



*THE
CONE
COLLECTOR*

#30 May 2017



THE
CONE
COLLECTOR

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*Note from
the Editor*

Dear friends,

It is a great pleasure to complete yet another number of our bulletin *The Cone Collector*. I sincerely thank all those who made it possible through their contributions. It is clear that we do need everybody's help to keep this project rolling. Remember, no note is too short or insignificant! A report of a recent shell trip, a book review, photos of unusual or exceptional specimens, etc., these are all things that you are invited to share with everybody else in the Cone world.

I do hope that you will enjoy the contents of TCC # 30. Once again, special thanks are due to André Poremski for his great proficiency in preparing for publication the disparate texts and articles accepted, and for giving the final product the high quality looks that we all recognize.

In the meantime, we are already considering the organization of a new International Cone Meeting. Hopefully some exciting news will be available towards the end of the year. We will certainly keep you posted.

So, until next time, warm regards,

António Monteiro

On front cover

Pionoconus catus from

Capricorn Bunker Group,

photo courtesy of

Remy Devorsine

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Who's Who

Lucy & George Muehleisen

Caution! This article contains no taxonomic, morphological or other technical data, only cone people anecdotes.

On Self-Collecting...

The Muehleisens, originally from Philadelphia, PA, moved to the Washington, DC area in 1971 to pursue careers with the U.S. Gov. Neither had any interest or awareness of shell collecting, nor had they heard of cone shells at that time. (Although their employer may have done more work with cone toxins than openly admitted!) It wasn't until the early 1980's, while on a family vacation to Florida, collecting got its hooks into them. You guessed it ... Sanibel Island. I suppose many American collectors got their feet wet in collecting (no pun intended) at that location. Easy access to excellent beach specimens as well as legal collecting of live specimens in the bay and mud flats of the island made it very popular then. Of course, we also fell prey to the local hype of looking for the elusive *Scaphella junonia*! Our active shell collecting waned for some time and cones were not a focal point yet. Actually, Lucy took more of a liking to the Coralliophilidae.

Collecting picked up in 1993 when we took an assignment to Indonesia to assist the Ministry of Finance improve automation of their tax system. Lucy worked with the "Voice of Indonesia" by helping them translate and edit for English language broadcasts. For a budding shell collector, this job was a dream come true. The only thing that could top that would have been assignment to Manila -- but that tax project was covered by another team of advisors. In Jakarta, many Saturdays were spent with John Abbas at the Pasar Ikan, sorting through shells in baskets with no data as to source. Most of those were cowries and other species; cones were reserved at the fishing villages for dealers. My only guide was Tucker Abbott's "Seashells of Southeast Asia", but later I found Bunjamin Dharma's "Siput Dan Kerang Indonesia" to be very helpful. Edition 1 was best for cowries, and Edition 2 was best for cones.



An Indonesian shell shop

In 1994, we took a rest and recuperation trip to Gold Coast, Australia and through some means by which I can't recall, we contacted a collector named John G. Jordan.

John had an extensive collection of Indo-Pacific shells, he cultivated orchids, and he maintained a wondrous display in his garage. When you entered the darkened room, he lighted a display that looked like a 3m by 7m swimming pool with a coral reef at the bottom! It was



Cowry hunting in Pasar Ikan

only after you were asked to step into the water, you discovered that everything was mounted on the ceiling and the lighting created a reflection on the 10mm trough of water on the floor. It was an amazing illusion and beautiful sight to see!

As Antonio often observes, collecting has provided the opportunity to develop friendships that one could not imagine. For us, I suppose our first contact with other collectors was via the American Conchologist's list server called "Conch-L". It hasn't been that long ago there were no websites or internet auctions, just emails and attachments with price lists and trade offers among enthusiasts. (You surely remember at that time, the printed "Rice's Prices" was the best gauge to knowing if you were paying or exchanging a shell at a fair value.)

It was through "Conch-L" I met Matt Grote, also



Fresh *Pionoconus aurisiacus*

from Maryland, who had an excellent collection of Western Atlantic cones and had prepared a very nice iconographic guide comprised of his collection. At that time, he had lost interest in his collection and offered to sell me any or all of it. Unfortunately for me, the collection was a bit more valuable than a government employee with 4 college age children and a mortgage could afford. A collector with much deeper pockets than I snapped that collection up quicker than a jackrabbit! However, Matt took pity on me. He had a large bin of cones, mostly unidentified, that didn't meet his standards and he gave them to me! That got me started on cones.

Don Barclay in American Samoa, got me really interested in self-collecting cones. Perhaps you will remember him posting photos with *Darioconus episcopatus* and *magnificus* and *Cylinder canonicus* chasing *Cypraea*



Looks warm doesn't it?

around his aquarium! We collected quite a few cones and cowries snorkeling in Pago Pago, which I placed in a large plastic container and filled with alcohol to preserve them for the trip home. My delight turned to dread when the Honolulu agricultural inspector told me I had to turn them in because they were snails. Snails are not allowed to be brought into the U.S., especially ones with soft parts still remaining. After a "courteous educational conversation", he conceded that the snails I had collected did not crawl from a terrestrial habitat, into the sea for a swim.

In 2002, we took another assignment that I thought for sure would enhance our cone collection. This time



It's not a fossil, but it looks good to me

it was to Trinidad and Tobago. I brought all the right reference books, had diving certification and gear --- and I spoke the language! The Internet was available and more collectors and dealers were easy to access. So, what happened? No cowries or cones because the island is in the outflow zone of the Orinoco River of Venezuela, thus creating murky waters that prevent the growth of coral. Waters were clearer on the north and east coasts of Tobago, but another hindrance existed. No one collected or dealt with shells, unless you wanted *Strombus gigas*, or as the locals call it "Lambie". There was no dive club, shell collectors' club, shell collection in the Port of Spain natural history museum or malacology department at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad. I am sure there are cones in the offshore reefs north of Tobago, however, going alone in an open boat with inexperienced local fishermen didn't fit my risk profile.

So... the most fruitful shelling expeditions were to Isla Margarita, Venezuela, not Trinidad. The fishermen there are happy for you to clean up the beach by taking some shells. In the photo below, my friend, Dave Gaugler, who has since passed away, joins me in finding a fresh cone among the *Strombus pugilis* and *Phyllonotus margaritensis*.



Shell Mountain - Isla Margarita, Venezuela



All things shell at Schloss Muehleisen

We are much more casual and less conversant collectors than many of our friends in the TCC group, but we never felt dismissed. It is impressive how carefully arranged, labeled and stored are the collections of the members of the TCC "family" we have visited. It is clear this has been a lifelong passion for them. I can guess that like me, many of you can tell a story about each of your specimens. Usually, there are memorable people in those stories.

Lately, Lucy spends a lot more time, playing tennis and gardening; and I spend many hours on home remodeling projects, shells on stamps collecting, and cooking ... but not shellfish! Attending the Cone Conferences has been an event we really enjoy because the group is congenial and welcoming. I only wish more U.S. collectors would join us.

Conclusion

Self-collecting is very gratifying, but very difficult, sometimes dangerous, and not accessible to most collectors. Make friends and trade with other collectors or "shell out" the big bucks to your friendly dealer who will be happy to make your life safer, less smelly, and ever so accessible to that little gem that makes your collection complete.

We always welcome our shell collector friends who are visiting Washington or nearby. Send us an email.

GJMUEH52@hotmail.com

Broward Shell Show Cone Report – January 2017

Bill Fenzan

On January 14, 2017 I attended the Broward Shell show in Pompano Beach, Florida. This is a short report of the notable cones seen during my brief time there.

There were a few cones in show exhibits and some for sale on dealer tables. I will show only the cones I thought were most interesting, and at the end some of the cones I bought.



Poster for the show



Entrance to the Emma Lou Olson Civic Center



Foyer immediately inside the entrance
(Rich Goldberg's table)

[next page]

Main room of the show with exhibits in the center and dealers around the edge
(Don Pisor's tables in the foreground)



There were no exhibits with only cones. Here are some photos of cones in Gene Everson's exhibit. Photos were all taken through glass, so they are not optimal, but I did not have an opportunity to get better photos..



One display had three different forms of *Conus ampliurgus*. I did not see the name of the owner of the display, nor was it clear to me where the shells had been collected. I assume they were found in the Gulf of Mexico, though. The shells appeared to have been collected dead, but it is so rare to see multiple forms of this species, I thought the group needed to be photographed.



On the left is the "normal" flat-topped form usually found by divers off the Florida panhandle. In the center, is a specimen with dark brown axial flammules found in the holotype. On the right is a specimen with the shape and color of the *C. juliae* holotype.



There were several dealers selling cones. Randy Allamand was one.



Sue Hobbs was another dealer with some cones.

Rare cones were in the glass covered display cases, but more common species were in boxes on the end of one of her tables (see photo below).



Sue Hobbs' cones for sale

Following are some of the more interesting cone specimens I was able to buy from Brian Hayes. Fortunately for me and other cone collectors, Brian had purchased a large cone collection just before this show which allowed him to have a better selection (in my opinion) of interesting cones than the other dealers at this show.



Specimen in unusually good condition for the locality



Large specimens of the Key Biscayne variety



Clearly different from *Conus mus*



Labeled *Conus epistomoides*, but this specimen does not look like the type of that species to me, so I am still looking for a better classification



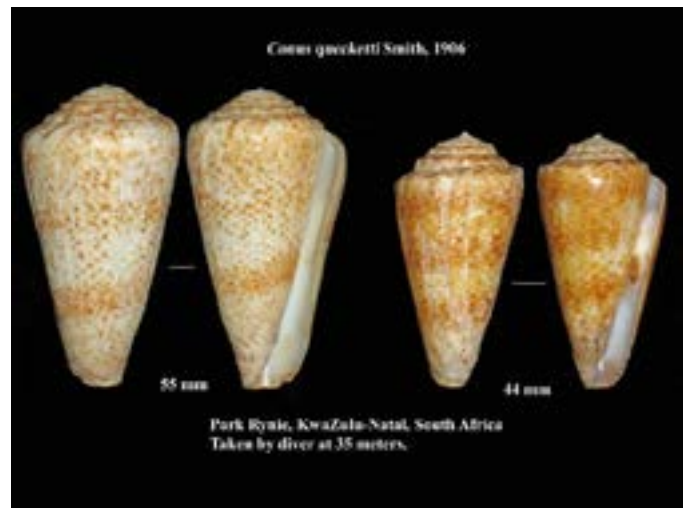
I had never heard of a "golden form" for this species



Label states this is the World Record Size (WRS) for this species, but I can not confirm



This is just a large specimen from a locality that seems to be no longer collected



Specimen on the left is the largest of this species I have seen. Specimen on the right was at such a good price I could not resist it.



This specimen is very similar to the *Conus racemosus* holotype rather than to the majority of specimens from Oahu. I have another specimen from Midway that is like this, but unlike this shell, it is in poor condition.



Normally, I do not buy freaks or shells with unusual patterns at a premium. For some reason, though, this shell appealed to me as exceptional.



This shell was labeled as a hybrid between *Conus tessulatus* and *Conus eburneus*. I have another specimen like this, so it may not be rare.



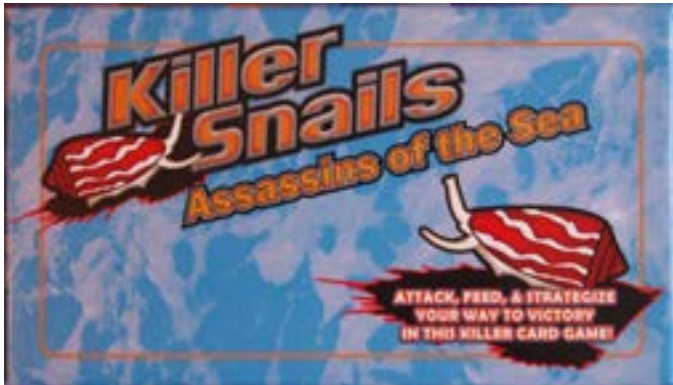
I was surprised to find this set since this species has not been on the market in a long time. The pattern variation here is just a sample of the range seen in these shells.

