,— and of other new Indian Cyclostomata; also, remarks on an unrecorded character in *Diplommata*. *Annals and Magazine of Natural History series 2* 11: 283-287 April. <<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/13786021>>

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Férussac, A.E.J.P.J.F. d'A. de and G.-P. Deshayes, 1819-1851. *Histoire naturelle générale et particulière des mollusques terrestres et fluviatiles, tant des espèces que l'on trouve aujourd'hui vivantes, que des dépouilles fossiles de celles qui n'existent plus; classés d'après les caractères essentiels que présentent ces animaux et leurs coquilles*. J.-B. Bailliere, Paris. Tome 1: 8 + 184 pp; Tome 2(1): 402 pp., Tome 2(2): 260 + 22 + 16 pp; Atlas 1 (Tome 3): pls. 1- 70; Atlas 2 (Tome 4): pls. plates 71 to 166 [with multiple A's and B's] + fossil plates 1 to 5 + (1)-22+ pls. 1-5. Atlas 2 is posted at <http://books.google.com/books?id=JoIDAAAACAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Hedley, C. 1910. The marine fauna of Queensland. Pp. 329-371, in: J. Shirley, ed., *Report of the Twelfth Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, held at Brisbane, 1909*. Brisbane: Cumming, xxxviii + 821 pp. <<https://archive.org/details/TheMarineFaunaOfQueensland1909/page/n2/mode/1up>>

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Stanisic, J., 2018. *Helix namoiensis* Cox, 1868: synonym of the North American zonitid *Mesomphix (Omphalina) cupreus* (Rafinesque, 1831). *Memoirs of the Queensland Museum* 61: 154.

Stanisic, J., M. Shea, D. Potter, and O. Griffiths, 2017 [2018 for availability of nomina nova]. *Australian Land Snails Volume 2 A Field Guide to Southern, Central and Western Species*. Bioculture Press, Mauritius. 594 pp. ISBN 9789994903832. [not seen]

Membership Dues are payable in **September** each year.

If you're not paid up, please send in your dues: Individual \$15.00; Family \$20.00, to

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Sanibel-Captiva Shell Club
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This past year has certainly turned everything upside down. The Sanibel-Captiva Shell Club cancelled our show at the Sanibel Community House and instead is hosting a free 2021 Virtual Sanibel Shell Show on the Sanibel Shell Club's YouTube channel. It will be a blast, and with tons of social media promotion, it will attract a global audience. On schedule for March 5-6 from noon to 3pm EST are educational and entertaining videos, a shell photo contest, DIY shell projects, door prizes, and more! More information will be coming as the committee completes its work in the next couple months.

Clair Beckmann
2021 Virtual Sanibel Shell Show Chair
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