

New Zealand Shell Collecting Adventure

American Shell Collectors Visit Middle Earth (There and Back Again) or Friendly People, Beautiful Country and Great Shells.

by Ken Piech

Like many other U.S. shell collectors, my wife, Alice, and I started our shell collecting avocation during a family summer vacation. In 1987 we were with our four young children on Sanibel Island, Florida and found many beautiful shells. Several months later we purchased masks, fins and snorkels to take with us on our 10th wedding anniversary trip to the British Virgin Islands in the Caribbean. We collected many new (for us) shells, while we enjoyed the warm, clear tropical water with beautiful coral reefs and colorful fish. **We were hooked!** Since then, we have collected seashells in many places using a variety of methods. Although much of our shell collecting has been in southern Florida and the Caribbean, we have also collected in Brazil, West Africa, panamic Central America and many Indo-Pacific islands.

After more than twenty years of serious shell collecting, we had visited a number of great shelling locations, but had also developed a “shelling destination wish list”, places where we want to collect but have not yet visited. Although we had been to Australia several times, we had never visited New Zealand, which was at the top of our “wish list.” We knew little about this English-speaking, island nation in the southern hemisphere, only that it is relatively near Australia, has active volcanoes and has many endemic species of flora and fauna, including some flightless birds. Our ever-growing shell collection contained only a few NZ shells that were either trades or gifts. Perhaps the strangest one was *Struthiolaria papulosa* (Martyn, 1784), for which I had traded a large, chocolate-colored *Typhis grandis* A.

Adams, 1855 that we had collected by dredging in Panama. Although this trade now seems a little one sided, this unique NZ shell pricked our curiosity about New Zealand and its many endemic seashells.

In early 2008 a combination of events gave us the opportunity to visit New Zealand, not just for a few weeks, but for 5-6 months. I was asked to work as a pathologist at Hutt Hospital in Lower Hutt, a city just north of Wellington. In addition to the remuneration, the hospital provided us round trip airplane tickets, a nice car to use and a small cottage one block from the eastern shore of Wellington Harbour in the delightful small community of Eastbourne. Having most of the logistics arranged for us, Alice and I focused on making the necessary arrangements to leave our home and country for our extended stay in New Zealand.

As we prepared for our time in New Zealand, I searched the internet and found the email addresses of some members of the Wellington and Auckland shell clubs. I sent emails to a few of these shell collectors and also posted a request for information about NZ shell collecting on the internet discussion forum/listserv, Conch-L, www.conchologistsofamerica.org/conch_L, which is sponsored by the Conchologists of America (COA), www.conchologistsofamerica.org/home/. COA is the main, national organization for amateur shell collectors in the United States. In addition to providing an avid shell collector a venue to discuss shells, Conch-L provides a forum to share all types of information concerning seashells, molluscs and shell collecting. I received many kind,

informative responses, especially from the NZ shell collectors. Prior to our June departure for New Zealand, we were able through trade to acquire a copy of Powell's New Zealand Mollusca, 1979, which we brought with us to New Zealand. Although now 30 years old, it is still considered a great general reference on New Zealand molluscs, though the nomenclature has become somewhat outdated.

I arrived in Wellington in early June at the beginning of New Zealand's winter. For family reasons Alice came in early July. Although the temperature in Eastbourne never got below 0°C, the frequent 25, 40 and 60 kph winds made it feel much colder. We quickly learned that most homes in New Zealand do not have central heating and have windows with only single panes of glass. As such, our home was fairly cold for much of our first several months in New Zealand. Although the weather in June, July and August was not ideal for sightseeing, the frequent “southerlies” with their strong wind and waves brought to the Eastbourne beaches a number of interesting seashells, many still containing the dead or dying molluscs. After the storms the gulls and other shore birds feasted well for days. The Eastbourne beaches consist mostly of small pebbles with some sandy areas increasing near and below the low tide line. Rocky points separate the coast into many small bays, such as Lowry Bay, York Bay, Days Bay and Rona Bay. Our home was just one block from Rona Bay. We frequently walked the beaches and found many shells, either empty or with dead/dying animals.



Rona Bay Beach looking north



Rona Bay Beach, looking south

Many of these gastropods and bivalves were beach worn specimens in fair-good condition; others were in excellent shape. Some of our best *Pecten novaezelandiae*, *Zenatia acinaces* and *Panopea zelandica* I collected near the end of a storm when the rain was dissipating. Although the collecting was wet and cold, I was the first person

on the beach and was even ahead of most of the shore birds, although I had to fight one for a nice *Pecten novaezelandiae* at the water's edge. During this very productive shelling afternoon Alice stayed in our warmer home. When I returned several times to get warm and change into dry clothes, she made disparaging remarks

suggesting that even the birds were smart enough to stay out of the bad weather. Although the cold wind and rain reduced the comfort of shell collecting, it also reduced the competition and thereby increased the number of nice shells that I found.