I did buy other shells from Brian, plus a few from Randy Allamand, Don Pisor, and Peggy Williams, but I think these were the most interesting ones.

End of report.

Killer Snails: Assassins of the Sea

António Monteiro



Killer Snails, LLC is a learning game company that celebrates extraordinary extreme creatures found in nature. Killer Snails (KS) creates intriguing learning games to explore issues of scientific learning. The exciting venom content encourages players to think analytically about the world around them and the many opportunities and challenges present in scientific exploration to become science change-makers.



The KS team includes Mandë Holford, PhD (Associate Professor in Chemistry at Hunter College and CUNY-Graduate Center, with scientific appointments at the American Museum of Natural History – Research Associate at the Sackler Institute for Comparative Genomics, Invertebrate Zoology – and Weill Cornell Medical College), Jessica Ochoa Hendrix, MBA (who worked in K-12 education for 9 years and served as an educational consultant focused on leadership development) and Lindsay Portnoy, PhD (an



educational and developmental psychologist focusing on the analysis of developing cognition in classroom learning); they work with game developers and designers Humberto Machuca and Noelle Posadas.

The KS team leverages their expertise in scientific investigation of extreme marine creatures, educational assessment, and game design to create cutting edge learning experiences that inspire and educate players. Dr. Holford’s research and team KS was recently added as a Google Virtual Reality Career Expedition, where you can take a 360 tour of her lab, the shell collection at the American Museum of Natural History, and the KS office space.

In collaboration with the American Museum of Natural History, the team has created the card game “Killer Snails – Assassins of the Sea”, which is described as follows:

“Silent assassins of the sea, cone snails use venom delivered through a needle-sharp tooth to attack their prey. Cone snail venom toxins are powerful enough to



paralyze a large fish – or kill an unwary person. Yet in a surprising twist of nature, deadly venom toxins can become life-saving drugs! The first drug from a cone snail toxin is used to relieve pain in cancer patients. With further scientific research other venom toxins should be discovered to treat diseases and disorders such as cancer and epilepsy.

In this exciting game, you are the scientist collecting predatory cone snails, which prey on fish, worms and other mollusks, to build a venom arsenal of potentially life-saving drugs. Race your opponents to create the winning venom cocktail and win the game!”

The game is aimed at ages 12+ and set for 2-4 players; each match should take about 30 minutes.

It is packed in an attractive compact box containing:

- 100 chips (alpha, delta, mu, omega and FED)
- One deck of 64 cards of “preys” (worms – including the bloodworm *Glycera dibranchiate*, the bobbit worm *Eunice aphroditis*, the ragworm *Nereis pelagica*, the rusty scale worm *Lepidonotus squammatus*, the arro worm *Chaetognatha sp.*, the bearded fireworm *Hermodice carunculata*, the lugworm *Arenicola marina*, and the peanut worm *Sipuncula sp.* – fishes – including the blue devil fish *Chrysiptera cyanea*, the clownfish *Amphiprion sp.*, the gold belly damsel fish *Pomacentrus auriventris*, the goldfish *Carassus auratus* the butterfly

fish *Hemitaurichthys polylepis*, the dusky frillgoby *Bathygobius fuscus*, the half-and-half chromis *Chromis iomelas*, and the stripey *Microcanthus strigatus* – and mollusks – including the Hebrew volute *Voluta ebraea*, the serpent’s head cowry *Cypraea caputserpentis*, the turbo snail *Turbo fluctuosa*, the Venus comb murex *Murex pecten*, the common periwinkle *Littorina littorea*, *Conus kinoshitai*, *Conus leopardus*, and *Oliva bulbiformis*)

- One deck of 84 cards (labelled “Instant” – potency, predator, meeting, ocean waves, presentation, publishing, research, tsunami, starvation)
- One deck of 46 cards of Cone snails (including *C. arenatus*, *bullatus*, *ebraeus*, *californicus*, *geographus*, *gloriamaris*, *imperialis*, *magus*, *marmoreus*, *pennaceus*, *princeps*, *pulicarius*, *purpurascens*, *textile*, *tulipa*, and *victoriae*.)

The goal of the game is to feed your snails so they produce peptides that match the three sets of peptides in the middle!

In each round players will “play a snail”, “feed a snail” (snails not fed by the end of the round will hibernate), “play an instant”, “play a predator”, “buy a card from the market”, and/or “attempt to solve a cabal”. The first player to have solved all three cabals is the winner of the game. Naturally, the box also includes a detailed set of rules.

The game can be bought from Amazon (search: killer snails game). The game has been featured in several radio shows and gaming conferences and has won last week Best Table Top Game of 2016 from 16BitPlayCrafting awards:

For all Cone collectors the interest of this delightful strategy deck-building game is obvious, and it is a true pleasure to acknowledge it on the pages of TCC. We sincerely wish the KS team the continuation of its big success.

Chelyconus ermineus (Born, 1778) Morphological Continuity or a Beginning of Separation?

Marco Bettocchi

Introduction

Chelyconus ermineus (Born, 1778) is a well-known species. Many distinguished authors have written about it, which means that perhaps it would be pointless to write and read further texts concerning this species. But my aim in the present article is to show what actually happens in a specific point of its vast geographic range, which extends from the Caribbean area in West Atlantic to the West African coasts. This range includes the Cape Verde Islands, which is the region I will mainly address.

Taxonomic Methodology

In this article I will follow the taxonomic classification proposed by John K. Tucker e Manuel J. Tenorio in 2009 (*Taxonomy of the Conoidea*).

History

It is always interesting to go over the history of a species, especially since here we face a slight dilemma that has been present for a long time: are we in the presence of a single species, or are there two separate, albeit closely related, species?

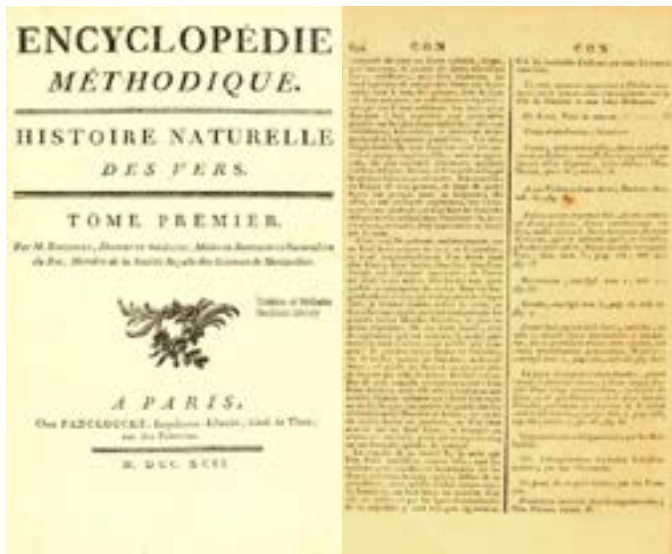
It was in the year 1778 that Vindobonæ, ex Officina Krausiana, Wien published the famous book *Index Rerum Naturalium Musei Cæsarei Vindobonensis*. Pars Prima, Testacea, written by Ignaz Edler von Born. It is in this work that, on pages 141 and 142, we find the original description of *Conus ermineus*: “Testa pyriformis glabra, basi transversim striata, striis elevatis punctatocabrhis. Spira conica. Anfractus glabri planiusculi. Color fulvus, spira albo maculata; ventris cingula duo interrupta alba. Puncta elevata alba.” However, there is no image of any specimen for holotype, and no type location is given.



In the absence of a type specimen, Alan J. Kohn, in 1964, designated a lectotype, which was deposited in the Naturhistorisches Museum in Wien (NHMW) (see figure 57). As for the type locality, the problem had already been addressed by Friedrich Heinrich Wilhelm Martini, who in his Neues systematisches Conchylien-Cabinet (1773) had indicated a vague “Indiis” (as related by Born “Mart. Konch. Kab. II. 57. t. 631. f.”).

The second possible species is *Conus testudinarius*, which was described by Christian Hee Hwass in 1792, in the *Encyclopédie Méthodique – Histoire Naturelle des Vers*. Tome Premier. alla pag. 694 : “83. CONE, Peau de serpent. *Conus testudinarius*; MARTINI. *Conus*, testa conica alba, furva et pallida caesio nebulata, maculis fascis sagittatis per fascias albas dispersis, spira obtusa ; Mus. Hwass, spec. B., variet. A”.

The Encyclopédie had been started by Jean Guillaume Bruguière, who had written it up to the letter “C” and stopped there. This of course means that most of the work was actually left to Hwass. Once again, no type location was mentioned and no specimen was figured, and for this reason, in 1968, Alan j. Kohn deposited a lectotype in the Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle of Geneva (MHNG) and indicated “Surinam” as the type locality (see fig. 58).



The main reason for the question asked above originates in something written by António Monteiro, Manuel J. Tenorio e Guido T. Poppe in their work for *A Conchological Iconography* (2004): “Recent studies performed on both Caribbean and West African specimens of *C. ermineus* might eventually prove that they are actually separate species. In that case the name *C. testudinarius* Wasss, 1792 should be properly applied to West African specimens since the original description of *C. ermineus* was based upon a specimen from the Caribbean.”

In any case no one so far has published any further considerations about this question, and everybody uses the name *ermineus* only, wrongly relegating *testudinarius* to subspecific or even varietal rank, according to the beliefs of each writer, at the same time incurring in another mistake, since most dealers actually use the taxon *testudinarius* for the specimens coming from the Western Atlantic.

The whole thing could be even more intricate, since it must be pointed out that William J. Clench, in an article published in *Johnsonia* No. 6, December 5th, 1942 – The Genus *Conus* in the Western Atlantic, described *Conus ranunculus* Hwass (page 32; plate 15, fig. 6-7) and puts *Conus testudinarius* Hwass 1792,

[in] Bruguière in its synonymy. However, Tucker & Tenorio (*Illustrated Catalog of the Living Cone Shells*, 2013) placed *ranunculus* in the synonymy of *Conus achatinus* Gmelin, 1791, thus leaving us with only one problem instead of two.

Geographic Range and Habitat

It is well known that this species can be found in both western and eastern Atlantic Ocean.

On the western side, it covers the whole Caribbean area, from the shores of Louisiana, Texas and Florida to the north, and along Mexico, Belize, Costa Rica, Colombia, Venezuela, Greater and Lesser Antilles, Trinidad and Tobago, finally reaching Guyana, Surinam and northern Brazil (Rio Grande do Norte, Rocas Atoll and Fernando de Noronha Island).

On the eastern side, it can be found along the coasts of northern Senegal, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and São Tomé and Príncipe Islands, then Congo and down to southern Angola. Naturally, its range also includes the Cape Verde Islands.

According to “official” literature, *Chelyconus ermineus* lives in depths ranging from a minimum of -25 m to a maximum of -53 m, or even down to -100 m (Kersten, P. – “Cone Collector’s Guide”), on sand and detritus, under rocks and stones. Nevertheless, in Cape Verde it can also be collected from shallower depths, -12 to -15 m and up to -2 to -3 m, sometimes in groups of four to six specimens (Boyer, F., 1998).

Pattern and Colour Variation

For this section of the present paper I will base my comments on specimens belonging to my own collection [the large gaps, missing several states, are due to the difficulty in obtaining specimens from such areas

and in finding dealers able to supply them: many of the “classical” ones either did not reply to my contacts or did not have any in stock, and once I got asked an exorbitant price].

