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Terebra trochlea Lost and Found

By OLIVE SCHOENBERG

A terebrid seldom seen in collections is *Terebra trochlea* Deshayes. Twila Bratcher, writing in *The Veliger*, Vol. II, No. 4, says, "In 1857 Deshayes described a singular and beautiful species of *Terebra* (*T. trochlea*). The type locality was Zanzibar.

Subsequently, several other authors listed this shell but no new finds were reported. For almost a hundred years *trochlea* disappeared from literature (and collections).

Then, in 1967, Cliff Weaver of Honolulu, the former editor of *Hawaiian Shell News*, received one from Richard Sixberry. He had found it at Nukuhiva in the Marquesas.

At the American Malacological Union convention in Corpus Cristi in 1968, a paper was presented by Dr. Harald Rehder, of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. One of the slides shown in conjunction with his paper was of what looked like the Deshayes holotype, but it was unidentified. It, too, had been collected at Nukuhiva by the same man who had sent Cliff his shell.

In 1970 I was on Bora Bora in Tahiti. A lady gave me a strange terebra that she said had come from the Marquesas. I had never seen one like it and hadn't ever come across a description of one. It looked a bit like a mixed-up *T. crenulata* or even an aberrant form of Hawaii's endemic *T. thaanumi*. I couldn't be bothered with identifying it then and put it in a box in the garage — a souvenir of Tahiti!

Several years later, while perusing some old *Veligers*, I came across Twila Bratcher's photographs of my Marquesan terebra. Comparing the photos with my shell proved it was a *trochlea*, and a beauty.

I sent it off to Twila, who confirmed it, saying she was glad to hear it came from the Marquesas. She thinks it is endemic there and that Deshayes' locality data were incorrect, as is sometimes the case in old literature. Shells were brought to Europe by sailors and traders from far-away places and much of the data was lost or mixed up.

Possibly there are more *trochlea* at Nukuhiva, but it is such a remote place and off the shell collectors' trail. . . .



Terebra trochlea

Photo: Schoenberg

Conchomania

The illness had been incubating for some time. The first symptoms had appeared as far back as June or July, when we were at the Tuamotu Islands. They reappeared in New Caledonia, on the little sandy islets of the Grand Lagoon, where we used to go for night mooring. At Surprise Island the attack had become quite definite. And the moment we landed on the beach of Huon Island there was no doubt about it. It was a plague. And we all had caught it.

CONCHOLOGY. Shell science. Rather, **conchomania.** The symptoms are oblivion of all that is not a shellfish, together with delirium, one-track verbal delirium. There is a consuming feverish condition, with exacerbation of the collecting instinct, accompanied by loss of appetite. There seems to be no antidote. It is one of those illnesses of which one has to say, "it must follow its course."

After a night of dreams (out loud) of spiralities, the patients awoke at daybreak, gobbled down their breakfast, leapt into the water or took to the boat, and in a very few minutes entered the typical state of feverish uncontrolled activity. They were to be seen combing the beach all day, neglecting their food. From time to time they would pick up a helical-shaped object. This they would gaze at rapturously for some moments before placing it carefully in a plastic receptacle.

Although they were stark naked and there was no shelter, the sun seemed to have no effect on them. The terrible dazzling light did not seem to affect their sight. They were apparently in a hypnotic state. But not merely did the acquisition of the shells which they constantly picked up not calm them at all; it seemed on the contrary to aggravate

their condition in a sort of geometrical progression towards some craving ultimately, no doubt, to possess all the shells in the world. . . . Yes, there was no doubt about it, we were badly caught.

When daylight waned, we were still crouching on the sand, marvelling at the trophies spread out before us; and the following days were spent in the same way. Day after day the waves continued depositing these dazzling jewels on the beach; alone on our desert island we seized on them. . . .

from *Moana Returns*, by Bernard Gorsky
 (Elek Books, London, 1959)