

# The Mystery of *Conus mozambicus*

By DIETER ROCKEL

DARMSTADT — One of the most complex of the *conus* species is *Conus mozambicus* Hwass in Bruguiere, 1792. It is due to the foresight of R. N. Kilburn of South Africa that a transparency of this species even exists today. Even so, identification by the average collector remains difficult.

Jerry Walls, in his recently published *Cone Shells*, uses the name *C. guineensis* Gmelin, 1791 for this shell. However, Dr. Alan J. Kohn who examined this taxon in 1966 came to the conclusion that *C. guineensis* was a *nomen dubium*. He said he was unable to "associate the diagnosis and characteristics of *C. guineensis* with any species of *conus*."

Gmelin referred the species to pictures in the works of Argenville and Chemnitz. Kohn noted the similarity of these pictures to *C. guinaicus* Hwass, but did not feel this could justify the establishment of a species with certainty. I have carefully studied the figures of Argenville and Chemnitz and fully agree with Kohn.

These figures have similarities with other species (*C. guinaicus* as well as *C. mozambicus*), but they lack the features necessary to constitute a new species.

(W. O. Cernohorsky in an analogous case took the view: "When the description is pitifully short and the figure is unrecognizable and the types are not extant, then the species should be treated as a dubious name.")

Thus, my conclusion is that we should forget *C. guineensis* and use *C. mozambicus*.

Walls distinguishes between two subspecies, *Conus guineensis guineensis* and *C. g. informis*. *C. g. guineensis* = *C. mozambicus*. But what about *C. informis*?

Again, I refer to Kohn, who accepted *C. informis* Hwass provisionally as a valid species (1968). Three years later, R. N. Kilburn published his "Revision of the littoral Conidae . . . of the Cape Province," after careful examination of the literature and the material in the South African museums. He recognized *C. informis* as the typical False Bay variation of *C. mozambicus*.

It seems sure that *C. informis* is a synonym of *C. mozambicus* and so is not available as a species name.

Kilburn indicated in the same article that there is in fact a subspecies of *C. mozambicus* which he called *C.*

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## Unusual *Terebra achates*

Two odd specimens of *Terebra achates* Weaver 1960 were collected by HMS member Roger Schmeltz from three meters of water at Midway Island. Above left is a normal specimen. The middle one is striped; Schmeltz thinks this was due to an injured mantle. The third is a blonde. All three were live collected at the same spot.

Incidentally, is anyone collecting shells at Midway since Schmeltz left? E.G.L.

*m. lautus* Reeve. He stressed that this name was given only provisionally to the shell, since the holotype of *C. lautus* in the British Museum, a faded beach shell, is in poor condition (Tomlin called it a miserable specimen). Nevertheless, since *C. m. mozambicus* and *C. m. lautus* are distinct and clear in shape and geographical range, the establishment of the subspecies seems quite correct.

I believe that Walls' figures of *C. g. guineensis* on page 352 represent a typical *C. m. mozambicus* and (lower left) a typical *C. m. lautus*. The three juvenile shells he figures could possibly be subspecies or *Conus tinianus*.

The variation of *Conus mozambicus* called *C. informis* by Hwass is not figured in Walls' book. Marsh & Ripplingale's *Cone Shells of the World* (1964) has it on plate 18, No. 11.

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