Even so, we will visit many different localities, examining the specimens that can be found in each of them. I will use the single taxon *ermineus*, since the differences in pattern are not substantial and we can often find specimens whose pattern seems to be a combination of the patterns found on the two lectotypes, which would make it extremely hard to try to assign them to one or the other taxon; furthermore, we must keep in mind the dilemma stated above.

Let us start with the Western Atlantic.

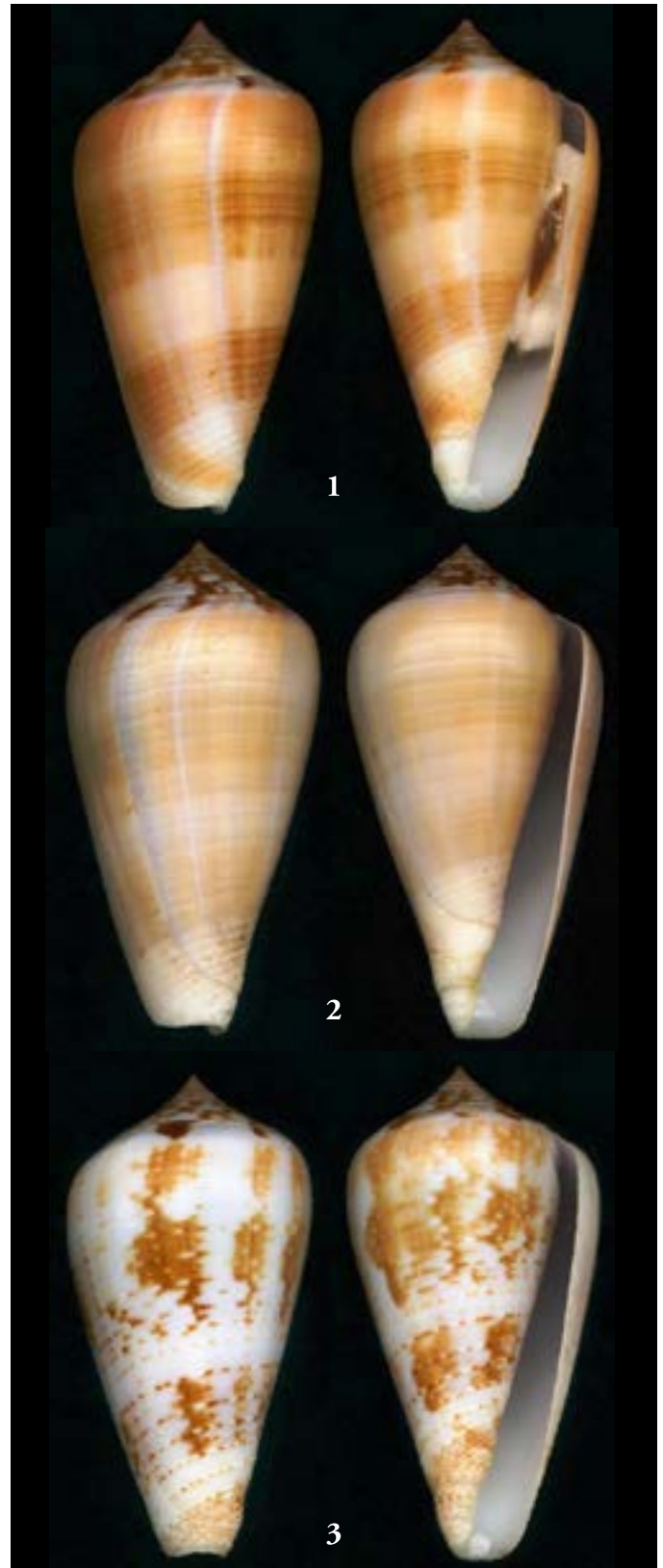
1 – Venezuela, Venezuela Gulf, Los Monjes Archipelago. (Figs. 1-7).

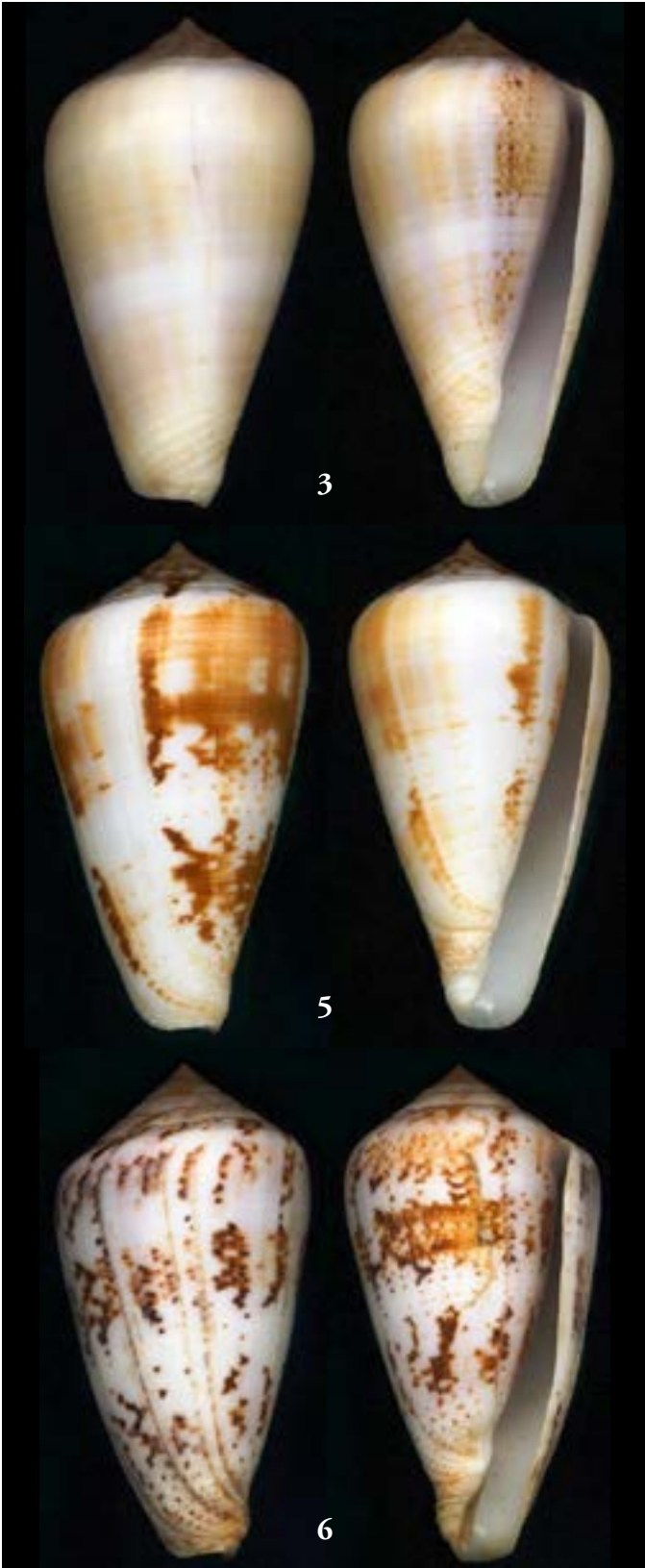
As can be seen in the photos, in these eight small islands the light brown, hazelnut, red, yellow and white colours prevail, with a rather neutral pattern, sometimes comprising only wide bands without any markings or blotches, other times quite fragmented. The shell profile is always slightly convex, with a rounded shoulder, while the spire is moderately high, with an almost always concave profile and a pointed apex. The interior of the aperture is always white.

2 - Netherland Antilles, Curacao Island (fig. 8).

The pattern in this specimen is typical of most patterns found in the Caribbean, that is to say. Very light coloured, with the darker brown shades and the background white colour covered with large and small blotches of light hazelnut and white and brown lines and dots forming spiral lines. Altogether a very “open” pattern, with single-coloured blotches. The interior of the aperture is always white.

3 - Venezuela, Isla Margarita, off Farallon Blanco Islet





(fig. 9).

As can be perceived underneath the periostracum, the pattern in this specimen is quite fragmented, the interior of the aperture is white, and the profile and spire are typical. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that in this specimen the periostracum is unusually thick and opaque, whereas in general in this species it is semitransparent and yellowish. Unfortunately this is the only such specimen I have, so I cannot say whether or not we are dealing here with characteristics pertaining to an entire population.

4 - Lesser Antilles, Guadalupe Island (fig. 10).

In this island too, the pattern is fragmented, and also divided in two irregular bands, whereas the interior of the aperture is white, as in previous cases. The shell profile and the spire are also similar to those of the former specimens.

5 – Lesser Antilles, Martinique Island (figs. 11, 12, 13, 14).

Contrary to the previous cases, in this island we find a greater diversity in pattern. The specimen in fig. 11 has a patternless shell, with barely noticeable spiral bands only. The shell profile is the same as before, but the spire is somewhat lower than usual.

In the locality of Cape Salomon we find a discreet pattern variation, although maintaining the white interior of the aperture and the general profile, with the slightly raised spire. It goes from almost patternless shells (fig. 12), to others with a sparse light brown to reddish pattern (fig.13), and yet others with a dark brown pattern on a bluish white background (fig. 14).

6 – Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Isle a Quatre (figs. 15, 16, 17).

From this small, almost uninhabited island (which I

have actually seen to be for sale with the indication “P.O.R.”), came three of the specimens in my collection. Here we find some differences not only in the profile, but also in the pattern. The profile is slightly pyriform, with a wider, rounded shoulder that forms a convex spire, less elevated than usual. The pattern covers more of the body whorl and the colour presents divers tones of light to dark brown. Nevertheless, the interior of the aperture remains white.

With these specimens my collection from the western Atlantic comes to an end and now we must cross the ocean towards Senegal, from which we shall go south until Angola.

7 – Senegal, Dakar area (figs. 18, 19, 20).

Almost every pattern variation for this species can be found in Senegal. I have three specimens with patterns of the irregular, fragmented, kind. The shell and spire profiles remain unchanged, when compared to their western “cousins”, but the periostracum is transparent. The interior of the aperture is still white.

The specimen in fig. 18 was handed to me directly by the person who collected it in the Bel Air area, in the southern part of Dakar, whereas the one in fig. 20 was collected in the Gorée Island, in front of Dakar, in January 1968, and came into my hands from an old collection.

8 – Ivory Coast, Vidi Abidjan Canal (fig. 21).

I possess a single specimen from this locality, albeit a rather large one. It has a convex spire, whereas the general shell profile corresponds to what is usually found for the species. The interior of the aperture is white and the pattern is rather special, because it is made of two distinct parts, one with spiral bands only, of the same colour as the background, in different shades, the other showing darker irregular patches and a few dark spiral lines.





10 – Ghana, Mia Mia Bay (fig. 22).

This shell blends the basic characteristics of the species with some slight variations, already spotted at another location. The background colour is a mixture of white and light blue areas. The pattern includes a few large brown blotches, rather compact, forming two irregular spiral bands. Here and there we can find brown and white dots. The interior of the aperture is light blue and the shoulder is quite wide, with a straight profiled low spire and a protruding apex.

11 – Gabon, Esterias Cape (figs. 23, 24, 25).

Three photos, three different patterns. The only features these specimens share are the white interior of the aperture and the low spire. There is perhaps a slight variation in the profile of the body whorl, but well within the accepted variability for the morphology of the shell. So, no surprises here.

12- Gabon, Port Gentil (figs. 26, 27, 28).

We find greater diversity in these three specimens, especially because one of them has a definitely more ventricose body whorl. The spire remains low. In the patterns, there is some predominance towards the presence of a scarce decoration or the presence of large compact coloured blotches. The interior of the aperture is bluish white in the specimen shown in fig. 28, and more whitish in the other two.

13- São Tomé e Príncipe, Príncipe Island (figs. 29, 30, 31 32).

