

Focus on Conchology

By RICHARD L. GOLDBERG

NEW YORK — The Conchologists of America, at their upcoming national meeting in San Francisco, are likely to get a sneak preview of a proposed television series called "Focus on Conchology." It is the product of more than a year of hard work involving members of the New York Shell Club and malacologists from many parts of the world.

It started as an idea more than a year ago, after a discussion with some fellow collectors. One of the few TV programming areas that have been neglected, we realized, is shell collecting — conchology. Having a background in the production of educational television programs, I felt the need acutely.

At first, my idea was to have a talk show, with an advanced collector, a shell dealer and a noted malacologist as guests. Four months later, with a line-up of guests, a date for taping and details arranged both in and out of the studio, D Day was just 48 hours away.

When I made the final confirming phone calls to Edward Neiburger, vice president of the Boston Malacological Club, Robert Janowsky, owner of the Mal de Mar shell shop, and Dr. Edward Petuch, at the University of Maryland, however, Petuch reported an urgent last-minute professional commitment he was unable to avoid.

In that moment of crisis it developed that Dr. R. Tucker Abbott and S. Peter Dance happened to be working on their forthcoming general identification book of worldwide shells at the Museum of Comparative Zoology in Cambridge, Mass. They would be coming to a New York Shell Club affair that very weekend.

Abbott, Dance and Dr. William Clench. Three of the biggest names in shells in the same place at the



Hastula hectica

Photo: Schoenberg

same time. What a coup!

The talk-show format went out the door and a documentary-style program began to unfold. On location with a portable minicam and field production equipment, two hours of successful interviewing was recorded.

Since then — in early April, 1981 — many hours of field segments have been shot, including a shell auction, a shell show, field collecting (shoreline, scuba, etc.) and shell collections. Other people interviewed include Janowsky of New York, A.J. (Tony) Gabelish from Western Australia, and a beginning collector from New York, Victor Stein. I was able to record on videotape their feelings on such things as collecting, how they got into shells, attitudes toward rare specimens, ecology and the future of shell collecting.

As I write this, I am taping cut-away shots and will be into post-production editing soon.

The biggest headache right now, however, is the question of future funding. The amount of support will determine whether there will be more programs in the "Focus on Conchology" series.

OBSERVATIONS

We were standing at the surf line on an almost deserted Maui (Hawaii) beach, at low tide, waiting for a terebrid. *Hastula (Impages) hectica* (Linne, 1758) has a way of appearing briefly as it rolls down the beach following a receding wave. If you are quick on your feet, you can often collect a few specimens.

A shelling man I had just met that morning asked me what I was doing, standing there like that.

"Hunting for *Terebra*," I replied.

He looked at me with doubt in his eyes.

"*Terebra* in the surf?" he snorted and walked off.

I knew the *hectica* were there, but now I had to prove it. All it took was a lot of patience and a fleet-footed grab at the rolling shell before the next wave crashed on the shore to bury it in foam and sand. After half an hour, triumphant and soaking wet, I was able to go back to where my doubting friend was soaking up sunshine and display the *Terebra* from the beach, alive and kicking.

Hectica adults are rugged beach tumbler. The juveniles remain offshore. Most adults have lost their spires in their violent habitat.

The species is widely distributed throughout the Western Indo-Pacific. A couple of years ago we collected some fine specimens near Phuket, southwestern Thailand, on the Andaman Sea.

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