Eastbourne Beaches Gastropods

First row, left to right: *Cookia sulcata* (Lightfoot, 1786), *Argobuccinum pustulosum tumidum* (Dunker, 1862), *Haliotis australis* Gmelin, 1791 (2), *Haliotis iris* Gmelin, 1791. **Second row:** *Scutus breviculus* (Blainville, 1817), *Maoricolpus roseus roseus* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1834), *Austrofuscus glans* (Roding, 1798), *Cominella adspersa* (Bruguiere, 1789) (2), *Cominella maculosa* (Martyn, 1784) (2), *Cominella virgata virgata* Adams, H. & Adams, A., 1853 (2), *Buccinulum linea* (Martyn, 1784) (2), *Buccinulum species* (2). **Third row:** *Haustrum haustorium* (Gmelin, 1791) (2), *Xymene ambiguus* (Philippe, 1844) (2), *Haustrum lacunosum* (Bruguiere, 1789) (2), *Haustrum scobina* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1833), (2), *Sigapatella novaezelandiae* (Lesson, 1830) (2), *Lunella smaragdus* Gmelin, 1791 (2).



Fourth row: *Calliostoma punctulatum* (Martyn, 1774), *Trochus viridis* Gmelin, 1791, *Cantharidus opalus* (Martyn, 1784), *Cantharidus purpureus* (Gmelin, 1791), *Trichosirus inornatus* (Hutton, 1873), *Siphonaria australis* Quoy & Gaimard, 1833 (2), *Cellana ornata* (Dillwyn, 1817), *Cellana radians* (Gmelin, 1791), *Cellana denticulata* (Martyn, 1784), *Haliotis virginea virginea* Gmelin, 1791.

Eastbourne Beaches Bivalves



Top Row, left to right: *Panopea zelandica* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1835), *Pecten novaezelandiae* Reeve, 1852, *Perna canaliculus* (Gmelin, 1791), *Tucetona laticostata* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1835). **Second Row:** *Zenatia acinaces* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1835), *Myadora striata* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1835), *Gari lineolata* (Gray, 1835), *Gari stangeri* (Gray, 1843). **Third Row:** *Atrina zelandica* (Gray, 1835), *Mytilus galloprovincialis planulatus* Lamarck, 1819, *Aulacomya maoriana* (Iredale, 1915), *Modiolarca impacta* (Hermann, 1782), *Solemya parkinsonii* E.A. Smith, 1874, *Soletellina nitida* (Gray, 1843), *Paphies australis* (Gmelin, 1791), *Pseudarcopagia disculus* (Deshayes, 1855). **Fourth Row:** *Austrovenus stutchburyi* (Wood, 1828), *Protothaca crassicosta* (Deshayes, 1835), *Ruditapes largillierti* (Philippe, 1849), *Ostrea chilensis* Philippe, 1844, *Tawera spissa* (Deshayes, 1835), *Dosinia subrosea* (Gray, 1835).



Talochlamys zelandiae (Gray, 1843)

On the Eastbourne beaches we also learned to look for shells in the orange sponge that washed up after the storms. The sponge often contained dead or dying *Talochlamys zelandiae* of many different colors. The most common colors were varying shades of purple and brown. Orange was less frequent, and yellow was rare. A yellow *T. zelandiae* in good condition is an excellent find. Some of the *T. zelandiae* exhibited surface deformities, which seemed to be due to the confines of their sponge habitat. In addition to these nice pectens, the sponge contained a fair number of *Modiolarca impacta* and a few *Hiatella arctica*. In one sponge there was a *Trichosirus inornatus*. The Eastbourne beaches are rich with shells, especially after a storm.

Since we are avid snorkelers and certified scuba divers, Alice and I brought with us our snorkeling gear and some scuba diving equipment. However, during most of our time in New Zealand, the water was just too cold. During the months of June, July and August, the Wellington Harbour water temperature ranged from 10 to 13°C (50-55°F), which is too cold, even with a thick wet suit. If our time in New Zealand had been longer, we most probably would have learned to use dry suits, but that is another story. So, despite the rich molluscan fauna in Wellington Harbour and the nearby coastline, our only means to collect shells was to do so by searching the beach for washed up specimens, which is not the best means to find high quality shell specimens. Although we received reports of *Calliostoma tigris* living in Wellington Harbour at 25-35 meters, we never saw a washed up specimen on the harbour beaches.

I had been in New Zealand only a few weeks when I attended my first Wellington Shell Club meeting, held at a club member's home. In my car I drove on the left or "wrong" side of the road following another club member up and down many narrow, winding roads. When we finally arrived, I was just glad that I had not had an accident. Many people attended this meeting, including several with whom I had exchanged emails prior to coming to New Zealand. I especially enjoyed the time of "show and tell", when members would report on their recent shell collecting experiences and show the shells that they had collected. This was an excellent way for me to see some of the local shells and learn about the best shell collecting spots. These include Moa Point, Lyall Bay and Owhiro Bay, which are south of Wellington; Green Point and Porirua Harbour, which are north of Wellington; and Paraparaumu and Waikanae, which are on the Kapiti Coast, even further north of Wellington.