In the smaller of the two isles of the archipelago there are Shells definitely more elongated than those found on the continental coasts, and with a higher and straight-sided spire. The background colour of the body whorl is bluish white, and the same colour can be found in the interior of the aperture. All these characteristics appear

to be fairly constant, hence one would be justified in thinking that perhaps we are witnessing some initial steps towards a possible future specific separation. The pattern tends towards the fragmented version and its colour belongs in the variability spectrum of brown hues.

14- Angola (fig. 33).

The single specimen in my collection is remindful of the one in fig. 28, being quite similar to it in pattern, background and apertural colour, and shell profile. However, with a single specimen available for study, the discussion must per force be short.

Here ends the journey along the West African coast, without any meaningful surprises. We can underline a slight predominance of dark colours in the patterns and the constancy of the white colour on the background, with a few exceptions when a light bluish shade occurs in both the aperture and the background colour of the body whorl.

The elongated specimens from São Tomé e Príncipe should probably be kept “under surveillance.”

Cape Verde Islands

We now arrive at the main object of the present article. This species is present in almost all the islands of the Cape Verde archipelago, except apparently from Maio, Fogo and Brava; following a windward/leeward course, beginning in the west, it occurs in Santo Antão, São Vicente, Santa Luzia, São Nicolau, Sal, Boa Vista and Santiago.

15- Santo Antão Island (figs. 34, 35, 36, 37, 38).

As we can see by these specimens, practically all pattern variations are found in Santo Antão, and the shells are always rather “delineated”. I have never seen a patternless specimen from this island, like those in



22



25



23



26



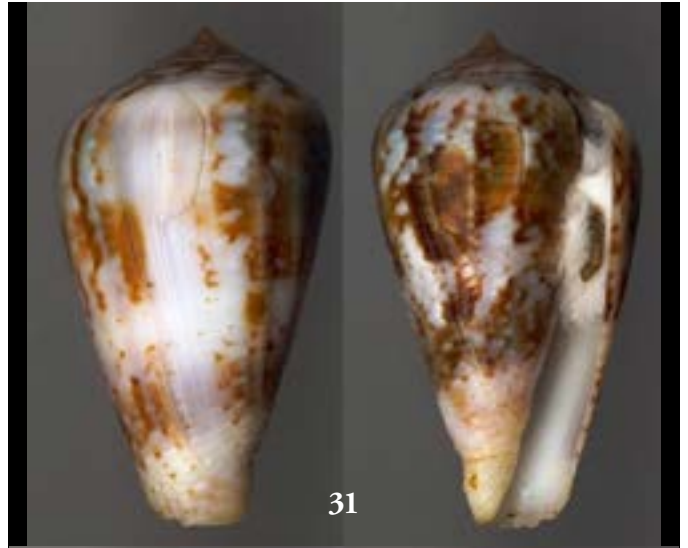
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32



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33



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37



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38



36



39

figs. 2 and 11.

The specimen in fig. 36 even shows a bluish white background and the interior of the aperture has a tonality that approaches violet. On the other hand, the shoulder is more rounded and the body whorl more elongated. In my opinion, this actually represents a beginning of “departure” from the typical characteristics of the nominal species. It is obviously too early to talk of a new variety or form, but the basis of evolution is clear and almost certainly, within a few thousand years, our future “colleagues” may find themselves before something that will need a new name.

And there are other surprises in stock!

16- São Vicente Island [which I like to define as “nha krétcheu Soncent”, that is to say “my darling Soncent”, because this is the island where I would like to close my eyes when my life comes to an end] (figs. 39, 40, 41, 42).

I have made an almost complete tour of this island and collected specimens in several localities (São Pedro, Palha Carga Bay, Gatas Bay, Mindelo area). The first thing that meets the eye is that in most specimens light to medium brown colour predominates, with dark brown not very frequent. But the variation in colour, shape and pattern nicely fit the variability range of the species.

But what constituted a real surprise was the specimen shown in fig. 42, collected at Ilhéu dos Pássaros, an islet in front of Mindelo, about 15 m deep. The person who sold it to me told me that in the zone there are strong sea currents that make diving quite difficult, and for that reason he had obtained that single specimen only. It is 42.9 mm long, hence already an adult. The first noticeable feature is the shell profile, not that of a typical *Chelyconus*, but in fact closer to a *Leporiconus* from the Indo-Pacific. On the other hand, this specimen totally disagrees from all the others I

had the opportunity of seeing. It would be interesting to obtain others, because the existence of a whole population with such characteristics would allow for the conjecture (subject to ulterior verification) of the presence of at least a subspecies.

17- Santa Luzia Island (figs. 43, 44).

I have two specimens collected at this uninhabited island. The one in fig. 43 is almost entirely brown, the background colour being visible only through a few white blotches randomly dispersed over the body whorl. The interior of the aperture is bluish white.

The specimen in fig. 44 has a pattern that is remindful of the one in fig. 42: irregular blotches and a few sparse specks and dots, all brown. Also, the shoulder is quite rounded. The spire is lower, but the distinctive characteristics are clearly present, and diverge from the classic *Chelyconus*. There is some possibility of having before us the embryo of some new thing, but... only time will tell!

The island of S. Nicolau deserves a short mention, although I do not have any specimens from there to show. Nevertheless, my friend Ramiro Fiadeiro told me that he did see some juveniles from S. Nicolau, albeit of a quality standard too low to allow collection. It will certainly be a mere question of time before we do get beautiful specimens...

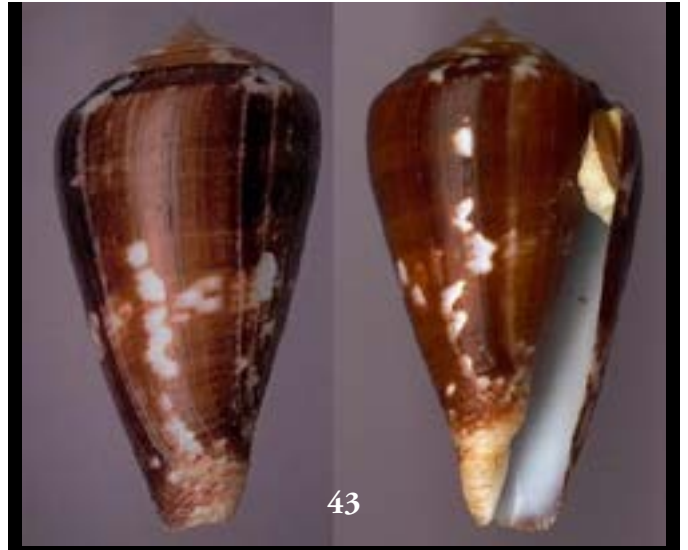
18- Sal Island (figs. 45,46).

The two specimens I have available are typical of the Cape Verdian forms: shell profile and relatively low spire, slightly convex, as in a classical *Chelyconus*, a pattern of irregular dark blotches and specks on a white background; interior of the aperture bluish white, which is the predominant colouration in the archipelago.

19- Boa Vista Island (figs. 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54).



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43



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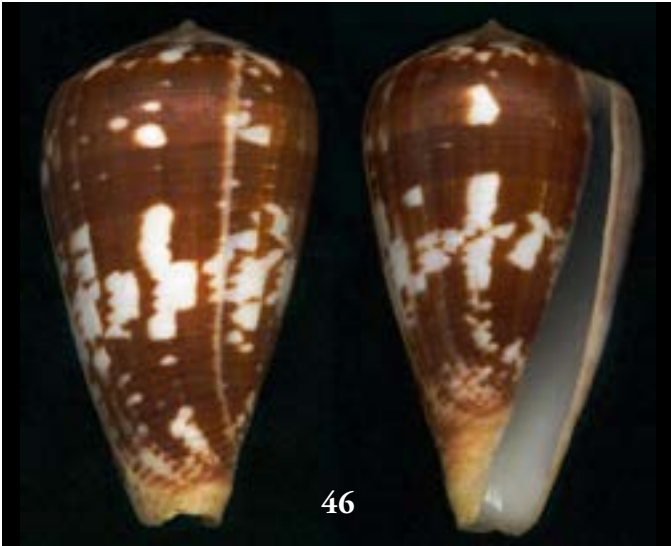
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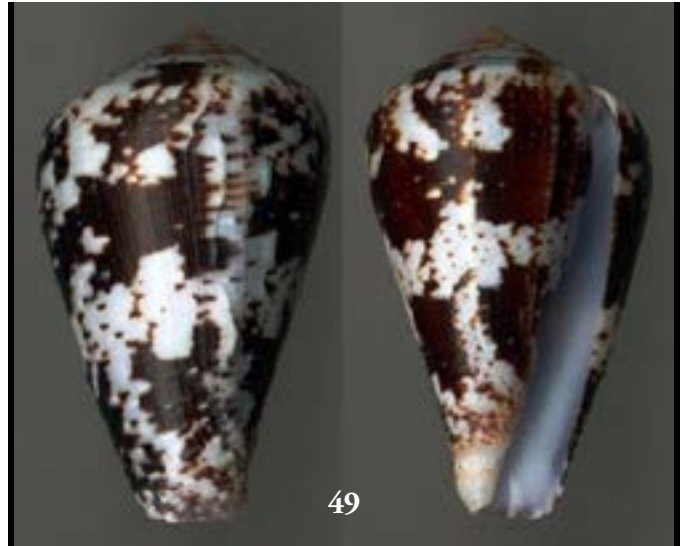
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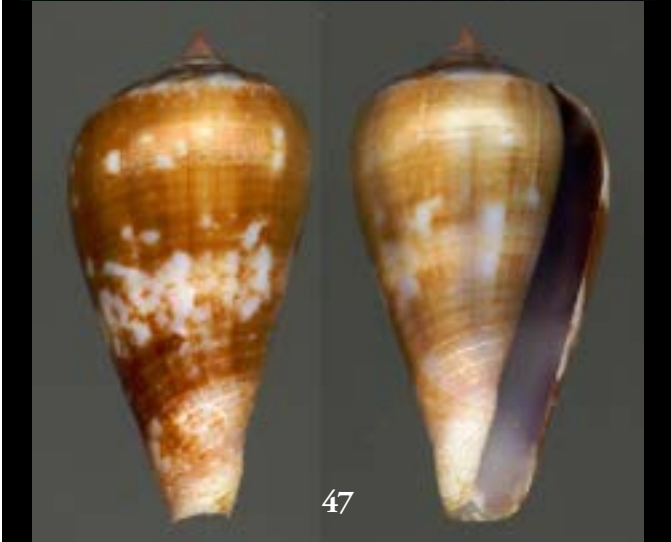
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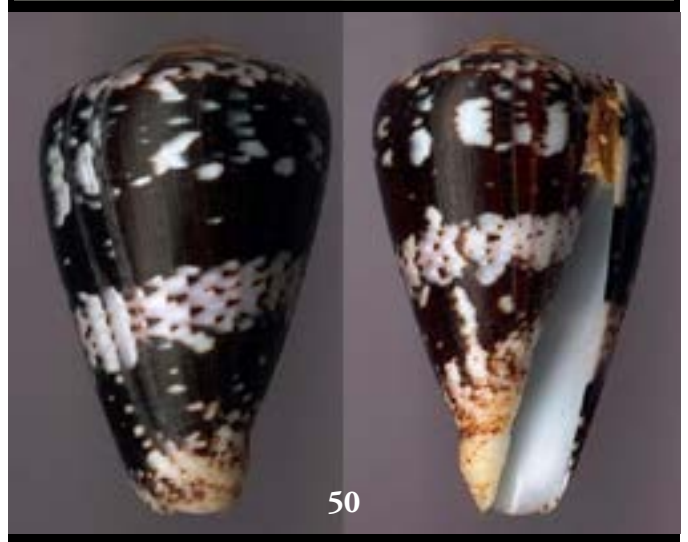
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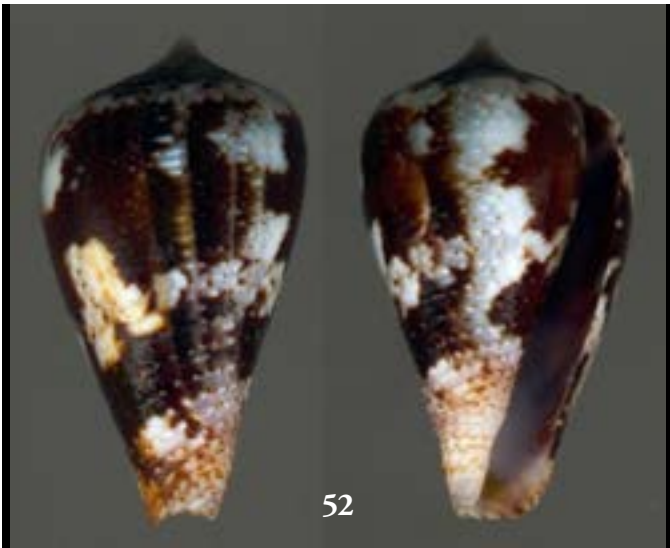
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54



57



In this island too, the species occurs frequently in several localities (from Sal Rei to Porto Ferreira, including Derrubado). I believe that the samples presented are emblematic of what can be found along the coasts of the island, and certainly the images speak more clearly than any words: every possible morphological variation is found, in both body whorls and spires, just as every pattern and colour we have encountered before (even the light blue background).

