

SEA BONES

NO. 1

A Conchological newsletter from the desk of Roy Aiken.

e-mail -- shells@molluscafrica.co.za

27 (0)82 900 1079

P.O.Box 13216

Northmead

1511

..... the ancient as well as recent Hawaiian elders used the “Conch” (possibly a Triton) to begin their religious ceremonies. They employed also, many other shells for healing purposes. The grand mothers in Hawaii have always referred to these waterborne gifts as “Sea Bones”.

1 - Our Annual General Meeting this year was a super affair, held once again at Uitsig Primary school in centurion, Pretoria. The Theme for exhibits was **“Whatever you can fit in a beer tray”**. This proved popular, with a healthy 23 trays on show! Winners were: Best overall exhibit – Jelle Lammers. Best artistic exhibit-Renata Kruyswijk. Other – Rina Matthee. Congratulations to all exhibitors for their effort on the day, and especially to our deserving winners. The new committee for the next term is:

President-Roy Aiken

Vice-president-Rina Matthee

Treasurer-Christelle Deysel

Secretary-Etrecia de Kock

Editor Strandloper-Alwyn Marais

Additional member- Maurice Evans

A fabulous meal was prepared by Christelle’s husband, Ed , who is to be thanked once again for this marvellous effort.

Our guest speaker, Anton Mauve, whose primary interest is cowries, regaled us with the story of his recent fascinating coastal journey, undertaken with his wife and two young daughters, from far Northern Kwazulu Natal, all the way to Cape town! It became apparent that he has a canny knack of finding good shelling beaches. Miles and miles of beachcombing resulted in a total of 2000 cowries found, representing in excess of 40 species. What struck home, was that with a bit of extra effort, there are still some good places to go shelling in South Africa!

2- Compliments have been received from far and wide as to the quality of recent Strandlopers, particularly the bulging 50 th Anniversary edition. The material presented was at least equal to two editions. Editor Alwyn Marais is to be congratulated once again on such a quality production purely in his private

capacity. The contribution of articles is the lifeblood of *The Strandloper*, and an appeal is made to all concerned for submission of such.

3- It is a reality that interest in hobbies, particularly in Southern Africa, is on the wane, with the average age of current members steadily increasing. This is a major challenge for many societies, the goal being to market our hobby through good channels by promoting the many benefits of Conchology.

4- A medical snippet –

Sea urchins don't have eyes, ears or a nose, but they have the genes humans have for vision, hearing and smell. They actually share more than 7000 genes with us. Scientists are currently using these prehistoric creatures to study and understand cancer, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and muscular dystrophy. Many of their Amino acid sequences are a perfect match for ours.

5- Sony Shootout – Aliwal shoal

An invitation to judge the Mollusc section of this competition proved educational, as one was exposed to the amazing life on our South Coast reef system. Pics were taken on Aliwal over a mere five day period, with a host of quality shots being entered. An encouraging twenty entries were submitted in the Shell category, up on last year. The top two entries were:

1 --- Two *Cypraea tigris*

2--- A superb shot of *Cypraea annulus* with its shell half covered in the awesome black and white zig-zag mantle.

It was special to be judging with Dennis King, well-known author of books on local fishes, in particular *More Reef Fishes* and *Nudibranchs*. The Nudibranch section is by Valda Fraser, whose marvellous photos appear in the *Strandloper* from time to time. These exquisite soft-bodied creatures can only be "collected" by photography, and Valda has become renowned for her work in this field. How many of you collectors out there are aware that Nudibranchs belong to the Phylum, Mollusca ?!

6- Valda's beautiful shot of a *Volva* on the cover of our 50 th Anniversary *Strandloper* has given rise to the debate as to whether it's a *V. volva* or a *V. kilburni* ?? Any comments from the ether would be of value.

Yours in shelling,

Roy Aiken