During the next several months Alice and I spent many weekends enjoying the intertidal collecting at these

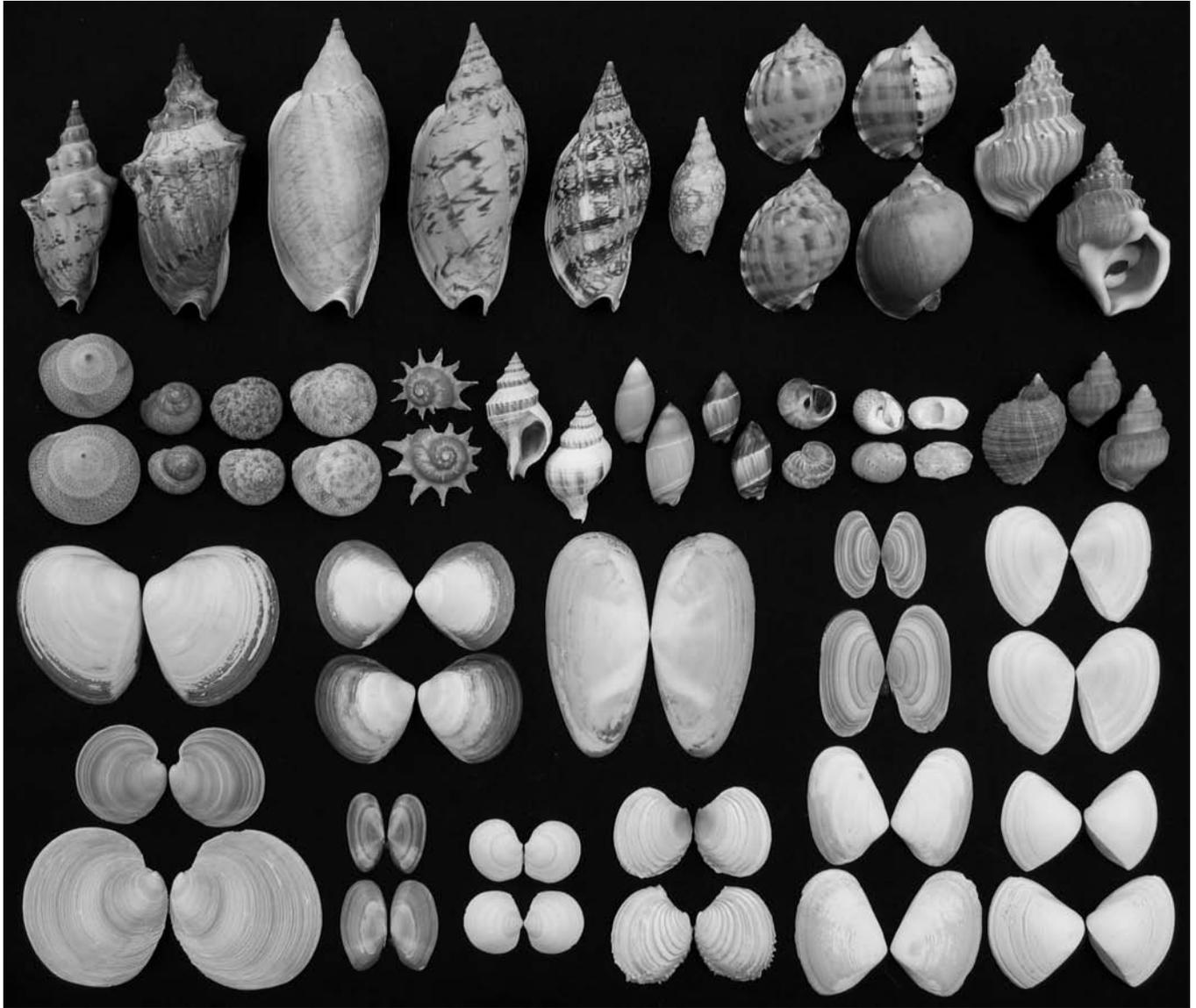
locations, often with other members of the Wellington Shell Club, who kindly shared their time, knowledge and shells. Most of the shells we found at Moa Point and Lyall Bay were similar to those that we found on the Eastbourne beaches, although many of them were in better condition. At Moa Point we did find a few live *Dicathais orbita* and *Atalacmea multilinea* as well as a few dead *Xymene traversi*. At Lyall Bay we also found *Diloma bicanaliculata* and one *Nerita melanotragus*. At Owhiro Bay in August we found *Tugali elegans*, *Patelloida corticata* and *Marinula filholi*. Unfortunately, Owhiro Bay became a marine reserve on 7 September 2008, and shell collecting is no longer permitted there. Only once did Alice and I visit Green Point, a strikingly beautiful (and very green) promontory extending into the Tasman Sea towards Mana Island. Although the approximately one km hike from the car park took us down a steep cliff and along beaches composed almost entirely of rocks and boulders, the beauty of Green Point more than justified the effort to get there. For shell collectors, Green Point is probably best known for the occasional *Mitra carbonaria* that is found there. The afternoon we visited Green Point there were numerous small fragments of brown, wood debris in the water, which made more difficult our search for the uncommon, brown *Mitra carbonaria* of similar size. Although Alice and I did not find any mitres, we did find a number of nice *Tucetona laticostata* and *Haliotis australis* and a few *Modelia granosa* and *Dendropoma lamellosa*. At the end of the afternoon our friendly guide, Alan Smillie, gave us a *Mitra carbonaria* that he had found on a previous visit to Green Point. Although such generosity was typical of many New Zealand shell collectors, it was nevertheless most appreciated.