Nevertheless, I would like to draw some attention to the specimen in fig. 47 that is the most “Caribbean” of those I have in my collection and brings me back to what was stated by António Monteiro, Manuel J. Tenorio and Guido T. Poppe in their work for *A Conchological Iconography* (2004). We probably have before us two morphological forms of the shell: a slightly pyriform body whorl, a rather elevated, concave spire, very rounded shoulder and elongated shell, against a cylindrical body whorl, a low convex to straight-sided spire, slightly angulate shoulder and a more solid and compact shell. This is all independent from the locations where the specimens are found, both in western and eastern Atlantic. Marine biologists have certainly noticed such differences already. My brief reflection is aimed at collector friends, who may not be fully aware of the distinctions I have mentioned.

Before ending our tour at Santiago Island, we pass Maio Island, from which I do not have any specimens at all, which may simply mean that *ermineus* has not yet arrived at this island. There are many species of *Africonus* there (with new ones being added to the list from time to time), but no *Chelyconus*. Since I do not know well the sea currents around the archipelago, I will not put forward any hypothesis about the possible colonization of the island by this species.

20- Santiago Island (figs. 55, 56).

From this island, I only have the two specimens shown. The one in fig. 55 was obtained from a fisherman from Tarrafal, the other was personally found at Cidade Velha... in a small box, together with other shells, in the restaurant of the inn where I was staying! I know that this is not much, but at least it shows that the species is present also in this island. When I return to Santiago, I hope to be able to find more specimens.

On the contrary, *ermineus* appears never to have been found in the two islands of Fogo and Brava. It would appear that in the former no species of Cones exist at all, while from the latter only *Africonus furnae* was recorded. This of course, would be the official position, but confidentially I have been able to examine a Cone specimen taken at a depth of 18 m, which I could not relate to any known species; at the request of its owner, however, I cannot say anything more.

Conclusion

With this brief journey to the interior of *Chelyconus ermineus*, I hope I have brought some new information about the localities where it is found, and offered a few points for consideration about this species, which although apparently univocal as presented, could have in store some malacological surprises, if studied more carefully.

I swear that in a second life I will become a Malacologist!!

Acknowledgements

I must send heartfelt thanks to my friend Ramiro Fiadeiro, well-known Portuguese dealer, collector and author, from whom I have obtained several specimens collected in the Cape Verde Islands, and also gave me permission to publish the photo of the juveniles from Santo Antão.

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Shell Trip 2016 (25th Anniversary Trip)

Remy Devorsine

Cheryle Myles joined Brisbane Shell Club in 1990. She went on Doug Thorn's shelling trip to Swain Reefs that same year, and Cheryle took over organising people for the trips in 1991. This year's trip to "The Locals", i.e.: the Bunker Group of reefs, is the 25th annual shelling trip to the Great Barrier Reef that Cheryle has organised on behalf of the Club.

During the early years the trips were aboard the Australian, and in 1999 the shelling trip was aboard the much anticipated Tura. Cheryle developed a close relationship with Chris and Ellen Pike of Tura Charters, and this has enabled access to the vessel for the lowest tides of the year. In 2010 the Shelling Trips changed to using the second vessel in the Tura Charters fleet, the larger and more stable Eastern Voyager.

On behalf of Brisbane Shell Club (now Brisbane Shell Club Inc.) Cheryle has organised nine (9) trips to different parts of Swain Reefs, eight (8) trips to the Locals, 4 trips to Gould Reef (east of Bowen), 1 trip each to Sumarez Reef, Fredericks Reef, Shoalwater Bay, and East Diamond Island.

Some of the many behind-the-scenes activities Cheryle does in preparation for these annual shelling tips include identifying the lowest tides of the year, booking the vessel for the trip, finding people for the shelling trips, chasing up deposits and final payments by the due date, applying for permits to use borrowed recreational shell dredges, making 'treats' for the crew and fruit cakes for trip participants, organising shells and other prizes for the multi-draw raffle held on the first afternoon of the trip, and organising some alcohol for purchase during the trip.

Thank you Cheryle for all you have done, and still do, for all of us in the Club.



Best Trip Organiser

Shelling Trip 2016

With MV Eastern Voyager to Capricorn Bunker Group
12-20/10/2016

Trip Itinerary

We left Gladstone on the 12 at 10:00 p.m.

We reached Sykes Reef on the 13 at 6:00 a.m., then moved to Broomfield Reef for shelling.

On the 14 we went back to Sykes Reef and shelled there for the day. On the 15 we moved to Lamont and shelled there for the day. Early morning the next day, the 16 we went back to Sykes and shelled there the all day.

Due to strong winds the 17 at 7:00 a.m. we headed for Lady Musgrave where we did shell on the afternoon and at night as well.

Lady Musgrave is about 26 nautical miles South East of Lamont.

On the morning of the 18 we left at 6:00 a.m. heading





for Lamont where we arrived at 12:00 p.m. We shelled there on the afternoon. The 19 at 5:00 a.m. we left Lamont for North West. It was 9:00 a.m. when we arrived at North West. This was our last shelling day.

We sailed back to Gladstone during the night and left the ship early in the morning of the 20th.









Trip Participants

- 01 - Anne RITCEY
- 02 - Anne BUTLER
- 03 - Callum WOODWARD
- 04 - Cheryl MYLES
- 05 - Jack WORSFOLD
- 06 - Jan KREMER
- 07 - Julie HEALEY
- 08 - Lee KREMER
- 09 - Lorraine RUTHERFORD
- 10 - Michael BARLOW
- 11 - Myckel OU-PANE
- 12 - Patrick MARTI
- 13 - Remy DEVORSINE
- 14 - Robert ELLIS
- 15 - Sally JOHNSEN
- 16 - Steve GRAIL
- 17 - Thierry VULLIET



My Catches





Cone Report of the International Sydney Shell Show

Remy Devorsine

Here are some photos from the International Sydney Shell Show. The venue was Balgowlah RSL Club in Seaforth near Manly.

The event had less people compared to the previous show, and it is possible that this reflects the influence of the internet, through which many sales are made.

We had in total 24 dealer tables 4 were visitors: Steven Ko from Taiwan, Andres Bonard From Argentina, Val Darkin from Russia, and Moses Raj from India.

The show was very poor in Cones. The most abundant group for sale was the endemic *Zoila* and *Umbilia*, as well as Australian Volutes, as usual!

I saw only one rare cone in this show, the *tisii* shown on two of the photos, priced at 5000 Aud.

I did not buy much at this show only 4 Cones I had already in my collection: 2 *floccatus*, 1 *dusaveli*, 1 *stainforthi*.

Some nice Cones for sale are shown in the photos, sometimes at rather steep prices!





The Challenge of Collecting Cones ...in Angola

Chris Schönherr

My interest in shell collecting began in Yemen, where I was working for 3 years.

However I have been now living for the last 28 years in Angola and working on different tasks for the government. One of my problems here in Angola was that I was sent by the German government as an advisor in 1989 to the Angolan government. I worked for some years in the Ministries of trade and industry.

The civil war in Angola not only affected the Angolan people. My humanistic education and knowledge of Angola gave me the desire to stay longer in Angola to take the responsibility for the German activities for three big camps of refugees, and after that to do 6 years supervising the removal of military mines. Only after 2007 could I think about using some free time for collecting shells by snorkeling and dredging.

My collecting of the different endemic cones has taken me to the bays of Santa Antonio, Caothinha, Caota, Baia Azul and Baia Farta, where I dived along the rocky parts of these bays and found many forms of the different species. I learned the hard way that it was only wise to access to these localities, when the roads were passable.

Between Xmas and New Year in 2008 I stayed at the Pension of Baia Farta, a big village at a flat and sandy bay, still dominated at the present time by the fishing industry. My objective was to go from there south and to visit the rocky bays of this southern region. Unfortunately, during my stay it was often raining, which is a rather scarce occurrence in this region. When it rains, there is a risk, that the normally dry rivers leap to life with water and passing these rivers may not be possible. The only road to the south runs at a height of between 1200 to 1500 m and is about 27 to 32 km distant from the line of the ocean.

Having consulted people in Baia Farta about the roads to the south, conscious that to the South the telephone

network does not exist for emergencies, I headed for the nearest bay from Baia Farta at Cuio, about 60 km on a road, then 18 km to the water line. Further to the South in the higher mountains, it was raining so it was not so easy to pass the small rivers with raging water along the 18 km of rough road. However in Cuio, success, I found many specimens of *Conus*.

On another day, I wanted to go to the Bay of Equimina by car, 140km on the main road and 28 km on a rough track, made by machines over this area of stony desert. My advice from the locals in Baia Farta was not to go because of the rains. However I persevered and progressed well along this rollercoaster route. As I neared the end, I saw the bay from a height of 1200 m. However, while going down a wadi, I began to wonder if I could ever get back!

When I entered in the long narrow wadi, I was faced with having to cross a river of about 25 m width and fast running water. There was not a geographic possibility to detour along this river, so I left my car, took my necessary gear and waded through the river. The sea appeared very near, but I reached it only after going by foot for 4 km. It was not the right moment to go shell collecting in this bay since the river brought into the bay much rubbish and soil from the mountains. The sea was not welcoming along rocky coast, and having assessed the situation, regretfully I went back to my car. I learned the lesson to avoid visiting these bays during the rainy season. I finished my stay in Baia Farta and I went back to Luanda with the knowledge of the geographic conditions in this area, but determined to go back to look for Cones at a later date.

In June 2009, I went once more to Equimina. This time I could park my car directly at the edge of the sea. My new car had an electronic key, which I could not take with me into the water. Therefore, I took with me a plastic bottle with a waterproof cap. I put the key in a waterproof plastic bottle and hid it under a boulder. Having passed a group of young boys near





the beach, I tried to make sure that no one had seen me hide the keys. After more than 3 hours of diving, I came back to my starting place but could not find anywhere the bottle with the key. On the way to the car, I met 2 young men and told them my situation; they also searched but could not find the key. One of these 2 men proposed to take me with his motor-bike to Baia Farta, because only from there was possible to phone to Luanda to get a replacement key sent. Before starting out, the policeman was informed about what happened. It was not an easy ride behind the motor-driver Eusebio, going along the very stony way. We went 80 km and the motor-bike suffered a puncture. After an hour, we were still trying to repair the tyre, when a bigger motor-bike arrived with news that two of the local boys had surrendered my keys to the policeman. Sometimes delay for a puncture can be a fortunate experience!

