

## Some Indo-Pacific Terebrids

Enrico Romagna - Manoja

There are about 150 species belonging to the **Terebridae** Family (**Superfamilia Conacea**), which is subdivided into four Genera, conchologically not very easy to separate but, anatomically, very well defined: **Terebra** BRUGUIERE, 1789 whose species are radula-less; **Duplicaria** DALL, 1908 and **Hastula** H. & A. ADAMS, 1853 the species of which have a radula composed of rows of a single pair of teeth only (the species belonging to **Hastula** are, furthermore, generally much smaller); and **Impages** E. A. SMITH, 1873 with a radula which is very much like those of the other **Conacea** members.

**Terebridae** are carnivorous and photophobic (scared of light) mollusks; they spend most of the day in fact, deeply buried in the sand between the coral reefs they usually dwell in, and which they only leave when they go night-hunting. Together with **Volutes**, **Terebras** are the most fierce predators of the coral reefs. Masses can be collected at dusk, if one follows the deep tracks they leave on the sand when their timidity makes room for their careless hunter's instinct or, during the day, with dredges made of deep rakes.

The animals' restless foot is extremely small when compared to the mass of the mollusk whose soft parts reach up to the very distant apex (thus causing not a few problems in cleaning); their operculum is ovoidal with a more or less prominent, slightly hook-shaped appendix at the anterior end, and auburn-brownish in color.

### **Terebra affinis** GRAY, 1834

Among the most common, small Indo-Pacific species and probably among the less noticeable ones because of the not so slen-

der and elegant shape of the shell. Average height from 20 to 60 mm. Characterized by its numerous, curved, axial ribs which darker and finely punctate interstices like the subsutural groove (even though in a less evident way). The closer one gets to the last whorl, the more obsolete does the sculpture become. The ornamentation is longitudinal, brownish-orange patches on a whitish and cream background. There are often one or more pale brown lines towards the base of the shell. The opening is white, shaded with cream or hazel-nut. The outside ornamentation may be seen through the transparent wall of the outer lip. Wide Indo-Pacific range (the specimens in the photograph were dredged off Cairns, North Queensland, Australia).

### **Terebra chlorata** LAMARCK, 1822

An uncommon **Terebra** that may reach 80 mm in height. The first whorls are very slightly ribbed whereas the last ones are completely smooth. At about one third of each whorl, from the suture, there is a shallow subsutural groove which is noticeable especially because the light, axial growth striae which ornate the whole surface of the shell, change direction when crossing the groove, thus forming a more or less evident, «S»-shaped figure. The color is unmistakable and consists of two bands of patches, below and above the subsutural groove: the superior one is more evident and is formed by rectangular blotches, whereas the inferior one is not as distinct, especially in the first whorls, and has roundish spots instead; from the patches of the inferior band start irregular tails of a paler brownish color which touch the suture of the whorl below. The spots of the bands are purplish-brown whereas the infra-sutural lines and the paler bands on the base of the last whorl are light hazel-nut. The background is creamy-white or pinkish-yellow. The operculum is drop shape.

### **Terebra monilis** QUOY & GAIMARD, 1832

There is a taxonomical controversy for one of the prettiest species of the Genus: as Dr. CERNOHORSKY points out in the first volume of his « Marine Shells of the Pacific » (page 204), QUOY & GAIMARD's taxon had been used before and will have to be substituted. Waiting for its new name (there would be masses of appropriate ones such as, for instance, **filigrana** for the white rosary between the suture and the subsutural groove, or **exilissima** for the delicacy of its shape and the tenderness of its colors, or **magnifica** for its elegant beauty, **aurora** for the golden shade of the entire shell), this common member of the **Terebridae** Family, sticks to its old and well-chosen taxon: this little jewel in fact (**monilis** means jewel) the size of which varies from 25 to 32 mm. in height, does not risk being confused with any other **Terebra** because of its characteristic rosary of white, quadrangular nodules, separated by narrow golden-auburn interstices, which runs along the suture and the light but deep subsutural groove. There are two not so evident grooves below the latter, which divide into three equal parts the whole of the whorl. The columella is extremely crooked and paler in color than the rest of the shell: a tender mixture of orange, gold and auburn which also colors the aperture. The outer lip is thin and fragile. The first whorls are purplish-pink.