Alice and I visited several locations in Porirua Harbour and found a number of shells, including *Alcithoe arabica* typical form, *Zeacumantus lutulentus*, *Cominella adspersa*, *Cominella*

glandiformis, *Buccinulum linea*, *Amphibola crenata*, *Haminoea zelandiae*, *Cabestana spengleri*, *Sigapatella tenuis*, *Maoricolpus roseus roseus*, *Atrina zelandica*, *Talochlamys zelandiae*, *Peronaea gaimardi* and *Macomona liliana*. Perhaps the most fun we had was finding a way to locate the live *Alcithoe arabica* when they were buried in sand and not making trails. Unfortunately, many of the shells in Porirua Harbour have a dark brown (iron?) staining, which makes them less attractive and more difficult to clean. However, this is the only place where we found *Haminoea zelandiae*, a most delicate and attractive shell, since they were generally spared the brown staining.

The Kapiti Coast is another rich shell collecting area. In addition to some of the shells previously mentioned, Alice and I found many different shells along the Kapiti Coast, especially during a good "wash-up" at Paraparaumu and/or Waikanae Beach. When the weather was nice, walking the beach was so pleasant. There often were many people enjoying the beach, including kite surfers and sail cart racers. When the weather was fair to poor, there were relatively few other people on the beach. Then there was the afternoon that I was enjoying a good wash-up at Waikanae Beach. At first, the wind was 25-30kph coming from the Tasman Sea, but within just an hour or two, the wind had increased to 60-80kph. A few times I seriously thought that the wind might very well blow me over. On another occasion I tried to cross the relatively narrow "stream" that separates the beaches of Paraparaumu and Waikanae. Although the water is quite shallow on the Waikanae side, it is much deeper on the Paraparaumu side, as I learned when I sank into about one meter of cold water with my first step. Although I quickly climbed back out, that unpleasant surprise left me a bit cool during the rest of the afternoon's shell collecting.

Kapiti Coast Shells



Top row, left to right: *Alcithoe arabica*, typical form (Gmelin, 1791) (2) {actually from Porirua Harbour}, *Alcithoe arabica* f. *swainsoni* Marwick, 1926 (3), *Alcithoe fusus fusus* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1833), *Semicassis pyrum* (Lamarck, 1822) (4), *Struthiolaria papulosa* (Martyn, 1784) (2). **Second row:** *Calliostoma selectum* (Dillwyn, 1817) (2), *Calliostoma punctulatum* (Martyn, 1774) (2), *Calliostoma pellucidum* (Valencienne, 1846) (2), *Calliostoma waikanae* Oliver, 1926 (2), *Astraea heliotropium* (Martyn, 1874) (2), *Austrofusus glans* (Roding, 1798) (2), *Amalda mucronata* (Sowerby, 1830) (2), *Amalda australis* (Sowerby, 1830) (2), *Amphibola crenata* (Gmelin, 1791) (2), *Tanea zelandica* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1832) (2), *Maoricrypta monoxylla* (Lesson, 1830) (2), *Dicathais orbita* (Gmelin, 1791), *Pellicaria vermis vermis* (Martyn, 1774). **Third row:** *Maetra purchisoni* Deshayes, 1854, *Maetra discors* Gray, 1837 (2), *Resania lanceolata* Gray, 1853, *Gari lineolata* (Gray, 1835) (2), *Peronaea gaimardi* Iredale, 1915 (2). **Fourth row:** *Dosinia anus* (Philippi, 1848) (2), *Soletellina nitida* (Gray, 1843) (2), *Divalucina cumingi* (Adams & Angas, 1864) (2), *Circomphalus yatei* (Gray, 1835) (2), *Paphies subtriangulata* (Wood, 1828) (2), *Crassula aequilatera* (Reeve, 1854) (2).

In late August Alice joined Wellington Shell Club members Jenny Raven and Pat Lakeman for a day trip to the South Island. They took a short flight to Blenheim, rented a car and spent several hours collecting the low tide at Marfells Beach, which is on the east coast. Alice found a number of shells, many of which were new for us at the time, although their condition was only good to fair.

Marfells Beach Shells

Top row, left to right: *Calliostoma tigris* (Gmelin, 1791), *Modelia granosa* (Martyn, 1784), *Argobuccinum pustulosum tumidum* (Dunker, 1862), *Haliotis iris* Gmelin, 1791. **Second row:** *Cabestana spengleri* (Perry, 1811), *Penion sulcatus* (Lamarck, 1816), *Cookia sulcata* (Lightfoot, 1786), *Haliotis virginea virginea* Gmelin, 1791. **Third row:** *Cellana flava* (Hutton, 1873), *Irus elegans* (Deshayes, 1854), *Irus reflexus* (Gray, 1843), *Barnea similis* (Gray, 1835).