Some weeks later, I came back to Equimina and Eusebio and could dive without any problems. I found several of the known species of Cones and also 2 species, which appeared to me undescribed and immediately I put them in alcohol and preserved the specimens.

Part of my collection is in the Museu Nacional de Historia Natural in Luanda. I have many unidentified specimens especially as I am collecting all types of gastropods and bivalves, and have lacked the time and sufficient literature for such identification. I sent unidentified specimens to specialists and known institutions. Only a small number of specimens came back and I received just a few suggestions for names or reference literature. Some specimens were described as new species regrettably without any feedback to me.

Now, I am retired and I should have more time for my shell hobby and hopefully I can pass on to others the knowledge that I gain.

I will be collecting along the Angolan coast for gastropods and hopefully try to describe some new

species. For this, it is necessary to have a good and intensive collaboration with others scientifically engaged in this field. At the moment, I am focused on the family of Conidae in Angola. I have many specimens for which I do not know an existing species name to put on the label. For sure, I have a number of species still not described.

With the help of Gavin Malcolm, I am acquiring better literature and contacts with others who can help with the dissection of the animal and its radula. Several of my specimens were analysed by Nicolas Puillandre et al for DNA and I have received some feedback but more specimens will be needed to test the species boundaries. I have collected so many specimens labeled “species”, any one of which may include key physical and colour features spanning at least two of the species as described in *Argonauta* by Rockel and Rolan 2000.

Recently I have been searching without success for *Conus bocagei* around Lobito, its designated type locality. The citation in the original description mentioned: “Type locality: “13.35’S / 12.19’E”. This is off Santa Maria, 350km to the South from Lobito. But the holotype was collected, according to the original description, at Lobito. I have learned the hard way that local knowledge of the Angolan is essential to successful collecting. I have now found *C. bocagei* in Santa Maria and other nearby bays, but never around Lobito. I think, we should recognize the real type locality in the description: 13.35’S/ 12.19’E”, Santa Maria.

As to the challenges one faces in identifying Angolan cones specimens, I have developed a tableau of just a few specimens in my collection which I cannot identify.

If anybody in *The Cone Collector* world can help, I would be interested to receive any feedback.

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On the Description of New Species

António Monteiro

As we all know, new animal species turn up regularly as previously unexplored regions are searched for the study of the local fauna, or when new collecting methods are applied to regions already scanned in more traditional ways. Obviously, the number of recently described mammals or birds is scant when compared to the quantities of new invertebrates found, especially the ones coming from the deep seas, even more so if they are of small size. It is not infrequent for the results of an oceanographic campaign around some remote archipelago to yield several hundred previously undescribed species, which meticulous teams of experts end up assigning new names to.

The process of naming a new species is more or less straightforward: a given population, represented by anything from one to a few hundred specimens, is examined, morphological, anatomical or biochemical characteristics of its specimens are compared with those of specimens from all other previously known species within the same group, and if the differences found are deemed sufficient to justify specific separation, a new species is announced; it must then be more or less thoroughly described, a name must be devised for it, a holotype and perhaps a number of paratypes are chosen and deposited in museums, for future reference, and the paper is published in some specialized magazine. That's all there is to it, really.

Nevertheless, two parts in the process have quite different demands attached to them. As a matter of fact, the naming of a proposed new species is a purely technical, well-defined and minutely regulated issue. The new name must be in accordance with the binomial system introduced by Carl von Linné in mid-18th century, some grammatical rules must be observed and, very importantly, the author(s) of the new name should make sure that the same designation was never used before for some other species in the same group. The whole thing is carefully controlled by the International Commission of Zoological Nomenclature, who issues the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature

(ICZN), a compendium of every rule applicable to the process.

Quite on the contrary, the decision of whether or not a population under study does deserve specific status, which means that it differs from all congeners in some precise way, according to the author(s)'s criteria, is essentially a subjective assessment, for which the author(s) take full responsibility.

The concept of "species" being quite a tricky one – as in fact we do not even have a single such concept, but a large number of different ones – it is scarcely surprising that different authors use distinct criteria when it comes to decide what constitutes sufficient proof of specific separation.

A friend of mine, unfortunately deceased, used to say that the number of new species names published each year would probably fall drastically if only species names were not to carry the name of their author as an attachment! This was of course said half with tongue in cheek, and may be considered too harsh on many scientists doing extensive research into poorly known groups, from which large numbers of previously unknown species often result, but it may contain at least some truth.

Along the same lines, Prié [2016] writes the following: "With the establishment of the binomial nomenclature by Linné (1758), the name of a species is linked to its authority, that is to say, to the name of its describer and the date of description [...]. From 1758 onwards, numerous authors, upper class persons, bourgeois and doctors, developed a passion for malacology, in particular with the hope of leaving their names to posterity by describing new species. The height of that enterprise [...] lies in the Nouvelle École that included authors such as Bourguignat, Paladilhe, Locard, etc., responsible for a multitude of names [...]. As a matter of fact, such authors did not bother themselves with rigorous descriptions, did not really question

the concept of species and did not doubt that the differences they observed were the consequence of as many distinct species.”

Because to each action usually corresponds a proportionate reaction, many of the species thus described are placed in synonymy in subsequent revisions of published works. In some cases, less than 10% of the validly described names have been preserved as corresponding to actually distinct species! But it should be stressed that several of the nominal species created by the members of the Nouvelle École and placed into the synonymy of other previously established ones, would be raised again to the status of valid species in further revisions of the European non-marine molluscan fauna, by the last quarter of the 20th century.

Apart from personality idiosyncrasies of the scholars involved, which may or may not prompt the sympathy of others towards their works, this represents the well-known dichotomy among authors that is usually indicated by dividing them into “lumpers” and “splitters”, the former using a much broader criterion as to what constitutes a species, allowing for wide intraspecific variation, whereas the latter being much stricter and often considering smaller differences between populations or specimens as solid enough grounds on which to found specific separation.

Such problems are of course not new. Kohn [2005], says that before 1800, “339 species of Cones had been described. I reviewed these [...] and concluded that 123 [...] are valid species. Between 1801 and 1810, eight workers described 98 more species of *Conus*. Preliminary results from my study [...] suggest that only 23 are valid species.” This of course means that from a total of 437 Cone species described from 1758 to 1810, only 146 (a mere 33%) are considered valid by Kohn.

When considering the basic conditions for publication

of new species names, it has always been deemed preferable not to limit the supporting media for such publication and actually the ICZN merely establishes that in order to be acceptable a work must be “issued for the purpose of providing a public and permanent scientific record” (article 8.1.1), and “obtainable, when first issued, free of charge or by purchase” (article 8.1.2), and at the same time must “have been produced in an edition containing simultaneously obtainable copies by a method that assures [either] numerous identical and durable copies or widely accessible electronic copies with fixed content and layout.”

Such relatively vague provisos mean in particular that there is a very wide range of accepted publications for the introduction of validly proposed names, from peer-reviewed magazines issued by prestigious scientific institutions such as museums or universities, all the way to self-published books, magazines or bulletins.

Personally, I believe that the ICZN should enforce stricter criteria as to which publications are acceptable, and I would tend to demand peer revision as a minimum requisite, but the fact is that such exigencies are not contemplated in the Code, even when some conflict of interests may occur (for instance in cases when there are commercial interests involved). For the time being, that cannot be helped.

On the other hand, as pointed out above, the ICZN rules do not bear upon the general form of details of each particular description, but only with the formal aspects having to do with name attribution. Even so, in an appendix, it is indicated that “an author, when drawing up the description of a new nominal taxon, should include comparisons with appropriate related taxa in order to assist later identification of the taxon. Name-bearing type material should be illustrated (or a reference given to such illustration).”

There is however some vagueness in such recommendations. For instance, when authors are

advised to “include comparisons with appropriate related taxa in order to assist later identification of the taxon”, one is left with no indication of the actual thoroughness desired in such comparisons. Some descriptions may for instance include extensive morphometric studies, tending to ascertain morphological separation of, say, a species being described and all other known congeners, or at least individual comparison with all other such congeners, whereas in other cases comparison is scant and far from exhaustive; in the case of some recent descriptions of proposed Cone species, indications such as “a slightly smaller shell, decorated with larger blotches on a rosier background colour,” when comparing the proposed new species with a single vaguely similar one, are not unknown.

So, the question remains of ascertaining how detailed and thorough a comparison should be to ensure that is actually assists in some later identification of the taxon. According to Prié [2016] again, and obeying to explicit or implicit instructions of the ICZN, the description of a new species should “clearly indicate the intention of describing a new species” and “a holotype should be deposited in a public collection.” The necessity of such precepts may however be questioned, as I do not find them to have been respected when the Commission decided in favour of accepting the names used in Sily Diana Kaicher’s cards (published roughly from the mid-1970s to the 1990s) for some West African Cones: in these cards I see no intention of describing new species (in fact, Kaicher attributed the names she used to Trovão, apparently unaware that they had never been published), there is no detailed description and no holotype is designated, much less deposited in any kind of institution or even in any private collection.

But Prié [2016] also makes a most important point by saying that “publication of new species must obey certain rules that make them refutable by peers”; at the same time, he goes on suggesting that in view of the modern methods at the disposition of present day authors (including morphometry and molecular

analysis) to support their views, “the description of a new species usually takes several pages and includes a revision of the group to which it belongs”; what is more, “the purpose of a description is essentially to convince one’s peers of the validity of the described species”, a detail that may sound perfectly obvious to most of us, and yet is of paramount importance.

As a matter of fact, it is certainly the author’s obligation to supply enough arguments to convince others of the fact that proposed new taxon is indeed different from all previously known ones, at the same taxonomical level, not the other way around! Theoretically, one could merely pick up one or even a few shells that present some minor differences from similar ones and give it or them a new name, leaving others the task of proving one wrong, but that would certainly not be good science, or even minimally ethical. It is the author or authors that must defend their case, presenting sufficiently strong evidence to support their proposals. When dealing with shell-bearing molluscs, and more particularly with the groups that are the most popular amongst shell collectors, such as Cones, the problem of describing new species is more complicated still, for a number of reasons, of which I will mention three.

First of all, Cones constitute an admittedly difficult group, containing a high number of species, especially when compared to other equally popular groups. And not only that, but each species is often quite variable as far as shell colouration and pattern are concerned. This obviously entails added difficulties when it comes to establish the boundaries between distinct valid species, or to reach the conclusion that certain variations remain within the limits of acceptable intraspecific variation.

Such problems are obviously aggravated in the case of uncommon to rare species, for which a restricted number of specimens is available for study; they are also more serious in the case of species that have very wide geographical distributions, along which specific populations may present noticeable variations.

Secondly, the existence of a large number of collector of a certain group forcibly entails the corresponding existence of a correspondingly large number of advanced collectors, many of whom actually undertake collection expeditions, often to remote areas, sampling previously unknown or very poorly known populations, or else are well-known enough to have access to samples collected by others, even occasionally by scientific expeditions organized by museums or other similar institutions. Many such advanced collectors feel that they are sufficiently well versed in their favourite subject to act as describers of new taxa, despite the fact that they may lack the proper scientific background to do a proper job of it.

This obviously does not mean that amateurs should be excluded from the study and description new species, since in fact they often have access to materials and first-hand information not available to professional malacologists. As pointed out by Bouchet et al [2016], “the population of molluscan taxonomists worldwide is on the order of 500 individuals” and “40 % of the first authors are citizen scientists (“amateur” taxonomists) but they are responsible for 57 % of the new species descriptions.” This obviously means that the role of the aptly named citizen scientists cannot be undervalued. Moreover, the number of yet undescribed molluscan species (of all families, of course) is currently estimated at around 150,000, and the same authors clearly state that “with little institutional support from academic institutions and funding agencies for baseline alpha taxonomy, the future inventorying of the marine molluscan diversity of the world rests on the massive involvement of citizen scientists.”