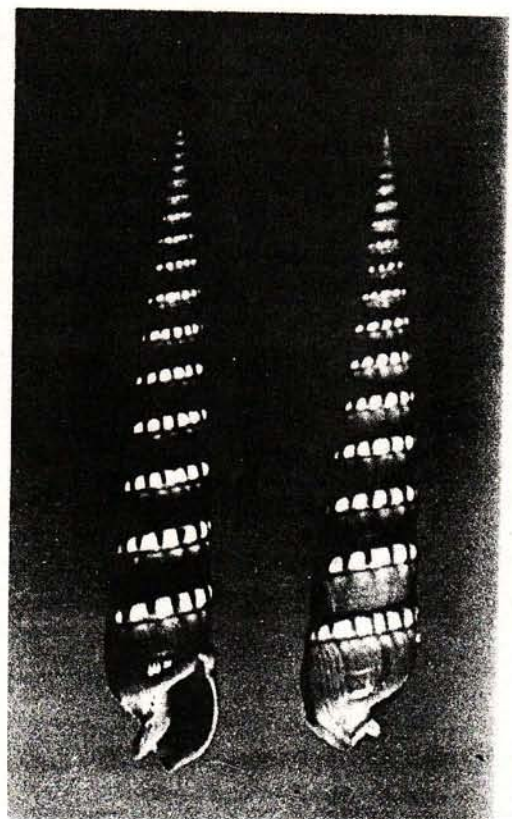
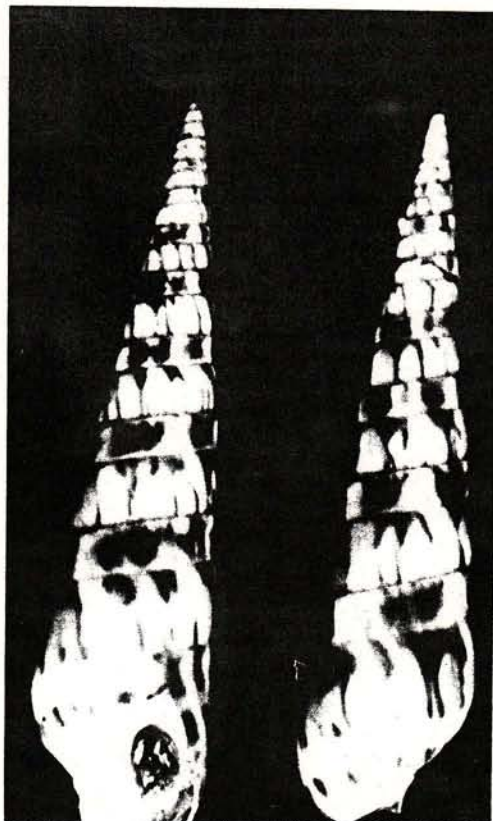
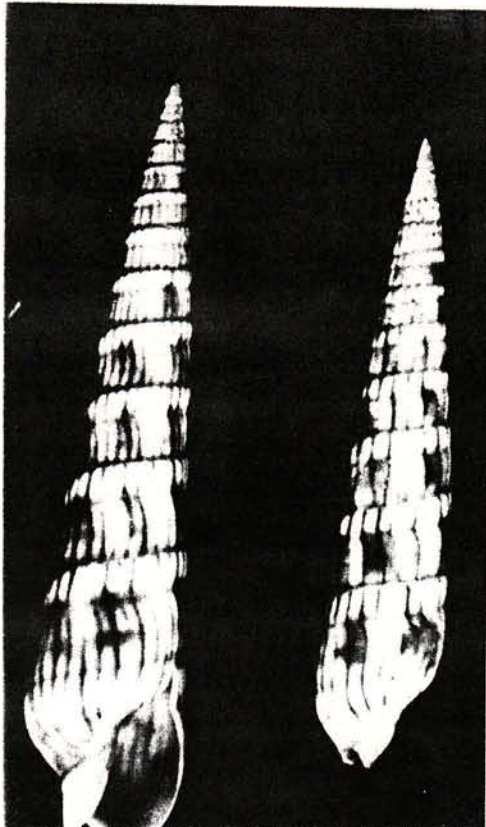
### **Terebra areolata** (LINK, 1807)