In September the Wellington area weather started to become nicer. During the middle of the month, Alice and I took a four-day weekend and drove to Auckland to do some sight seeing, attend the Auckland Shell Club auction and hopefully, collect some seashells. We left after work on a Thursday and spent our first night in Taupo. Friday morning we visited Rotorua and Te Puia, a center of Māori culture and geothermal activity. This was an interesting and most enjoyable experience. During the welcoming ceremony I became an honorary chief, which apparently has had no lasting effect on my status in our family.

Through Wellington Shell Club members Alice and I were introduced to some of the Auckland Shell Club members and spent two lovely nights at the home of Heather Smith, a delightful lady, internationally known for her prize winning shell exhibits. At the auction, our host and I ended up bidding on the same lot of shells, which was the cause for some amusement and significantly increased the price of the winning bid. Afterwards, we worked things out so that she obtained the one rare shell that she wanted, and I took the rest. If only we could have known beforehand what each of us really wanted, we could have gotten the entire lot for about half the price. Such is the nature of an auction.

On our way back to Wellington, Alice and I drove along the Bay of Plenty and collected shells during two morning low tides. At Waihi Beach we found

numerous *Boreoscala zelebori*, *Zethalia zelandica* and *Maoricolpus roseus* with a few *Epitonium jukesianum* and *Zeacolpus pagoda pagoda*. At Ohope Beach we found *Struthiolaria papulosa*, *Austrofusus glans*, *Alcithoe arabica f. swainsoni*, and *Maoricrypta costata*. In addition, we found one dead *Poirieria zelandica* at the high tide line. Although this murex was relatively small (3.5 cm), it was in excellent condition and still contained the dead animal with its operculum. Since Muricidae is one of our favorite shell families, we were most pleased to find this endemic muricid in such good condition. We spent the night at a beachfront hotel with an amazing view of the ocean from our second floor living room. We enjoyed an excellent dinner at a nearby café. Our first real excursion in New Zealand was a most delightful experience.

In mid October the Wellington Shell Club had an auction, which was a lot of fun. In addition to winning a few lots of shells, Alice and I were able to trade/sell some of the shells that we had brought with us from the United States. Thanks to the assistance of Selwyn Bracegirdle, we included in the auction the largest shell that we had brought with us from the U.S., a 17-18 inch (43-46 cm) *Triplofusus giganteus*. We then used the money to pay for some of the shells that we had “won” in the auction.

The next day Alice and I drove to Hawkes Bay and spent the night at Mahia Beach, which is at the upper end of the Mahia Peninsula. We stayed

with more gracious friends of the Wellington Shell Club, Bill and Cath Shortt. Bill enjoys living close to the ocean and collects paper nautilus (*Argonauta nodosa and argo*), when he is not trapping crayfish or catching gurnard. After rising early to collect the crayfish in Bill’s traps, Alice and I spent most of the day collecting shells along Mahia and Oraka Beaches. We found a number of new (for us) shells, including *Semicassis labiata*, *Muricopsis octogonus*, *Paratrophon quoyi* and *Offadesma angasi*. Before we left, Bill Shortt generously gave us a nice, large *Tonna cerevisina* from a 2004 wash-up in Tolaga Bay, which is north of Gisborne.

After enjoying a pleasant dinner and hotel room in Gisborne, Alice and I drove the following day to Ohope Beach, via the Waihoek Gorge. What a scenic route with thousands of giant tree ferns along the way! We arrived at Ohope Beach for the low tide. At the western end of the beach, we waded into the water and collected on rocks some nice, large *Dicathais orbita* eating the many *Perna canaliculus*. We found some dead, crabbed *Poirieria zelandica* and one live *Buccinum vittatum vittatum* among the rocks. We also spent some time at Coastlands (Whakatane) Beach, where we found numerous, relatively small *Struthiolaria papulosa* as well as *Alcithoe arabica*, *Cominella adspersa* and *Pellicaria vermis vermis*. A few of the small, but fully mature *Struthiolaria papulosa* were actually smaller than the largest *Pellicaria vermis vermis*.

Shells from the Bay of Plenty and Mahia peninsula

Top row, left to right (BAY OF PLENTY): *Zethalia zelandica* (Hombron & Jacquinot, 1855) (8), *Maoricolpus roseus roseus* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1834) (5), *Boreoscala zelebori* (Dunker, 1866) (8), *Poirieria zelandica* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1833), *Maoricrypta costata* (Sowerby, 1824) (3), *Dicathais orbita* (Gmelin, 1791) (2), *Pellicaria vermis vermis* (Martyn, 1784) (2), *Struthiolaria papulosa* (Martyn, 1784) (2). **Second row:** *Alcithoe arabica f. swainsoni* Marwick, 1926 (2) and *Cominella adpersa* (Bruguere, 1789) (2). **(MAHIA PENINSULA):** *Semicassis labiata* (Perry, 1811) (2), *Semicassis pyrum* (Lamarck, 1822) (2), *Calliostoma pellucidum* (Valencienne, 1846), *Calliostoma tigris* (Gmelin, 1791), *Cookia sulcata* (Lightfoot, 1786) (2). **Third row:** *Penion sulcatus* (Lamarck, 1816) (2), *Muricopsis octogonus* (Quoy



& Gaimard, 1833), *Paratrophon quoyi* (Reeve, 1846), *Amalda mucronata* (Sowerby, 1830), *Cellana flava* (Hutton, 1873) (4), *Offadesma angasi* (Crosse & Fischer, 1864), *Divalucina cumingi* (Adams & Angas, 1864), *Solemya parkinsonii* E.A. Smith, 1874.