The third reason that makes handling the study of a popular group like Cones particularly hazardous is the candid realization that there is a strong international market for their shells, the rarer ones attaining prices that range into four figures (in a very few almost mythical cases, perhaps even five).

Obviously, collectors will want their collections to be as complete as possible, encompassing every species and subspecies, in some cases even every known form. When they have the financial means to do so, they will not hesitate to pay high prices for the items they lack or even for exceptional specimens from more common species.

It should also be noticed that not all collectors have the time or the inclination to engage in any profound research, and they will then tend to collect seashells much as one collects stamps or coins, for which there are exhaustive catalogues in which collectors can simply mark the things they already have, thus being able to assess how far from completion their collections are.

This means that the introduction of new names, for supposedly new species, may create in such collectors an urge to obtain specimens corresponding to each different denomination, regardless of its true taxonomic value. However, it should be stressed that from a collector’s point of view, any confusion arising from indiscriminate separation of species, accompanied by poor, clearly insufficient descriptions may also have the opposite effect, rendering the collector so suspicious of a certain group as a whole that he/she actually loses interest in it, refusing to look for specimens until the whole panorama can be clarified by subsequent revisions by trustworthy authors and entities.

Naturally, it is in many cases extremely hard to reach final conclusions about certain given problems, which is certainly not unusual in science. As new information is gathered and new and more modern methods are applied to their study, conclusions previously taken for granted may be altered or reversed entirely. That is how the natural sciences work as they try to interpret and explain the natural world around us, at any scale, from microbiology to the functioning of the entire Universe. The changes that are often introduced in accepted theories do not result from any imperfection of the scientific method, but are in fact inherent to

it, not only within the realm of Biology, but also in Physics, Chemistry or Astronomy, for instance. In this respect, such sciences differ from Mathematics, where the introduction and development of new theories do not invalidate previously existing ones.

As Kohn [2005] rightly points out, “the description of a new species of animal is a scientific hypothesis. The author of a new species hypothesizes that the specimens he has studied are a sample of one or more populations of interbreeding individuals that do not interbreed with any other, different species. One can never be certain that this is the case; it is not possible to test the mating predilections of every animal in the entire species. In practice, it is usually not possible to learn this about any of them! So the hypothesis can never be proven. But do not despair. This is true of all hypotheses in science. They can only be disproved (by discovering a fact that is inconsistent with the hypothesis). [...] What scientists do for a living is essentially to try to disprove hypotheses. Those that are left – that are not disproven – we accept as valid theory or laws of nature.”

At the same time, the whole problem in taxonomy is made more complicated by the fact that animal species are not static units waiting to be identified, classified and named, quite the contrary, they are dynamic, undergoing evolutionary changes along the centuries, which means that when we study a certain group – be it a taxonomic group or a geographical one – we are merely taking a snapshot of a moment in time, like the photo-finish images that allow for the decision of who arrives first at the end of a race; if we had the means to turn that picture into a film encompassing thousands of years, we would witness a continuous variation that could lead to the extinct of species, to their separation into more than one, to the progressive alteration of their geographic range, caused by global climate changes, or any other causes, and so forth. Isaac et al [2004] underlined such a point by saying that “taxonomic uncertainty is ultimately due to the evolutionary nature of species, and is unlikely to be

solved completely by standardization.”

Recently, a relatively large number of new species of Cones have been proposed. In some cases, descriptions have been meticulous, involving not only a detailed account of the morphological characteristics of the shells, including statistical and morphometric studies, but also a careful examination of the radula and, in some cases, even DNA sequencing. That, of course, is how things should be done nowadays! Since we can avail ourselves of such modern means of diagnostic, there is no reason to settle for less, except of course if no sufficient information is at the disposal of the describer(s). Such thorough investigations are especially needed if one is trying to separate rather complex or numerous groups, less so when dealing with potential novelties, such as deep water populations dredged by oceanographic expeditions.

Cape Verde Cones obviously constitute a case in point when considering the quality of recent descriptions. It is well-known that the Cape Verde archipelago boasts an unusually high number of distinct Cone populations, and that in fact Cones are one of the most successful groups in the area (another one consists of the members of the buccinid genus *Euthria*), with many endemisms: only three of the species found in the Cape Verde Islands are present elsewhere along the African coast, namely *Genuanoconus genuanus* (Linnaeus, 1758), *Chelyconus ermineus* (Born, 1778) and *Monteiroconus tabidus* (Reeve, 1844).

Burnay and Monteiro [1977] mentioned 9 species in their book about *Cape Verde Seashells*, the three non-endemic ones, one probably misidentified after a juvenile specimen, two more correctly identified (*Africonus cuneolus* (Reeve, 1843) and *Trovaconus ateralbus* (Kiener, 1845)), and the other three were left unidentified: one of them has been since recognized as *A. lugubris* (Reeve, 1849), while the other two were described as new species: *A. regonae* (Rolán & Trovão, 1990) and *A. serranegrae* (Rolán, 1990).

From 1979 to 1995, no less than 36 new species or subspecies were described for the area, and a couple more new names were introduced in 2004, so that when in 2005 Emilio Rolán published his book on the malacological fauna of the archipelago, he included in it a total of 55 taxa (species and subspecies).

Such numbers might already be considered rather staggering for a restricted geographical region, but things did not stop there. From 2011 onwards, further species were described, especially through the papers published by Cossignani and Cossignani & Fiadeiro, starting in 2014, in which literally dozens of new names were introduced. The number of proposed species or subspecies for the Cape Verde Islands is currently about one hundred, a bountiful diversity of endemic species that, although not exactly impossible, can be considered as somewhat suspicious!

Obviously, should enough proof be provided for the existence of such a large number of distinct species, in such a restricted area, there would be no alternative but to accept it. However, if the descriptions published by Manuel Tenorio, Carlos Afonso, and others, distinctly abide by the most thorough demands, using every available means of proof for specific separation, the dozens of descriptions by Cossignani and Cossignani & Fiadeiro are, alas, extremely poor and over-succinct.

In their papers there is no really detailed description of the shell, no study of radular morphology, no morphometric studies, no molecular analysis, and not even a clear-cut and exhaustive comparison with lookalikes. This of course means that the author(s) provide no solid arguments for the validity of the new taxa they propose, leaving the reader with the task of proving or disproving their conclusions, without supplying proper grounds on which to base any further discussion. This of course is a most unscientific way of doing things.

Nevertheless, all the names introduced by Cossignani

and Cossignani & Fiadeiro are validly proposed, their descriptions meeting the criteria of the ICZN, which means that they cannot be discarded offhand. Moreover, some of the species proposed as new may of course prove to be valid distinct species, whereas others may turn out to be synonyms of previously known ones, based on exceptional specimens, special populations or even juveniles. Only a full and thorough revision of the Cone fauna of the Cape Verde Islands will allow us to obtain a concrete panorama of the whole situation.

As a matter of fact (Manuel Tenorio, pers. comm.) such a study is not only under way but in fact nearing conclusion. The use of DNA sequencing and all powerful tools at our disposal means that the study if lengthy but sure. Moreover, preliminary results indicate that a number of surprises may be in store, giving us a totally unsuspected vision of the specific separation within the genera *Africonus* and *Trovaconus*.

I must stress that I am using Cape Verde Cones to exemplify the general situation and by referring to them I do not mean any direct criticism of the work of Mr. Tiziano Cossignani, much less of my good friend Ramiro Fiadeiro. They are following their own criteria, which will be as debatable as any other criteria! So, when I refer to their recent descriptions of new taxa from the Cape Verde Islands, this does not mean that they are worse than the efforts of a number of other authors. It so happens that – as is well known – I have followed the study of the malacological fauna of the Cape Verde Islands with some care for several decades now, hence I feel more at ease to talk about it than about the faunas of other regions, worldwide.

As stressed above, in science no results must be dogmatically accepted, and even the most careful and thorough research will always be open to discussion and revision, if new information or new methods appear, and conclusions can be altered accordingly. But a full revision of the groups involved is at the moment sorely needed to help us gain some understanding of what is

in fact a fascinating zoogeographic area.

Acknowledgements

I thank my excellent friends Emilio Rolán, Manuel Tenorio, Bill Fenzan and Éric Monnier for their support to the ideas expressed in this paper and for their suggestions of improvement. Any flaws that subsist are of course strictly my own.

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Book Review: *Conidae de Polynésie française*

Bill Fenzan

At the Paris shell show (11-12 March 2017), I noticed a small table with three books resting in stands (figure 1).

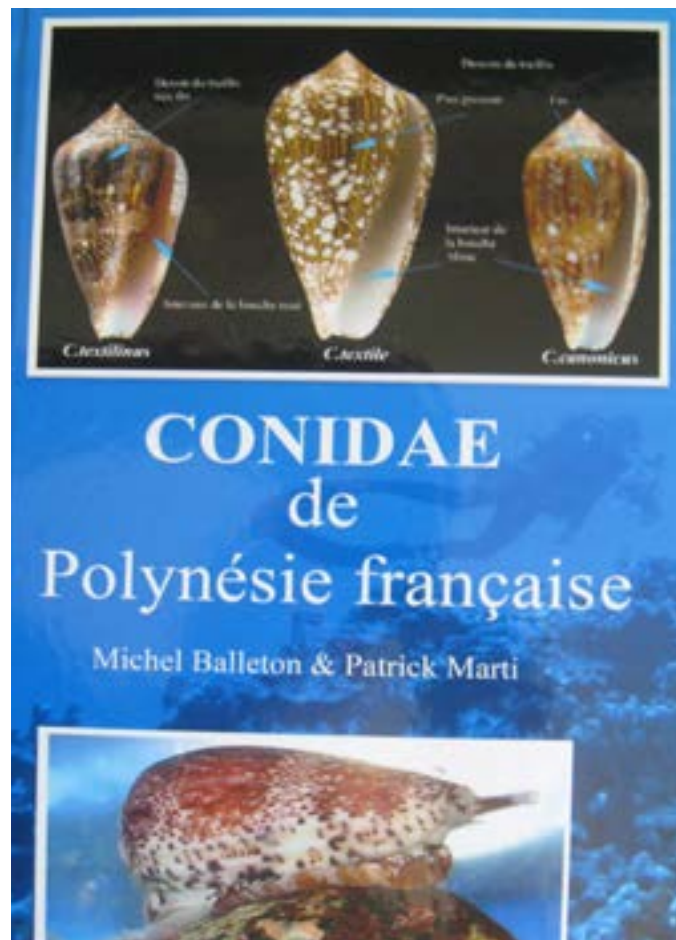
These books were short identification guides for three popular gastropod families: Conidae, Cypraeidae and Terebridae. I looked through the cone book (figure 2) quickly and saw it had splendid color photos of animals, tips for identification of species found in French Polynesia, and a table in the back of the volume listing the largest known specimens found in Polynesia. These are only local records, not world records for the species.

Despite the fact that the book is entirely in French, and I have only a basic understanding of French, I purchased the book for 80 euros (about \$86.40 US Dollars).

When I got home, I looked at the book a little closer. It has no information about the publisher, no ISBN number, no date of publication, or any of the usual information about the book itself. So, I assume it was self-published by the authors using a printing company to produce multiple copies for direct resale. A "Subscription's bulletin for books" (figure 3) that I photographed at the show seems to confirm this marketing plan. The only way indicated to obtain a copy is to contact one of the authors. This document is in English. E-mail addresses of the authors are:

Michael Balleton (cribrarula47@gmail.com)
and Patrick Marti (patrickmartitahiti@gmail.com).

