



The Epitonium

President's Message

By Dave Green

FINALLY!.....SOME GOOD NEWS TO REPORT!

Our annual end-of-the-year meeting and luncheon is scheduled for **Saturday, May 22, at Noon, at Monument Inn in La Porte**. We will be meeting in one of the rooms down-stairs, as usual.

Your meal choices will be Ribeye Steak, Fisherman's Platter, Grilled Chicken with Mushrooms, and Tilapia Pontchartrain. **The cost, including tax and gratuity is \$30.54 per person**. Due to the lack of fund-raising events during 2020-21, each individual will be responsible for the total cost of the meal they choose. HCS has very limited funds at this point and this is the only way we can have this gathering of our members in May. At this point, we are in survival mode and we must maintain what limited funds we have available for other upcoming events.

More and more of the public is now getting vaccinated for COVID-19, and the economy in Texas seems to be regaining some of its momentum, plus restaurants are doing a much better job in practicing social distancing in their facilities which gives most of us a more comfortable feeling about going out to dine. I have given much thought to holding this luncheon but, I feel it is worth the effort for us to meet and share our love for shells and our members. However, HCS still asks that you wear your mask while at Monument Inn (except during lunch), practice social distancing whenever possible and wash your hands

often..... the same procedures that we have utilized during the previous year.

If you are planning to attend the luncheon, please notify me by email, phone call, or text message that you are coming. I need a total headcount and your meal choice, as I have to report the total number and the number of different meals that they need to prepare for serving. I need your response and final meal selection before **SATURDAY, MAY 15**. I have to give Monument Inn the number attending and choice of selections one week prior to our visit. You will pay when you get to the restaurant, but it has to be with a check or cash – no credit cards.

So, mark your calendar and **DO NOT FORGET MAY 15**. I look forward to seeing you at Monument Inn on Saturday, May 22.

Contact Dave at 713-435-9971 or Dgreen2@entouch.net

Election of Officers

The slate of nominees received 40 votes from the 54 members who were eligible to vote. The following officers will officially take office on June 1, 2021.

President – Leslie Crnkovic

Vice President – Angela Doucette

Treasurer – Angie Haneiko

Recording Secretary – Rusti Stover

Corresponding Secretary – Lucy Clampit

President:
David Green

Vice President:
Cheryl Hood

Treasurer:
Angie Haneiko

Recording Secretary:
Rusti Stover

Corresponding Secretary:
Lucy Clampit

Visit HCS online at
www.houstonshellclub.com

CALENDAR

Apr 2020	HCS Meeting Cancelled
May 22	HCS Banquet
June 14-20	COA in Melbourne, FL
Oct 15-17	Texas Jamboree
June 31-6/4	2022 COA in Galveston

Membership Dues

The 40 members who approved the slate of officers also approved the increase in dues. A family membership will be \$20 and a single membership will be \$15. Anyone who wants a paper copy of the newsletter mailed to them will need to add \$5.00 to the amount.

If you read the newsletter on the website, you will receive a form attached to the email that you are sent when the April issue is posted on-line. If you receive a paper copy, you will find a form enclosed in the newsletter. Please mail your check to the treasurer Angie Haneiko whose address is on the form.

Texas Shellers' Jamboree / Sea Shell Searchers Shell Show

Members of HCS and SSS are beginning to make preparations for the two events scheduled for **October 15-17** in the Ballroom at the Lake Jackson Civic Center. Please mark your calendars for these two seashell celebrations.

The Jamboree, sponsored by HCS, will have interesting programs and lots of shells and shell related items for sale, along with a few Texas vendors selling their shell wares. On Friday and Saturday there will be speakers, silent auctions, a sale table, raffle, door prizes, and guess-how-many. You **must register** for the Jamboree to participate. It will end with an oral auction on Sunday morning. That auction is open to the public, so you do not have to register to attend it. A registration form and more information will be in the May newsletter.

Wanda Coker and Patty Humbird are organizing the Shell Show. Entry information will be available soon, so start preparing your exhibits.