At the end of the week Alice and I flew with Kris and Roger Woods on an Air New Zealand flight from Wellington to Nelson. We spent two full days experiencing the beautiful scenery of the Marlborough Sounds while we enjoyed the bucolic setting of Cissy Bay and the productive dredging of Kevin Mead. From 25-35 meters depth, we (Kevin) dredged up a number of interesting shells, which the rest of us found by searching through the dredgings on the back of Kevin's boat.

These shells included gastropods, bivalves and one Scaphopoda, *Antalis nana*. Of note, the *Austrofusus* glans were slightly larger than those found on the Kapiti coast and the Bay of Plenty. Although similar in size, the *Pellicaria vermis vermis* (and some other shells) had a thinner shell wall than those we found dead, intertidally along the Kapiti coast, the Bay of Plenty and the Auckland beaches. During brief intertidal collecting we also found *Phenatoma rosea* (a gift from Kris

Woods), *Corbula zelandica*, *Diloma bicanaliculata* and *Gari stangeri*. In addition, Kevin gave us some small, bright blue *Haliotis iris* obtained from mariculture. Could the bright blue color be due to its diet? The meat from the *Pecten novaezelandiae* sure made a nice appetizer for dinner. Many thanks to Kevin, Yvonne and John! Many thanks also to Kris and Roger for planning the trip and for being such pleasant traveling companions.



Cissy Bay, from an overlook



The four intrepid dredgers and our guide, Kevin

Shells from Cissy Bay, Marlborough Sounds

Top row, left to right: *Alcithoe arabica*, typical form (Gmelin, 1791) (2), *Alcithoe fusus* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1833), *Austrofusus glans* (Roding, 1798) (2), *Pellicaria vermis vermis* (Martyn, 1784) (3), *Struthiolaria papulosa* (Martyn, 1784) (2). **Second row:** *Amalda mucronata* (Sowerby, 1830) (2), *Aeneator otagoensis* Finlay, 1930 (2), *Poirieria zelandica* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1833) (2), *Haliotis iris* Gmelin, 1791 (2), *Sigapetalla tenuis* (Gray, 1867) (3), *Phenatoma rosea* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1833), *Diloma bicanaliculata* (Dunker, 1844) (3), *Pleuromeris zelandica* (Deshayes, 1854), *Nucula species*, *Antalis nana* (Hutton, 1873), *Corbula zelandica* Quoy & Gaimard, 1835 (2). **Third row:** *Talochlamys gemmulata* (Reeve, 1853) (3), *Pratulium pulchellum* (Gray, 1843) (3), *Notocallista multistriata*



(Sowerby, 1851) (3), *Limaria orientalis* (Adams & Reeve, 1850) (3), *Gari stangeri* (Gray, 1843) (3), *Pecten novaezelandiae* Reeve, 1853 (2).

The October meeting of the Wellington Shell Club was held at the Te Papa Museum, which has the New Zealand national collection of Mollusca. It was a pleasure to see the huge collection of NZ endemic shells, many of which we had not been able to collect and had only seen as pictures or not at all. In addition, we met Bruce Marshall, the resident malacologist and collection manager of Mollusca. Bruce was most gracious and patient with our small group of interested shell collectors, as we looked through much of the museum's collection. In October Alice and I also had the pleasure of meeting Alan Beu, who is a paleontologist and a malacologist with an interest in the family Ranellidae. One afternoon we enjoyed seeing his mollusc collection at the Gracefield Research Centre, Institute of Geological & Nuclear Sciences in Lower Hutt.

As our time in New Zealand was coming to an end, Alice and I began to organize our large collection of New Zealand shells. We spent many long hours cleaning shells, sorting shells, identifying shells, packing shells and giving shells away. As we found more

and more shells, many of the ones that we had collected earlier no longer seemed quite as nice. In addition, it was also important to obtain any necessary shell identification assistance prior to leaving New Zealand, since the local experts would not be available to us back in the U.S.

As a "final fling", Alice and I spent most of our last two weeks in New Zealand on a shell collecting and sightseeing trip to northland with two other Wellington Shell Club members, Jenny Raven and Carolyn Krebs. On our drive north we made a brief stop in Auckland where we found some nice *Pellicaria vermis vermis*, *Purpurocardia purpurata*, *Felaniella zelandica*, *Saccostrea glomerata glomerata* and *Dosinia maoriana* along Herne Bay ex Pakiri Beach dredgings. We then drove north to Russell and spent the next ten days shell collecting in the Bay of Islands, Bland Bay, Karikari Peninsula, Aupouri Peninsula and many other places along the way.

