

RECORD SIZE, BUT IT STINKS

By PAUL F. PATCHICK, FGSA

MONTEREY BAY, CA — Being advanced collectors, all of you must know how to clean shells. You've read about Clorox, you buried shells in sand so that the bugs could eat out the insides, and you heed warnings not to boil seashells lest the color be affected adversely. But every so often a shell arrives that presents problems.

A case in point was a fabulous *Charonia saulae* (Reeve), the Japanese triton, that arrived from Taiwan. I unwrapped it with one hand while holding my nose with the other.

The operculum was carefully glued to a chunk of cotton. When I pulled out the rest of the cotton plug (there could be no doubt why it was put there!) I had to rush outside and deposit the shell on the terrace for the neighbors to enjoy. Even the bugs didn't want to go near it!

Later, after my head had cleared, I soaked the shell in good ol' Clorox. After a suitable period, I dunked it in clear water, let the faucet squirt into its innards, dried it out — and it still smelled! I repeated the Clorox and faucet-running-full-force routine, but it still stunk. It was like working with a skunk you want to keep as a pet.

The *Standard Catalog* (1982) did not list *C. saulae*, but Isenberg's *Seashells of the World* showed it to reach 250mm. Abbot & Dance's *Compendium* indicated 160mm. Rice's *Dealers' Prices* noted that there was a premium for *C. saulae* over 10 inches (about 250mm). Mine, a gigantic 317mm, had to be worth fumigating.

I put it in a great pot of water, put on the lid and slowly, slowly heated it. When it was steaming, I jettied hot water into the monster, holding it with forceps and a hot pad. Then I shook it violently. The water gushed out, dislodging great lumps of crud which I hastily pushed down the garbage disposal. I sprayed the kitchen with scented "Glade" and closed the door.

Even with all the cleaning, Cloroxing and shaking, the odor lingered.

Previously, I'd tried spraying perfume or cologne on the cotton I used to keep labels from falling out. But the chemicals tended to fade the ink.

(You see, each of my shells has a label with as much data as I can crowd on to it. Also, if the shell comes with a label — as from the Cate collection or some other famous source — I want to keep that, as well. My trick is first to push a wad of cotton into the aperture. Then I insert the folded labels. Finally I glue the operc to another plug of cotton.)

(The first plug assures I will later be able to retrieve the label. In the early days, I kept losing it inside the shell. Now I use the Patchick (patent pending) double-plug system.)

But back to my *C. saulae*. What to do about that lingering smell of Clorox and fetid meat?

My solution was the handy spray can of Johnson's Lemon Pledge ("Waxed Beauty Every Time You Dust"). I sprayed the inside of the shell, then the cotton, and finally the operculum, spreading the wax around with my finger. This did the trick!

I've bought two cases of the stuff.

BACK ISSUES

The Hawaiian Malacological Society maintains a modest stock of back issues of *Hawaiian Shell News*. Copies of most issues back to 1960 are available, although some are in xerox form. Write to the Society for information.

Some Baffling *Terebra* From West New Britain

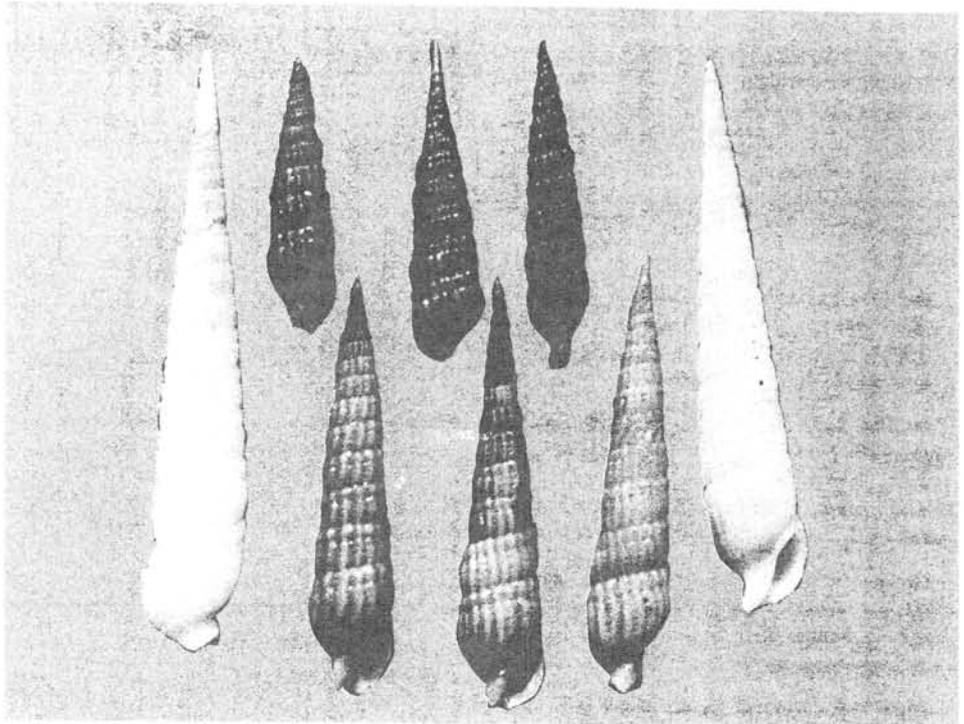


Photo: Richards

Examples of *Terebra exigua*, *T. roseata* and *T. textilis* from the Rabaul area of Papua New Guinea. The shiny all-white specimens (occasionally tinged with pink, especially near the apex) range in length from 26 to 46mm. The smaller shells, varying from fawn-brown through purple brown, pinkish purple and pink to all purple, measure 9 to 28mm.

By AURORA RICHARDS

KIMBE, P.N.G. — Personal observation of size and colour differences on a fairly large number and variety of specimens of *Terebra exigua* Deshayes, *T. roseata* Adams & Reeve, and *T. textilis* Hinds leads me to believe that *exigua* and *roseata* may only be juveniles of *textilis*.

The relevant literature tells us that Walter O. Cernohorsky considers *roseata* to be a synonym of *exigua*. To Georges Richards of Paris, however, *exigua* is a "form" of *textilis*. Both consider *textilis* to be rare.

Figured above are specimens of the three "species." But which is which?

Magnification shows the protoconchs to be identical in the smaller shells. Those of the larger white

specimens are more difficult to check, as they are eroded or broken.

Sculpture and axial ribbing are the same in all specimens, although the ribs vary in number, from 17 or 18 on the last whorl of one type, to 21 to 29 on the all-white specimens. Also the beading below the sutures is smoother in specimens with very close and finer ribbing.

The brownish and the pink or purple shells are generally found in small colonies in shallow (two meters plus) water of Rabaul Bay. Some, however, have been collected at scuba depths in thick volcanic sand.

The white specimens were all from scuba depths (30 meters or more). In the right season, these shells are not uncommon washed up on the beach.

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