We hope you can join us for these two fun events!

Conchologist of America is Turning 50

by Leslie Crnkovic

...well, that would be next year when we host the COA 2022 Convention.

Meanwhile there is a contest under way to design a COA 50th Anniversary Lapel Pin to be given out at the COA 2022 Convention. The competition will be held at the COA 2021 Convention in June. Details are in the December 2020 issue of 'American Conchologist' on pg. 23, and on the COA web site.

Want to enter? Look for: "50th Anniversary Pin Contest" at <https://ConchologistsOfAmerica.org/Conventions/>



A Collector's Story: Why Darwin is an avid shell collector!

By Darwin Alder

The roots of shell collecting started at an early age. Trips to Bear Lake, between Utah and Idaho, were the first time I collected shells. I was hooked! At age 16, I visited Oregon for the first time. I saw sea stars and sand dollars and saw the power, beauty, and immensity of the Pacific Ocean. I knew I wanted to go back.

Then I moved to Texas! I was in heaven. From the first trip to Matagorda to the present, I have explored the beaches, bays, and shores of Texas and have amassed a collection of monumental enjoyment. The beachcombing bug bit hard!

Two events followed my finding free shells on the beach: San Jose Island where I found my first *Amaea mitchelli*, the cornerstone of my Texas collection, and joining the Houston Conchology Society. Both of these led to meeting fellow shellers and an abundance of shelling adventures and shell trips to Florida, the scallop dumps, Belize, Bahamas, Costa Rica, Hawaii, Alaska, Mexico, Panama, and most recently, Louisiana.

So, in short, I am enchanted by the beauty, magnificence, and allure of one of the world's most fascinating hobbies and will keep on hunting!



Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary

The federal government recently approved tripling the size of the FGBNMS. The increase was less than the amount that environmentalists requested, but it was more than the oil companies and fishing industry wanted to give up. Fortunately, a compromise was reached. You can find two recent *Houston Chronicle* articles about the process on the HCS Links Page on the club website: <http://houstonshellclub.com/publications.htm>. Scroll down to the two top "Articles of Interest."

Trivia about FGBNMS: "Did you know that only one of the 17 banks that Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary encompasses is named after a woman? Parker Bank is named after Frances L. Parker, a paleogeologist who studied and classified foraminifera and published many influential papers on them. Her research significantly contributed to our understanding of ocean core samples and how they can be used to locate oil and gas reserves. More info on Parker Bank at <https://go.usa.gov/xsS2p>"

Black Coral at Parker Bank
[Photo credit: UNCW-UVP/FGBNMS]



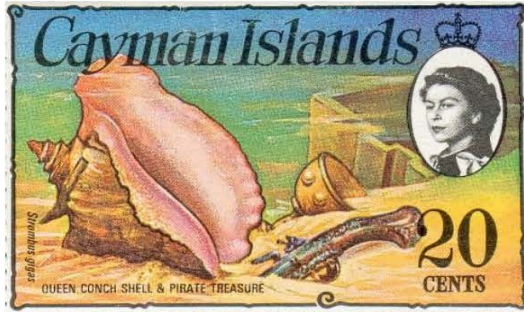
The article below is copied from the January, 2021 issue of Tideland with John Jacob's permission.