Even though it was now mid November, the water in the far north was still too cold for us to do any snorkeling, even with wet suits.

Despite this disappointment, it was a sheer delight to wake up each morning and spend many hours with friends collecting intertidal shells at new locations, almost always finding at least a few different species of shells. At Waitangi we found many small shells in the beach drift, including *Xymene traversi*, *Xymene plebeius*, *Muricopsis mariae*, *Paratrophon quoyi*, *Buccinulum robustum*, *Buccinulum vittatum vittatum*, *Eatoniella flammulata*, *Trichosirus inornatus*, *Stephopoma rosea*, *Taron dubius*, *Micrelenchus dilatatus*, *Micrelenchus sanguineus*, *Neoguraleus sinclairi*, *Neoguraleus lyallensis* and *Rissoina chathamensis*. At Bland Bay we found *Muricopsis octogonus*, *Cellana stellifera*, *Nerita melanotragus*, *Trivia merces*, *Amalda northlandica*, *Mitra carbonaria* (a gift from Jenny Raven), *Haliotis virginea crispata*, *Cominella quoyana quoyana*, *Buccinulum pallidum powelli*, *Bulla quoyii*, *Bulla angasi*, *Notocochlis migratoria* and *Barbatia novaezealandiae*. At Little Taupiri Bay we found some interesting small shells in the beachdrift, including *Mesoginella pygmaea*, *Volvarina mustelina* and *Austromitra rubiginosa*.

In Russell, Alice and I celebrated our 31st wedding anniversary at a nice restaurant with our two good shelling friends. I modestly pointed out to Alice that there were not many husbands who would take their wives half way around the world to celebrate their wedding anniversary, but she was not as impressed as I had hoped. I'm not sure what I will ever be able to do to top that.

After Russell, our group of four shellers stayed several days at a bach adjacent to the home of Bob and Betty Grange, which is on the Aupouri Peninsula, near Pukenui. What a delightful and generous couple! Bob and Betty have an extensive shell collection and many entertaining stories. From their bach, we took day trips to Cape Reinga, Spirits Bay, Parengarenga Harbour, Paxton Point, Kaimaumau and Ninety Mile Beach.

In Parengarenga Harbour we found on intertidal sand/grass many *Cymatium parthenopeum*, which appeared just after the turn of the tide. We also found *Cabestana spengleri*, *Ranella australasia* and more *Charonia lampas* on the rocks. While walking on the intertidal sand flats, I met a young Māori man who was out looking for

octopus for dinner. When he finally spotted a big one under a ledge, he invited me to come over and see it. Although I could not see the octopus under the ledge, I was fairly close when he quickly grabbed the octopus with his bare hand and pulled it from its lair. During the few seconds before it was dead, the octopus sprayed purple ink on everything close. My T-shirt still shows the now faded purple spots.

At the east end of Spirits Bay, we found a number of *Alcithoe arabica f. depressa*. On the small island we found in the piles of beachdrift many small shells, including *Mesoginella vailei*, *Micrelenchus rufozonus*, *Pervicacia tristis*, *Xymene traversi* and *Boreoscala zelebori*. At Paxton Point, we climbed over many, large boulders and found a number of nice shells, including *Buccinulum vittatum vittatum*, *Xymene ambiguus*, *Poirieria zelandica*, *Amalda australis* and *Boreoscala zelebori*. Despite finding many interesting shells, we found no species, new for us. At Kaimaumau we found some nice *Maoricrypta costata*, *Calliostoma punctulatum*, *Solemya parkinsonii* and *Glycymeris modesta*. Each shelling location was fun and interesting with a different group of shells. The weather was nice, and the scenery was gorgeous.

The evening prior to leaving Bob & Betty's place, the six of us enjoyed a nice dinner together. Alice and I received several very generous shell gifts from Bob & Betty Grange, including a very nice *Semicassis royana*, a deep water shell (150 meters) that comes from north of Cape Reinga. Although *Calliostoma tigris* is reported to be on intertidal rocks in Parengarenga Harbour, we did not find any specimens. So Bob & Betty gave us a nice specimen. In addition, they gave us two *Adelphotectonica reevei* from Paxton Point, another shell that we did not find, despite carefully searching this area, which is a known location for this shell.

At the end of our northland trip, we spent a day collecting along the beaches of the Karikari Peninsula. We found a number of additional shells, including hundreds of *Zenatia acinaces* and many *Boreoscala zelebori*. In addition, we found some *Cookia sulcata* in excellent condition in a relatively protected habitat. We even found several new (for us) species, including *Pupa kirki*, *Aoteadrilla rawitensis* and *Epitonium tenellum*. Early the following morning we started our 1000 km drive back to Eastbourne followed by 2-3 days to prepare for our trip back to the U.S.

