

SPEAKING OF BOOKS:

OPISTHOBRANCH, AN OLD FRIEND, MAKES NEW DEBUT

PHOENIX — The *Opisthobranch Newsletter* was founded in 1969 by Steven J. Long and Richard A. Roller while attending a meeting of the Western Society of Malacologists at Asilomar, California. The publication recently has been reconstituted to appeal to all branches of malacology, with the somewhat handier name *Opisthobranch*.

The original intent was to provide a channel of timely communication among opisthobranch* workers around the world, who often were giving new species different names due to lack of information on what others were doing. There was as much as three years' delay in finding out (in Australia, for example) what was being published in (for instance) Brazil. Roller and I decided to cut the delay by distributing bibliographic citations on a monthly basis. It worked well.

"ON" provided a focal point in study of the opisthobranchs, allowing people in areas away from major research centers reasonable access to literature and information. Personal Notes, Current Events, a Reader Forum and Information Exchange, plus the bibliography, helped to keep all informed.

Now we are seeking to expand *Opisthobranch* (we have dropped the *Newsletter* bit) to cover all malacology, while providing the same contact among workers. Sally Bennett of Phoenix has replaced Roller, with the title of assistant editor. Dr. Hans Bertsch of San Diego is contributing editor.

We believe that all shellers can contribute to malacology if they are kept informed. Collecting data, specimens and ecological notes are all valuable. Most opisthobranch species descriptions these days are based on observations by amateurs as well as on professional data.

Each existing periodical has its own readers who seldom see other publications. We hope to keep in close touch with all the malacological and associated publications, including those with only occasional papers on molluscs, to provide information on what is happening in research.

I think there is plenty of room for *Opisthobranch*.

We intend to use color every month and — after we get sufficient subscribers and advertising — to run longer papers. But the primary aim remains to be an information source.

Steven J. Long

*To refresh the memory of non-experts, Opisthobranchia is a subclass of Gastropoda, the class which encompasses most of the univalves. Ed., HSN

THE SYSTEMATIC CLASSIFICATION OF THE CHITONS (MOLLUSCA: POLYPLACOPHORA). By Richard A. Van Belle. 1983. *Information* of the Belgian Malacological Society 11(1-3):1-178. 13 plates. No price indicated.

Reviewed By WALTER SAGE

Chiton collectors are doubtless aware of the earlier works of this author — *Catalogue of Living Chitons* by Kaas & Van Belle (1980) and *Catalogue of Fossil Chitons* by Van Belle (1981). His latest work is a revision of the same author's seven-part systematic classification which appeared in *Informations* from 1975 to 1978 and covered all fossil and Recent supraspecific taxa. Full references are given to each of these taxa, including author and date of publication.

The classification, to be usable by both paleontologists and those working on living chitons, is based on shell characters — the articulamentum, insertion plates, and slit pattern. Characteristics less important to this classification are termed "striking external characters," "secondary external characters" and "specific characters."

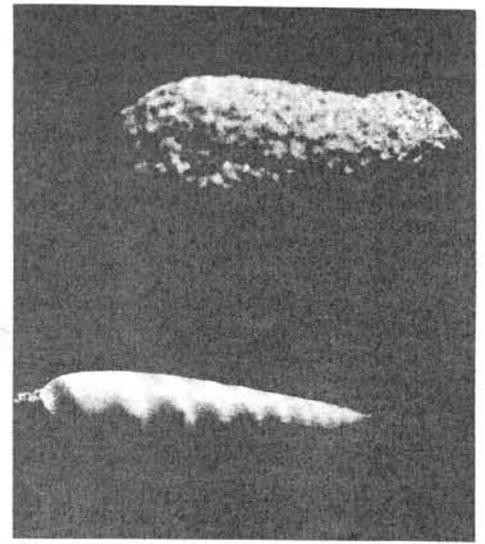
In addition to a short explanation of this classification, Van Belle provides a 19-page historical review of the literature of chiton classification from Linnaeus to his own work in 1978, and a 4-page synopsis of the classification, listing 2 orders, 5 suborders, 13 families, 15 subfamilies, 77 genera, and 43 subgenera.

The bulk of this paper is the systematic section, which discusses in detail each level listed in the synopsis. This 118-page treatment includes a listing of the type species of each genus and subgenus, the synonymy, original diagnosis, and geographical distribution for all taxa, and Van Belle's interpretation of each taxon with his comments where warranted. The index to taxa treated, 13 black-and-white plates illustrating a typical member of each genus and subgenus, and a short list of uncertain, rejected, and hypothetical taxa complete this paper.

This detailed compilation should prove invaluable to students of the Class Polyplacophora. With the two earlier papers, it should permit, as the author states, "any chiton student to find his way" through the names and papers for these molluscs, and hopefully identify and organize his collection. Copies of this paper can be obtained from Roland Houart, St. Jobsstraat, 8, B-3330 Landen (Ezemaal) Belgium.

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The Terebra Rolled in Sand



H. rufopunctata

Photo: Schoenberg

By OLIVE SCHOENBERG

Terebra live under the sand and come to the surface, usually at night to feed. Their trails in the sand give them away to predators, including man, who has learned to dig at either end of a trail for a shell.

At the extreme low tides we experienced last September in Broome, Western Australia, sand dwellers' habitats sometimes lie out of water. And if the low is of long enough duration, the sand gets dry, not only on the surface but down several inches. Very few fresh tracks are to be seen under these drying conditions. Only an occasional hermit crab in a shell draws a sand line or a bird etches its footprints here and there on the beach.

Nevertheless, at one beach I saw some lumps of sand lying about an inch from partially collapsed little holes. I dug into some of the holes but they were empty. Then, being curious, I fingered a lump. The dry, crusty sand fell off a hard thing inside. Rubbing the thing against my clothes, I found a shiny little terebrid (*Hastula rufopunctata* E. A. Smith) alive!

I picked up several more blobs of sand. They were the same. At least 25 such lumps were lying near holes in an area about the size of a two-car garage.

Why did these *rufopunctata* crawl out of their holes and cover themselves with sand? Other shells seen in similar habitats emerge from the sand glistening and clean, not covered with sand as though they had been rolling.

Maybe some shells are unable to dig deep enough to protect themselves from desiccation or predation and have devised this different way to wait out the low tides.

No, it couldn't have been an accident. All in the colony did the same thing. If I hadn't been curious, their little secret might never have been known — to me, at least.

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