Molluscs on Stamps

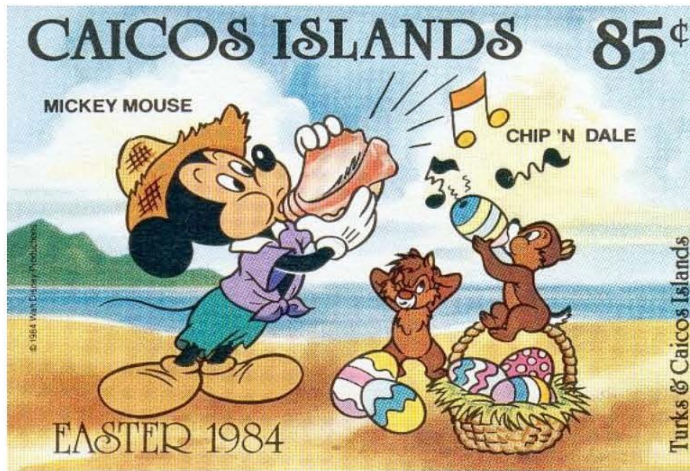
Story and scans by John Jacobs

The Queen conch, now called *Aliger gigas*, has appeared on more stamps than any other molluscan species. It's first appearance was on the first issue of the Bahamas in 1859. The species is so important to the Bahamas that it was included in their coat-of-arms which has appeared on many of the Bahamian stamps.

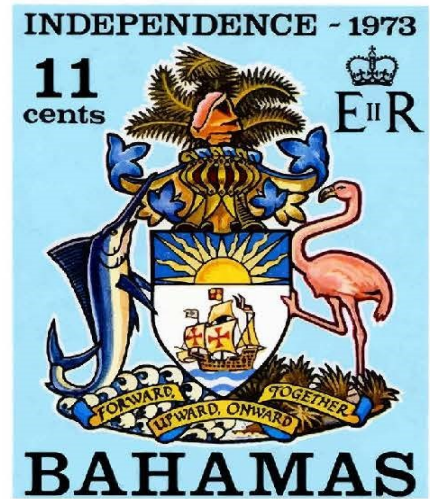
There are only a few US stamps depicting shells, but the postcard rate stamps issued in 2017 did include *A. gigas* on one stamp.



The Cayman Islands issued a set in 1974 for Pirate Treasure which had shells in each of the four designs including the 20 cent stamp above.



Disney characters get in on the act with Mickey Mouse using a queen conch as a horn on this 1984 Caicos Islands stamp issued for Easter.



Turks & Caicos Islands issued a Tourism set in 1981. This 20c stamp shows their flag depicting part of their coat-of-arms with a queen conch.

I could do a whole book about stamps showing *Aliger gigas*. But, for now, I hope you enjoy looking at these few stamps.

Darwin's Shelling Adventures

By Darwin Alder

I am now a true purveyor of the Gulf Coast from near Cameron, Louisiana to the jetty at Port O'Connor, Texas. I spent the first 10 days of April making several trips to the area and driving about 1,000 miles while beach combing.

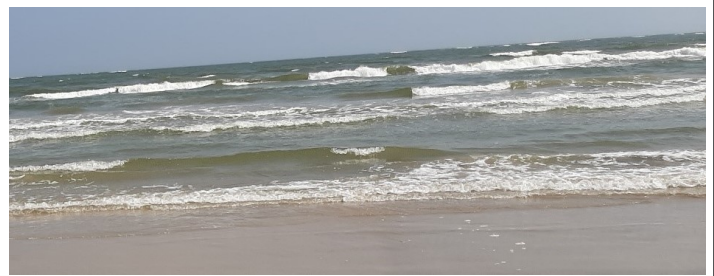
I walked the beach at Holly Beach, Louisiana where I found almost no evidence of the previous shelling extravaganza.

At Sea Rim State Park, I encountered a spectacular *Epitonium rupicola*.

Anahuac with its birds, trails, Cypress trees, and alligators was followed by the Bolivar Ferry and a speedy trip to Houston which completed a most memorable and productive journey.



Next, I went to East Beach, the end of the Seawall Boulevard. My best find by the seawall was a wonderful lead weight with 3 prongs in the surf zone. This was the first time in a long time that I encountered Portuguese Man of War jellyfish and lots of Sargassum weed. Guido's for lunch and on to San Luis Pass which yielded an old *Architectonica*, a couple of nice whelks, and a *Mercenaria campechiensis*, to



name a few.

At Surfside Beach, and Quintana I found fields of wildflowers, especially Indian Paintbrushes and one rare, yellow Paintbrush.