Shells from Northland Trip

Top row, left to right: *Charonia lampas* (Linnaeus, 1758) (2), *Ranella australasia* (Perry, 1811) (2), *Cymatium parthenopeum* (von Salis, 1793) (2), *Cabestana spengleri* (Perry, 1811).

Second row: *Alcithoe arabica f. depressa* Suter, 1908 (2), *Dicathais orbita* (Gmelin, 1791) (2), *Muricopsis octogonus* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1833) (2), *Buccinulum pallidum powelli* Ponder, 1971, *Cominella quoyana quoyana* Adams, 1854 (2), *Bulla quoyii* Gray, 1843 (2), *Haliotis virginea crispata* Gould, 1847 (3), *Cellana stellifera* (Gmelin, 1791) (2), *Penion sulcatus* (Lamarck, 1816).

Third row: *Dosinia crebra* (Hutton, 1873) (2), *Purpurocardia purpurata* (Deshayes, 1854) (2), *Glycymeris modesta* (Angas,



1879) (2), *Barbatia novaezealandiae* (Smith, 1915), *Trochus viridis* (Gmelin, 1791) (2), *Adelphotectonica reevei* (Hanley, 1862) (2), *Trivia mercus* (Iredale, 1924) (3), *Mitra carbonaria* Swainson, 1822, *Amalda northlandica* Hart, 1995 (5), *Pupa kirki* (Hutton, 1873), *Maoricrypta costata* (Sowerby, 1824) (2).

Shell Gifts, Trades and Auction Winnings

Top row, left to right: *Alcithoe fissurata fissurata* (Dell, 1963), *Alcithoe larochei larochei* Marwick, 1926, *Alcithoe larochei tigrina* Bail, Limpus & Terryn, 2005, *Alcithoe pseudolutea* Bail & Limpus, 2005 (2), *Alcithoe jaculoides* Powell, 1924 (2), *Provocator mirabilis* (Finlay, 1926) (2), *Alcithoe flemingi* Dell, 1978, *Alcithoe fusus hedleyi* Murdoch & Suter, 1906, *Alcithoe fusus haurakiensis* (Dell, 1956). **Second row:** *Calliostoma osbornei* Powell, 1926 (2), *Calliostoma blacki* (Powell, 1950), *Calliostoma foveauxanum* (Dell, 1950), *Calliostoma turneraum* (Powell, 1964), *Calliostoma tigris* (Gmelin, 1791), *Scutellastra kermadecensis* (Pilsbry, H.A., 1894), *Semicassis royana* (Iredale, 1914). **Third row:** *Modelia granosa* (Martyn, 1784), *Sigapatella terranovae* (Peile, 1924) (2), *Sigapatella superstes* Fleming, 1958 (2), *Poirieria zelandica* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1833), *Mitra carbonaria* Swainson, 1822, *Muricopsis octogonus* (Guoy & Gaimard, 1833), *Muricopsis scotti* Marshall & Burch,



2000, *Prototyphis eos* (Hutton, 1873). **Fourth row:** *Zygochlamys delicatula* (Hutton, 1873) (2), *Mesopeplum convexum* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1835) (2), *Talochlamys gemmulata* (Reeve, 1853) (4), *Anomia trigonopsis* Hutton, 1877.

Packing to fly home was an interesting experience. Although we had previously mailed back to the U.S. a few packages of shells, Alice and I quickly determined that we needed another duffel bag so that each of us would have three checked bags (max 32 Kg), as well as our carry-on bags. In addition to our clothes and the other personal items that we had used during our 5-6 month stay in New Zealand, we had many, many shells, which we estimated to be about 40 kilograms. Then there was the stainless steel dredge that I had purchased from Kevin Mead and Kev's Super Dredge of Cissy Bay. Most of the shells we packed in large, thick-walled Styrofoam containers, which we padded well with our clothes. Most fortunate for us, a Qantas overbooking problem required a last minute change in our airplane flights, which led to us flying home business class and each of us being

able to have three checked bags at no extra cost.

Alice and I arrived back home in America just prior to our Thanksgiving holiday. Although we had a few broken shells, most shells (99.9%) arrived in the same condition in which we had packed them. Since prior to leaving New Zealand, we could not completely clean many of our shells from our northland trip, we spent the first several months back home continuing to clean shells and enter them into our shell collection database. Each shell brought back fond memories of our wonderful time in New Zealand. Since arriving back in the U.S. we have had the opportunity to show our New Zealand shells to a number of fellow shell collectors. The most common question we receive is "How many shells did you bring back?" We really cannot answer that question because we never counted the individual shells and have

already given away and traded some of our New Zealand shells. Perhaps a better question to answer is "How many different molluscan species did we bring back?" Since we enter all our shells into our collection database, this is a question that is easier to answer. Including all the shell species that we found and all those that we received as gifts, trades and auction winnings, the total number of different molluscan species that we brought back from New Zealand is 215 and possibly a few more, since there are still a few small shells that we have yet to identify.

Alice and I certainly enjoyed our New Zealand shell collecting adventure. The friendly people, the beautiful country and the many, endemic seashells far exceeded our expectations.

Thanks to all who helped to make our time in New Zealand such a wonderful experience.

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