

SYDNEY SHELLER

Newsletter of the Shell Club of Sydney
NSW Branch, The Malacological Society of Australasia Limited ACN 067 894 848

Next Meeting:

27th August 2005

(normally 4th Saturday)

Ryde Eastwood Leagues Club
117 Ryedale Rd, West Ryde, Sydney

1.30 for 2.00pm

Topic: Bursidae
Steve Dean

(Bring along any you want identified)

View past newsletters with more pictures, plus references, and club information at

www.sydneyshellclub.net

Contributions:

Please send contributions to:

Steve Dean

PO Box 316, Mona Vale, NSW 1660

Text by disk or email only. Photos, and disks by mail, or preferably by email to steve@dean.as

If you cannot get your text onto disk, then **Karen Barnes** may be prepared to type it for you - send material to:

**17-9 Severn St Maroubra
NSW 2035**

Club Executive:

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Secretary: TBA
Raffles: Maureen Anderson
Sheller Editor: Steve Dean
Librarian: John Franklin
Annual Shell Show Mgr: Steve Dean
Special Projects Mgr: John Dunkerley

Shell Club of Sydney

Mission Statement:

To appreciate, understand and preserve shells and their environment and to share this with others.



Cleaning the outside of shells – before and after

Some of the topics inside:

- Cleaning Shells (Cover photo)
- Library List & borrowing terms
- Details for Sydney Annual Shell Show

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Note: The Sydney Shell Club is a branch of
the Malacological Society of Australasia
(MSA) It is preferred that you are also a
member of the MSA. MSA membership can
be organised through Des Beechey

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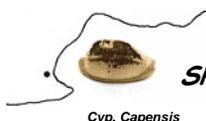
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Shells to Swap:

If you have spare shells and would like to find someone to swap with, try listing some of them here:





Cleaning Shells

John Franklin and Ron Moylan

Cleaning shells can indeed be very challenging, however on the other hand, the process in the final analysis can offer very rewarding results.

We have approached this topic on the basis that whilst we make suggestions as to cleaning methods, it is really up to the individual to select his or her own "best method" and by trial and error establish an efficient process most suitable to that person.

The "best method" approach will be successful in most cases but not in every case because there are differences in the form and chemical structure of the shell. Some shells are nacreous others not, some are thick, others thin, some shells are glossy, others dull.

In the Mitridae family, for example, *Mitra casta* will have the pattern removed in bleach as with some other species in the family. Another example is *Mitra fenestrata* where the pattern and colours are removed in bleach.

Therefore it can be seen that the first question to ask is "What type of shell am I dealing with?" and secondly "what approach will I adopt to clean it?"



Editors note: The April issue of the MSA QLD newsletter (The Radula) describes another method for removing the animal from shells with narrow apertures. The article is titled. "**The terrible truth about the smelliest way to clean your cowries, by Thora Whitehead.**"

It details the method she uses to remove the animal from cowries. Shells are left in sealed jars containing kerosene. This turns the meat into an easily removable smelly slime. Shells are raised up by putting plastic window mesh in the bottom of each container for escaping slime to settle into. This way if the rotting meat becomes acidic it does not attack the outer surface of the shells.