One of the better-known species, even if it is not always very easy to find, **T. areolata** is one of the largest **Terebras** as it may reach up to 125 mm in height. There are about twenty whorls, unmistakably ornated by three rows of squarish blotches, the lower are largest, whereas, on the last whorl, the rows become four with an extra basal one. The early whorls lack markings. The background color is cream or beige; the

**T. affinis**

**T. chlorata**

**T. monilis**



olumella is whitish. Below each suture is a remarkable carina which is more evident in the first whorls and which divides the surface of each whorl into two distinct parts: a smaller one, below the suture, which is slightly concave and with the superior part of the S-shaped figures formed by the crossing of the growth striae and the carina; and a larger one, between the carina and the suture below, convex and with the inferior part of the « S »; the difference among the two areas may be noticed only by touching the sides of the shell with one's fingers; the change of level from one zone to the other becomes, then, very evident. Moderately common in the tropical Indo-Pacific.

**Terebra textilis** HINDS, 1844

Another tropical Pacific **Terebra**, quite similar to a few other species even though more common. Because the habitat of these species is mostly the same (coral sand between the reefs), identification of the shells is not always very easy, as one has to base oneself mostly on the morphological characteristics of the shell (the anatomical study of the soft parts can in fact be done only by adequately-equipped labs) and, moreover, these characteristics often differ almost unnoticeably. The height of **T. textilis** varies from about 25 to 37 mm. There are from 6 to 22 axial ribs which are paler than the creamy-brown background, often darker in the interstices and are rather strong, whereas the spiral striae (6 to 16) are not so deep that they give a cancellate aspect to the shell, as is the case in other species. The subsutural groove is deep and punctate.

**Hastula strigilata** (LINN., 1758)

As already mentioned at the beginning, the genus **Hastula** is easily recognizable because of the smaller size of its shells (rarely over

35 mm in height), because of the slightly more tapering shape and the more striking ornamentation (color and sculpture). Among the prettiest and most uncommon species is **H. strigilata** (their rareness is due to the fact that their size allows them to squeeze out of the dredge, which is the only means of catching them as they spend most of the day deeply buried in the coral sand of the reefs they dwell in). Even though it risks being confused with similar species such as **H. lauta** and **H. stylata**, this species is remarkable mainly because of its sculpture of many axial, almost flat ribs (which are very strong in **lauta** and practically obsolete in **stylata**). The three species have in common a pre-sutural white band ornated by dark black brown spots of a rhomboidal shape; this band, however, can be absent as is the case of the shell in the photograph and when this happens, there are only the spots left, this time below the suture. The same can be said for the white band on the shoulder of the last whorl's base, which is also absent in this specimen. The background color is bright grey or olive-green with darker zones towards the last whorl and the first ones, which are brown. There are no striate interstices. In the specimen in the photograph, where the last whorl's band and the pre-sutural one were supposed to be, the area is much darker than the rest of the shell. Average size about 20 to 30 mm in height.

**Hastula albula** (MENKE, 1843)

An extremely variable species (a fact which is proved by the long list of synonyms: **casta**, **bipartita**, **philippiana**, **melior**, **mediapacifica**, **natalensis** etc.) even though it is quite easy to identify. White or cream background, streaked in a more or less evident way with small spots or yellowish and red flammulae, with often a band of tiny orange-brown dots (the same color as the embryonal whorls),



**T. areolata**

where the 18 to 25 axial ribs stop (at about one third of the whorl's height), to give space to a totally smooth or slightly wrinkled surface. The size of **H. albula** is only a bit smaller than the former species: maximum height about 26 mm. Rather uncommon, this species has a wider distribution, which extends also to the tropical part of the Indo-Pacific and which probably accounts for the long list of synonyms, due to the description under different names of the same shell, found in various localities.

**T. strigata**

**T. textilis**

**T. albula**