The book has 96 pages. It provides information on 70 species, subspecies, or forms of cones found in the island groups (Society, Tuamotu, Marquesas, Australs, and Gambier) of French Polynesia. For some reason, the figure for *Conus taitiensis* is captioned as a distinct species, yet it is included on page 66 within the treatment for *Conus rattus* and not mentioned in the index. There is no map showing where island groups are located. The introductory material includes basic terms for a cone shell, photos of the radula of 18 cone



species, and there is a photo of the venom apparatus for a cone. In each case, a dorsal and ventral view of each taxon is shown with lines to text indicating diagnostic characteristics.

Below is a table that shows the order taxa are presented. An index on the last page is provided to help look up a specific taxa using alphabetical order. In most cases, similar cones are on facing pages, so a separate comparative figure is not needed. Where this is not possible, or for some other reason, separate photos showing similar shells compared are following the individual taxon pages. The table indicates if a separate comparative photo is included. The table below also indicates if local forms of the taxa are illustrated in the book.

Key

A: Animal Photo(s)?

C: Comparative Photo?

Lf: Local form Photo?

Name	A:	C:	Lf:	Name	A:	C:	Lf:
<i>acutangulus</i>	Yes	No	Yes	<i>marchionatus</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>adamsonii</i>	Yes	No	No	<i>leopardus</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>bullatus</i>	Yes	No	No	<i>litteratus</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>arenatus</i>	Yes	Yes	No	<i>eburneus</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>auratinus</i>	Yes	No	No	<i>pulicarius</i>	Yes	Yes	No
<i>episcopatus</i>	Yes	No	No	<i>vautieri</i>	Yes	Yes	No
<i>magnificus</i>	Yes	Yes	No	<i>miles</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>quercinus</i>	Yes	No	No	<i>pertusus elodieallaryae</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>geographus</i>	Yes	Yes	No	<i>rattus</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>eldredi</i>	Yes	Yes	No	<i>taitensis</i>	No	Yes	Yes
<i>tulipa</i>	Yes	Yes	No	<i>vexillum</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>obscurus</i>	Yes	No	No	<i>chaldeus</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>flavidus</i>	Yes	No	No	<i>ebraeus</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>frigidus</i>	Yes	No	No	<i>coronatus</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>terebra</i>	Yes	No	Yes	<i>aristophanes</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>emaciatius</i>	Yes	Yes	No	<i>encaustus</i>	Yes	No	Yes
<i>virgo</i>	Yes	Yes	No	<i>miliaris</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>moreleti</i>	Yes	No	Yes	<i>sponsalis</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>conco</i>	No	No	No	<i>nanus</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>lividus</i>	Yes	No	Yes	<i>mcbridei</i>	Yes	Yes	No
<i>sanguinolentus</i>	Yes	No	No	<i>distans</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>muriculatus</i>	No	No	Yes	<i>mitratus</i>	No	No	No
<i>aureus</i>	No	No	No	<i>luteus</i>	No	No	No
<i>retifer</i>	Yes	No	Yes	<i>imperialis</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>legatus</i>	Yes	Yes	No	<i>pseudimperialis</i>	No	No	Yes
<i>textile</i>	Yes	Yes	No	<i>striatus</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>textilinus</i>	Yes	Yes	No	<i>catus</i>	Yes	No	Yes
<i>canonicus</i>	Yes	Yes	No	<i>planorbis f. vitulinus</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>cylindraceus</i>	Yes	No	No	<i>litoglyphus</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>coffaeae</i>	Yes	No	No	<i>pomareae</i>	No	No	No
<i>tessulatus</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	<i>glans</i>	No	No	No
<i>nussatella</i>	Yes	No	No	<i>generalis</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>auricomus</i>	No	No	No	<i>gauguini</i>	Yes	No	No
<i>marielae</i>	No	Yes	No	<i>circumcisus</i>	No	No	No
<i>vappereau</i>	No	Yes	No	<i>boutetorum</i>	No	No	No
<i>bandanus</i>	Yes	No	No				

The book would have benefited from independent editing. Some issues with the text noted:

- *Conus pertusus elodieallaryae* is not compared to *Conus pertusus* from other areas to help distinguish this taxon from *C. pertusus* variations. Even though this goes outside the scope of the book, it would have been a logical addition.
- *Conus rattus* and *taitensis* are presented as separate species. Other authors consider *taitensis* a subspecies of *rattus*. No justification is provided for separating the taxa.
- In several places, species names are capitalized. This was probably caused by autocorrect in the software used for word processing, but it should have been caught and corrected in editing.
- *Conus coronatus* and *aristophanes* are presented as separate species. Other authors have noted that in large lots of these shells intergrades occur, so separation can not be confirmed using the shells. No information is presented indicating separation is now supported by new information, perhaps because this book is restricted in scope.

- The table on pages 94-95 listing size records for Polynesian cones compared to the listed World Record (WR) size includes some listings that do not match up with the number of taxa treated in the book. It looks like this listing was compiled to include some extra forms included within higher-level taxa.

I found these issues to be minor. They did not detract from my enjoyment of the wonderful live animal photos, the excellent taxon photos showing dorsal and ventral views, or any other aspect of the book.



Paris Shell Show Trip Report – March 2017

Bill Fenzan

The first part of this report will have pictures I took at the show, including cones I thought were interesting.

Once again, I stayed at Jack's Hotel near the Place d'Italie. Last year it was convenient because most of my time was spent working with Eric Monnier, who lives in this neighborhood. The Place d'Italie area is not within a comfortable walking distance to the show, but it has better transport connections to the train station I use to get back and forth to Germany. This hotel is on a side street, so is very quiet at night.



Jack's Hotel

19, Avenue Stephen Pichon

13th arr., Paris 75013

Website: <http://jacks-hotel.com/en/>

There are other hotels in the area where I have stayed and one within walking distance of the show that is also excellent.

The show was opened to members of the French Shell Association (Association Française de Conchyliologie or AFC) on Friday, March 10, while the general public could get in for 2 euros the next day. My membership was not current, so I went on Friday to pay my dues and renew my membership.



Here is the poster for the event. It has most of the information on when the show is open, the entry price if you are not an AFC member, and where the show is located.

This was the first year I did not see this poster outside the door of the building where the show was held. It was used a lot to promote the show on social media, but I did not see posters like this around the bourse at the event itself.

When you take the metro to the show, here is what you see on emerging from the nearest station:



We had great weather for the show. This is not always the case, so we were lucky this year. Here is the view to where the show is held after you turn right at the first intersection:



Espace Charanton



The entrance to the show is through a side door, not the main entrance.

When you go through the door and see the AFC sign, you know you are in the right place.

Just past the sign is a display case containing shells entered to win "Shell of the Show". Here is the only 'recent' cone entered this year:

Conus kostini Filmer, Monteiro, Lorenz & Verdasca, 2012 (label omits first author)



This cone was submitted by Olivier Santini (shells-addict.com) who also had a sales table at the bourse. Here are some of the shells he was selling that I thought were interesting:



Conus kawamurai Habe, 1961 on the left and *Conus lani* Crandall, 1979 (56mm) on the right

Perhaps the most stunning cone on his table was this *Conus medoci*:



Conus medoci Lorenz, 2004 (~79 mm? Just a guess. I did not measure the shell)

Some cones that were easy to find for sale (not necessarily inexpensive, though) were:



Conus milneedwardsi clytospira Melvill & Standen, 1899

One dealer (Sorry, I forgot to note the name.) had the following box of classic cone rarities:



A surprise was seeing a pair of *Conus julii* Liénard, 1870 for sale (dealer unknown):



A dealer with several interesting cones was Jesus Ramirez from Colombia. The specimen below is, in my opinion, much more likely to be *Conus xanthicus* Dall,

1910 than *C. kohni*. I saw a second, larger & better, specimen on Friday which quickly sold. This one, I think, sold on Sunday:



One of the shells I came to buy was available, but the dealer wanted more money for it than I was willing to pay. With a heavy heart, I passed on it:



Conus pseudimperialis Moolenbeek, Zandbergen, & Bouchet, 2008 (~ 56mm?)

In addition to looking for cones to buy and photograph, I spent a lot of time talking to two other cone guys:



Bill Cargile (Left) & Manuel Jimenez Tenorio (Right)



Nicholas Zantop (Left), Bill Cargile (Center) & Eric Monnier (Right)



Nicholas & Bill contemplating a tasty slice of quiche.

For me, a Paris Shell Show is not complete until the photo with good friend Fikret from Istanbul.



Finally, there were three new books on sale at the show. One was on cones, so I bought it (80 euros). The other two were on *Cypraea* and *Terebra* of French Polynesia. All books are in French, but the photos are stunning and I am glad I spotted the opportunity to buy the cone book.

Following are photos of some of the cones I bought during the bourse. Prices were very high, I thought, so I did not bring back a large number of shells. Another

problem was getting data from the dealers. Many labels had only basic information. To get more, I tried asking the dealer. Sometimes it was provided, but often the dealer simply did not know any more.



The *Conus alinallaryi* was purchased from Jesus Ramirez (with the help of Eric Monnier & Jose Coltro).



The "*Conus saltzmanni*" was purchased from Gabriella Raybaudi. Despite the fact that she was one of the authors of this species, I have doubts about the identification of this shell. To me, it looks more like a *Conus jickelii* than one of the "Aden population", small specimens of *C. saltzmanni* illustrated in the description (*Argonauta* 9(10-12): pp. 11-16).

A pair of *C. jickelii* from another dealer



Dorsal view of the second shell

I also found some small *C. inscriptus* that I liked. Most *C. inscriptus* from India I have seen offered were larger than these 30mm specimens.



I was surprised to find a specimen labeled as *Conus anemone compressus* from the Abrolhos Islands. Not sure the classification is correct, but it may be an interesting problem to investigate.



Specimen purchased on the left and the Holotype in The Natural History Museum, London (photo credit: Mike Filmer) on the right.

My favorite shell purchase at this show was a specimen of *Conus adamsonii* Broderip, 1836:



This shell was bought from the diver who found it late last year. It is 47.3 mm long. It was found in Colette Bay, Taihoë, Nuku Hiva, Marquesas.



Siratus beui for sale at the bourse! Not a cone, but an hard shell to get in the past.

New Website Dedicated to Cones



Our friend Mario Dublanka has informed us of the recent construction of his brand new website dedicated to Cones (and Turrids). It can be visited at the following address:

www.conusturridcollection.com

We believe that everybody will find this site quite pleasant and user friendly. Mario will of course welcome any comments or suggestions, since the whole thing is still a work in progress.

Volunteer Required

Volunteer required to take over as

Webmaster for the Cone Collector website

For a number of years André Poremski has acted as production manager of the magazine *The Cone Collector* and also as webmaster for the administration, updating, integration of new material and communication with the contributors.

We would like a volunteer with some experience of website management to join the team with a view to taking over as webmaster. Someone who has developed their own website would be typical of the skill level required.

The role would include

- a. Working with steering committee of Bill Fenzan, Manuel Tenorio and António Monteiro to suggest and review new ideas.
- b. Redesigning, creating, managing the homepages which link the various sections.
- c. Encouraging community members to submit new content and integrating any new sections.
- d. Loading any updates to current sections (about 20 per year) and ensuring website backups.

Each of the current sections has an editor and a production manager who are responsible for creating the updated pages for their section. The page updates are prepared and tested in Dropbox by the production manager, ready for the webmaster to synchronise the folders.

The objective of the website is to provide high quality material for all levels of cone collector, to encourage community sharing of knowledge and to attract more interest in cones from other collectors who visit the website.

One of the advantages is that the webmaster is at the centre of the flow of information of new developments in the world of cones.

It is intended that the website will remain a source of knowledge based content and that commercial activities will not be supported.

If you are interested in exploring this opportunity further then please contact António Monteiro.

**We hope to see
your article in
the next TCC!**

