

WHAT IS IT?

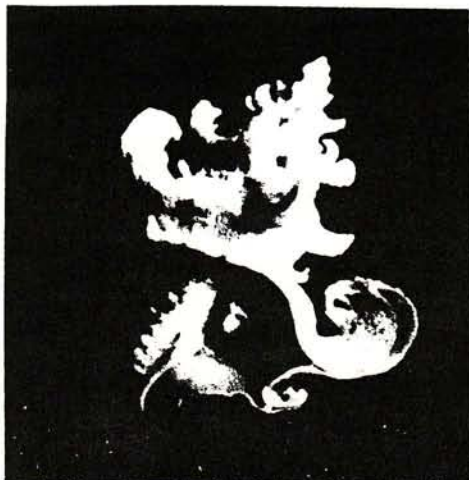


Photo: M. Saito

One's first reaction to the sight of *Latiaxis diadema* A. Adams (above) is liable to be, "There's no such animal."

But it's true. The species exists.

Photos of *L. diadema* are as rare as specimens. The shell figured here is in the personal collection of Minoru Saito of Tokyo, who submitted the picture. Data are sparse. The shell was found off Okinawa in 1974. It measures 40mm.

Clover's *Latiaxis Catalog* reports that *L. diadema* ranges from Southern Japan to the Philippines and usually is captured in nets set in 40 to 155 meters of water. Color is said to vary from light brown to flesh.

Latiaxis cristatus Kosuge is quite similar. S.L.

3 Rare Shells From the Western Pacific

By OLIVE SCHOENBERG

HSN Corresponding Editor Aurora Richards of Rabaul recently sent in a photo (right) of three unusual shells that had come into her collection. Unsure of their identity, she asked for help.

Her uncertainty is understandable. All three are relatively rare. Illustrations are not easy to find.

They are:

Terebra fortunei Deshayes, 1857 (left in photo)

This terebrid grows up to 80mm in length. It is characteristically white or yellow-white with a light brown band on the lower half of each whorl. Occasionally a rare one is found that is brown all over with a white band at the sutures. *T. fortunei* is found subtidally to 50 fathoms. The figured shell measures 82mm.

Terebra triseriata Gray, 1834 (right)

This extremely long narrow shell grows up to 100mm in length and only 7mm wide. Color overall ranges from fawn to chestnut brown. Very rarely, a pure white one is found. Moderately rare, the species lives in deep water and is brought up in nets and trawler hauls.

Tetraphora princeps (Sowerby, 1904) (center)

This uncommon species of the Triphoridae can easily be mistaken for a sinistral terebrid — which Mrs. Richards did when she obtained the specimen from Tawitawi Island in the Sulu Sea. Subsequently, the shell was identified as *T. princeps* by HSN Science Consultant W. O. Cernohorsky in New Zealand.

The figured specimen measures 63mm and has 41 whorls. It was bought from a fisherman who had no further data.

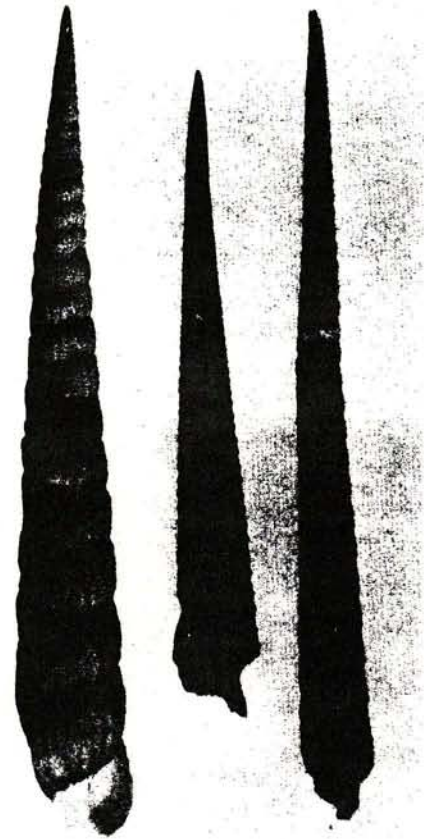
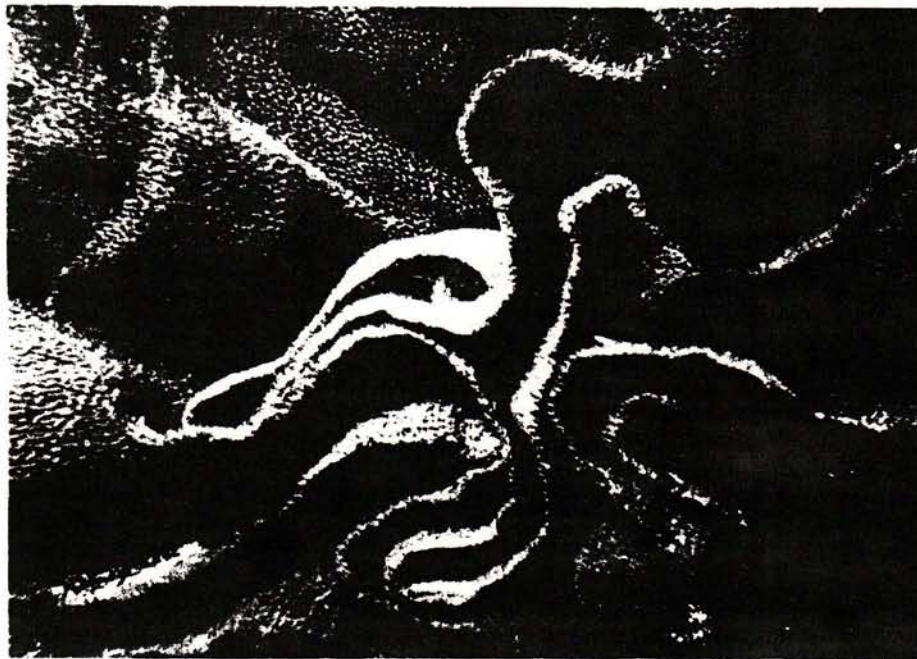


Photo: Schoenberg

Hexabranhus sanguineus egg mass

Photo: Earle



Flamenco Rose

Most shell divers have encountered the large dorid nudibranch, *Hexabranhus sanguineus*. This Indo-Pacific species hides by day amid coral rubble but, when disturbed, spreads its scarlet mantle like a cape and swims away in graceful undulating motions. Approximately, it is called the "Spanish dancer."

The name is doubly apt because the egg cluster of *Hexabranhus* (left) resembles a flamenco dancer's scarlet rose. Eggs are usually in plain sight on the reef, apparently immune from the depredations of such normal egg hunters as reef fish.

But everything in the sea seems to be food for some other creature. The canker in our aquatic rose is a small aeolid nudibranch, *Favorinus japonicus*. Usually, *F. japonicus* is scarce but this year it can be seen in fair numbers, munching egg masses.

Next time you encounter a *Hexabranhus* egg mass with a bedraggled last-rose-of-summer look, check it carefully for these small but well-fed nudibranchs and their own tiny white coiled egg clusters.

John Earle