Methods: Removal of the animal:-

- (a) If the shell is clean both inside and out; just wash the shell in warm soapy water, dry and rub with a soft rag.
- (b) Removal can be achieved by using a piece of bent strong wire, a dentist's probe or any other suitably adapted instrument. The trick here is to ensure that the lip of the shell is not broken during the exercise.
- (c) Freezing: Wrap the shell in a plastic bag and place in freezer for 8-10 hours. Allow the shell to thaw and reach room temperature. The process of freezing expands the body tissue in the shell and on occasions the shell can crack. Great care therefore should be exercised particularly when working with valuable shells.
- (d) Microwave oven: Again wrap the fresh shell in a plastic bag and place it in the oven. Invariably you will hear a "pop" after a minute or two. This method can be applied to spindle like shells such as the Terebra and small shells.
- (e) Beach sand: Fill a container with clean, dry beach sand and bury the shell in the sand, aperture up. Place a lid on the container and leave for 5-7 days. Wash out the animal in salt water preferably, and thoroughly dry.
- (f) Generally: It is important to recognise that the anchor muscle between shell and animal is the adductor muscle. This must have time to relax, usually about 5-7 days before the process of removing one hundred percent of the animal can be achieved.
- (g) Field collecting:- Within a twenty four hour time frame, mix a solution of sea water and 30% methylated spirits. It more than likely will be necessary to adjust this percentage according to the number of shells in the bucket or other container. The size of the shell is another factor. After 5-7 days, probe out the animal in one attempt.
- (h) Remnants: In the event that the whole of the body is not removed, then stand the shell upright with its spire down. This can be done by leaning the shell against something upright, such as a box or place the shell in sand. Then with the shell in the upright position from an eye-dropper release drops of hydrogen peroxide so that it runs down to the bottom of the spire. If held to the ear one can detect a bubbling noise. Leave for about four hours. The next step is to pour out the peroxide and, with a jet nozzle connected to the garden hose, give the inside of the shell a good jet spray. If necessary, repeat the process.



Removal of growths:

During the lifetime of some Molluscs they become encrusted with a calcareous substance (calcium carbonate).

- (i) On occasions these encrustations can be simply removed by the use of a sharp tool such as a scalpel or knife.



- (ii) However in practice (i) above is only a first step and it therefore becomes necessary to immerse the shell in bleach. For heavily encrusted shells it has been our experience that the bleach alone will not work to remove these growths. Rather the answer is to keep "chipping away".
- (iii) Apart from physically scraping the shell with a knife, collectors now have available to them electrically powered tools which come with an assortment of different heads. These head attachments can grind, prick, probe and cut etc. There is the dremmel drill, the Arlec Super tool, and many others are available. Whilst we make no recommendation as to the use of a particular tool, we do advise collectors to get the tool that suits them best. We recognise in the time honoured tradition that an ingenious collector can devise a tool without the necessity of going to a great deal of expense.
- (iv) The real time for the bleach comes after all the encrustations are removed. It may still be necessary to use a tool such as a dental pick to obtain access to that deepest crevice. For example a murex could well require special treatment.

Other methods:

- (v) Reduce a mixture of water and chloride of lime to a paste and, with the use of a small brush, cover the shell, leave for some time. Monitor very closely as the shell could be easily destroyed.
- (vi) To remove crusty surfaces from shells some collectors use muriatic acid but this is an extremely dangerous substance and it's use is not recommended.



Bleaches:

- (i) The basic rule is that bleach will *not* damage the majority of shells, but ...
- (ii) Bleach is a hypochlorite solution and can be sold with varying concentrations, or percentages of chlorine.
- (iii) Bleach sometimes can be sold with stabilisers, fungicides & other additives, the effect of which on shells is unknown to us.
- (iv) Shells that have a nacreous (mother of pearl) surface *will be damaged* if bleach is used. Some collectors coat the nacreous surface, e.g. the inside of the pearl shell with Vaseline as this substance, stops the chlorine reaching the shell on the surface coated. Clearly a matter for individual experimentation and monitoring.
- (v) From the above therefore it can be seen that cleaning shells with the use of bleach/chlorine is really a matter for the individual. Not only is an awareness of the type of bleach to be used required but also an accurate assessment of the nature of the shell.
- (vi) We have found that the use of swimming pool bleach (13%) in our experience gives satisfactory results.
- (vii) The use of tap water will affect your shells unless quickly washed and thoroughly dried.
- (viii) In the event that your shells have been coated with oil or other similar substances it will be necessary to remove these substances initially in warm soapy water, then dry and immerse in bleach.

Removal of the Periostracum

It is in the nature of things that shells from some families during the growth stage exhibit a thick coating called a periostracum. For example shells like *Conus Virgo*, *Conus Litteratus* and the cymatiums etc.