I hit the jackpot when I went to Perry R. Bass Research Station near Palacios. I encountered beautiful *Thais canaliculata*, *Busycon pulleyi*, and *Polinices duplicatus*. Near a jetty I found *Crepidula plana* and *C. fornicate*, both with hermit crabs. I even saw some *Thais* egg cases turned reddish purple by the sun and an old whelk egg case wrapped in seaweed. In Palacios I saw a spectacular wind sculpted tree. It looked like a normal sized trunk with a long and thin elongated crown.



A further foray to Port O'Connor yielded more *Polinices*, *Thais*, and *Busycon* near the jetty there.

A superb lead weight and a few barnacles completed the finds.

I await my next trip with great anticipation!



My First Visit to Ed Schelling's Shell House

By John Haneiko

It was June 30, 2014. Our entire family was on vacation in Destin, Florida and had gone to the beach. With my inability to walk or balance on sand, I was on my own. Checking for shell dealers like I did everywhere I went; I found this place in nearby Fort Walton Beach. Not knowing what to expect, I called and made an appointment. When I was welcomed by Ed at the front door, I was immediately amazed at what I saw. The entrance room had a large glass case full of spectacular shells on my left, another equally exciting large case on my right, and a third at the back of the center of the room. I could hardly look at Ed as my eyes roamed all over the cases already picking treasures that I knew I must get. We went into his office in yet another room full of cabinets and drawers from floor to ceiling, all filled with seashell treasures. Oh yes – and yet another smaller glass case where the really fancy stuff (read, “expensive”) was displayed. Believe it or not, in spite of my excitement to gather as many new shells as possible, we talked for about 45 minutes before I looked at a single shell. What an interesting character and what an interesting life. I later found 3 more rooms in another part of the house, each with storage shelves and boxes filled with specific shell families that filled each room to the exclusion of anything else. I kept Ed busy for over 4 hours packing and pricing the shells I was grabbing. If that was not enough, I was back two days later for another five hours, remembering things I had seen but not yet collected.

Since that day, I have visited the Shell House twice a year and added many new specimen shells to my collection, including more than 130 from Ed's personal collection of a lifetime. I keep records of everything, so I can also say I have spent 35 hours so far visiting the Shell House. I could not go this year for obvious reasons, but I still recently added another treasure from Ed's personal collection. How about a *Haliotis rufescens* that is about 10" long (245 mm+), 8" wide and 4" high? What is special about that one is that Ed collected it himself on February 2, 1957, and it was part of his personal collection.



An Overlooked Cone

By John Haneiko

Although it may not be as popular or well known as some of the more distinguished Cone shells, the *Conus dusaveli* has quite a history. First discovered in the stomach of a fish in deep water in 1872, it was thought to be unique and that no others would ever be found. In fact, no others were found for at least a century. At one time, some considered it to be the rarest seashell in the world and it sold for thousands of dollars. Fortunately for us, its habitat has been discovered and there are more available today. Currently there are three in my collection, collected in the Philippines at Balut Island in Mindanao and at Cebu. Originally thought to be limited to 40-60 mm in size (based on the few available specimens), they actually are larger than that. Mine range in size from 67 mm to 82 mm and the accepted range now is 67-93 mm. While the holotype was found in 360 feet of water, it is now known that it lives as deep as 945 feet (288 meters) near New Caledonia. A yellow aperture is typical but the defining characteristic of all *dusaveli*s is a series of narrow lines crowded together on the spire, looking top-down.

The attached picture shows three specimens. The one on the extreme right is the classic look for this shell. The one in the middle is what I have mostly seen for sale on eBay in recent years, a little faded looking by comparison. The beauty on the extreme left is one I was happy to get for almost nothing in the sale of an old collection online. The seller had no data and thought it was an Olive shell that he could not identify. As with many seashell species, there is quite a bit of variety in the patterns on the shell as well as some variation in color. Since I mostly collect variations of shells that I already own these days, it looks like the *dusaveli* should be providing me with some more specimens! It remains one of my favorite Cone shells.