We make the following observations:-

- (i) There is a strong scientific argument suggesting that at least one shell of a particular species with a periostracum should be left uncleaned in your collection. However removal of the periostracum can be a valuable means of identification.
- (ii) Immerse the shell in bleach (13%) for 24-48 hours and then by a process of elimination pare off the thick layer with a scalpel/knife. It may only be necessary to leave the shell in the bleach for 3-4 hours if the coating has been partly disturbed or missing.



After-care/preservation:

- On completion of the cleaning process the shell should be dried thoroughly.
- A coating of liquid paraffin oil should be applied. This process is not necessary with shells from the cypraea family.
- It is important to recognise that all shells over a period of time dehydrate. That is to say, they lose water and partially dry out.
- Furthermore, it is only shells with a high gloss that can be re-hydrated. This process can be achieved by placing the shell in distilled water for 2-3 hours, then thoroughly dry before replacing into the collection.
- Shells that are tolerant of bleach should be re-bleached every 2 to 3 years and where applicable re-hydrated. Then liquid paraffin applied.
- All shells should be cleaned from time to time to remove the accumulation of dust.
- We cannot over emphasise the requirement to exercise care and safety when cleaning shells. Invariably sharp instruments and dangerous chemicals become involved in the cleaning process. The manufacturer's label should be closely scrutinised before attempting to use the substance and all personal safety precautions should be taken, for example, protection of the eyes, face, hands and the body generally.
- Furthermore, care should be exercised when using alcohol and formalin as these substances are said to damage certain cypraeas and other shells. In the event that shells are intended to be preserved for scientific purposes, the best approach is to contact your local museum for advice.



Finally, the whole of this article is submitted to readers on the basis that it is up to individual responsibility when undertaking the potentially dangerous task of cleaning shells whether such shells be valuable or otherwise.



Library List and conditions of borrowing

The Club's Library of books, papers and periodicals is available to all financial members under the conditions that appear below. The publications are housed by the current Librarian with selected and requested materials made available at the Club meetings, or by arrangement with the Librarian at a mutually convenient time. Naturally, members assume responsibility for the books while they are on loan to them and undertake to return them promptly.

BORROWING

Members may borrow a maximum of three books at any one time for a nominal period of two weeks but this may be extended to four weeks or longer by arrangement with the Librarian. Borrowers by mail must be prepared to pay the postage both ways.

When requesting a publication please quote the title and catalogue number to avoid confusion. Reviews and summaries of publications will appear periodically in the "Sydney Sheller" to give you an idea of what may be of interest to you.

The current Librarian may be contacted as follows: John A. Franklin, GPO Box 3200, Sydney NSW 2001 (02 9907 9828)

PUBLICATION CATEGORIES

There are four categories of publications in the library and they are listed and numbered according to these category prefixes:

- G- General Books** Covering a range of general topics
- R- Regional** Specific to the fauna of geographic regions
- S- Specialist** Detailing groups such as families
- P- Periodicals** Newsletters and journals

ADDITIONS -The Club endeavours to update the Library with new publications as they become available according to members' interests. Suggestions as to suitable additions can e made direst to the librarian or any committee member or brought to Club meetings. Additions will be noted in the "Sydney Sheller".

PUBLICATIONS LIST - Attached is a list of publications currently held.

Library List			
Nº.	Title	Author	Date
G201	1001 Nudibranchs	Coleman, N.	2001
G202	Molluscan Megadiversity: Sea Land and Freshwater- World Congress of Malacology Abstract	Perth	July 2004
G203	A Reference List of Marine Molluscs of NSW	Iredale, T. & McMichael, DF.	1962
R???	Marine Molluscs of Victoria	Macpherson, H. & Gabriel, C.	1962
R301	Guide to Shells of Papua New Guinea	Hinton, A.	
R302	Queensland and Great Barrier Reef Shells	Rippingale, OH. & McMichael, DF.	1961
S401	Bivalves of Australia Vol 1	Lamprell, K & Whitehead, T.	1992
S402	Bivalves of Australia Vol 2	Lamprell, K & Whitehead, T	1998
S403	Mitridae of the World Pt 2	Cernohorsky, W.O.	1991
P501	Tidewatch	Townsville Shell Club	Current
P502	Cairns Shell News		1991-2002
P503	Newsletter	Whitsunday Shell Club	1999-2000
P504	W.A. Shell Collector		Current
P505	Shell Grit	South Australia	Current
P506	Keppel Bay Tidings		May 2004
P507	The Queensland Radula		Current
P508	MSA Victorian Branch Bulletin		Current
P509	MSA Journal		1957-Vol 14 1993
P510	MSA Molluscan Research		Vol 15 1994 → Current
P511	The Sydney Sheller		July 1998 → Current
P512	Australian Shell News	Newsletter of the MSA	Incomplete
P513	The Marine Zoologist		Vol 1 N ^o . 8 (1961)



Subscription Reminder

Shell Club Membership was due by 1st July 2005 for the upcoming year. The amount is \$40 adults, \$15 junior, \$25 student or pensioner, \$5 additional family member. International postage add \$8, A4 envelope non-folded add \$18. (See page two for how to pay)

Congratulations Sydney

25th Annual Shell Show

22nd October 2005; Public Entry 11am – 4.30pm

Program:

9:00 -	11:00	Display and Dealer set-up
11:00 -	4:30	Dealer tables open
11:00 -	12:30	Lecture/discussion program with Guest Speakers
12:30 -	2:00	Lunch break – own arrangements. The Club has a good low cost bistro with different sections: Asian, roasts, salads
12:30 -	2:00	Judging of exhibits. Exhibit area closed.
2:00 -	4:30	View spectacular shells in the competitive displays.
2:00 -	3:30	Children's program (targeted primarily to 11 to 14 year olds and younger children, run by the Coastal Environment Centre)
2:00 -	3:30	Bring your shells along and have them identified
3:30 -	4:30	Buy, swap and sell – get a bargain
4:00		Competitive display winner presentations
4:30 -	5:00	Pack-up exhibits. Close

Costs:

- Adult and junior members free venue entry, if entering competitive displays
- Adult members – a \$5 penalty if not exhibiting
- Adult members \$4 per competitive display
- Junior members – no fee when entering competitive displays
- Adult non-members \$4 per admission
- Child non-members under 15 years of age \$2 per admission
- A dealer table \$25
- A Sell-Swap-Buy table \$10
- Exhibitors may enter up to three entries per category

Exhibitors:

Rather than selecting eleven or so categories as we normally do, this year we are allowing any and all categories that are available for the National Shell Show at the same venue in March 2006. This means exhibitors can have a 'dry run' at exhibiting in categories not normally available at annual shows, to help them prepare for the national. The list of 78 categories is attached. Remember that juniors can exhibit in any category, not just the junior section.

Please be aware that with so many categories at a local show, many categories will have no competitors, or only one. For logistical reasons we will use generic winner certificates this year, rather than printing 1st, 2nd and 3rd for every category.

The rules for exhibiting and Judging are per the rules issued for the 2006 National Show as applicable. In the event of a dispute, or national rules conflicting with our normal annual show rules, the decision of the Shell Show Manager or his nominee will be final. Rules for the 2006 National can be viewed at www.sydneyshellclub.net or in the info pack sent out in March. Display boxes are 600 x 370mm or less, with the long dimension to the front (i.e. not portrait format). If you have large shells then two boxes may be used and an additional \$4 entry will apply. *(It has been decided that this double footprint option, with extra fee, will also be allowed for the 2006 National – this is the only amendment to the National info pack so far)*

Registration:

You may register on the day. However to avoid congestion at the door, you are welcome to pre-register. If possible we would like to know ahead of time in which categories you intend to exhibit. Those needing dealer tables should advise their intent to attend ahead of time to ensure tables are set out. Shell Show Manager: Steve Dean, steve@easy.com.au PO Box 316 MONA VALE, NSW 1660