

# Shell Museum News

Number 52

[www.shellmuseum.org](http://www.shellmuseum.org)

Summer/ Fall 2003

## From the Director

Another summer has gone by, and as winter draws near it brings expectations and the prospect of coming seasonal activities and new achievements for the Shell Museum.

Museum attendance has been steady and slightly better than in 2002 but, perhaps due to a slow economy, contributions have not been as bountiful as during last year. To mitigate that hopefully temporary decline, the Museum board is planning a fund-raising event for the winter of 2004. The date and location will soon be arranged and we will invite you to join the party and once more help the Museum.

The Museum is taking a leading role in American shell science: Museum staff, in association with members of the Sanibel-Captiva Shell Club, are already preparing to host the 70th Annual Meeting of the American Malacological Society, between July 31 and Aug. 4, 2004. The event, to take place at Sundial Beach Resort on Sanibel Island, will bring together the membership of the society and other participants to discuss the most recent advances in the many aspects of the study of mollusks. Please check this newsletter and the meeting Web site ([www.shellmuseum.org/AMS/index.htm](http://www.shellmuseum.org/AMS/index.htm)) for more information on the subject.

The special Museum project "Seashells of Southwest Florida" is starting to include images of micromollusks. The project, which in its first phase encompasses the online publication of a guide to local shallow-water mollusks, now includes 155 species; this number should increase rapidly with the addition of small-size shells. The second phase of the project aims for the publication of a field guide in traditional book format containing the same color pictures as the Web site, but including expanded descriptions and data on habitat.

Despite a sharp and sudden rise in transportation costs,  
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## Dr. José H. Leal Assumes Presidency of AMS

Since the end of July, Museum director Dr. José H. Leal has been wearing yet another hat. That is when he assumed the presidency of the American Malacological Society.

AMS is a dynamic international society of about 250 organizations and individuals with an active interest in the study and conservation of mollusks. It covers a wide range of subjects in the field of molluscan studies, and its meetings, symposia, sessions, posters, and special events reflect that.

"I've been a member of AMS since 1983," explains Dr. Leal, "and I'm proud to have the opportunity to work more actively on its behalf. The American Malacological Society was instrumental in my early career as a malacologist, providing me with a wealth of information and connections."

Next year, the 70th Annual Meeting of the American Malacological Society will be held on



Museum director Dr. José H. Leal, current president of the American Malacological Society, taught a short course on scientific publishing at the 18th Brazilian Malacological Congress. It was held July 21-25 in Rio de Janeiro.

Photo: Sociedade Brasileira de Malacologia

Sanibel from July 30 to Aug. 4, with the Museum as the hosting institution. The meeting's main venue will be the Sundial Beach Resort, located on the eastern part of the island. Sundial is offering specially priced room rates for AMS meeting participants, which is of particular interest to students on a low budget.

As of this writing, the event's sponsors are AMS, the Museum, and the Sanibel-Captiva Shell Club, with additional support

from the Sanibel-Captiva Chamber of Commerce, Sundial Beach Resort, J. N.  
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the Museum is continuing to host student field trips from Lee County public schools. Group tour and education coordinator Anna Marie Nyquist diligently researched and negotiated for lower bus costs and public relations manager Libby Grimm wrote a series of successful grant proposals. Thanks to their combined effort and the new "Adopt-a-Class" campaign (please see page 3 of this newsletter), the Museum is able to still provide this environmental education program for our community.



José H. Leal, Ph.D.  
Director



The microgastropods *Alaba incerta* (left) and *Bittium varium* are new additions to the Southwest Florida Shells online guide ([www.shellmuseum.org/sanibel\\_shells.html](http://www.shellmuseum.org/sanibel_shells.html)).

Photos: José H. Leal



Renowned glass artist Lucas Century, a Sanibel resident, is making many new custom creations for the Museum store, such as this dazzling paperweight. Other items include bowls, vases, decanters, and a wide variety of drinking glasses.

Photo: José H. Leal

## Dr. José H. Leal Assumes Presidency of AMS...from page 1

"Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Florida Gulf Coast University, and Captiva Cruises.

Plans for the meeting include a symposium titled, "The Relationships of the Neogastropoda." It will be convened by M. G. Harasewych of the National Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian Institution.

Special sessions will include Biodiversity of Marine Mollusks (organized by Gustav Paulay, Florida Museum of Natural History); Coastal Molluscan Assemblages as Environmental Indicators (Michael Savarese, Aswany Voley, and Greg Tolley, Florida Gulf Coast University); Systematics of Freshwater Gastropods (Russel Minton, University of Louisiana at Monroe); Terrestrial Mollusks as Agricultural and Environmental Pests (David Robinson, United States Department of Agriculture/Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia), and Global Marine Bivalve Database Workshop (Gustav Paulay, Florida Museum of Natural History, Paul V. Scott, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History and Graham Oliver, National Museums & Galleries of Wales).

In addition, a special forum organized by Ken Hayes, Anna Bass, and Amy Wethington, all graduate students in malacology, will focus on and discuss common issues and problems facing soon-to-be professionals in the field.

The Sanibel-Captiva Shell



Sanibel Island's Sundial Beach Resort is the main venue for next summer's 70th Annual Meeting of the American Malacological Society.



Club will sponsor the Shell Museum Open House on Sunday, Aug. 1. The closing banquet will be a dinner-cruise aboard Captiva Cruises's Lady Chadwick, a two-deck vessel holding 250 passengers.

Three field trips are planned for the last day of the meeting, Wednesday, Aug. 4: A nature-watching visit to J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel, guided by professional ornithologist and Shell Museum volunteer Dr. Jon Greenlaw; a daylong boat trip to Cayo Costa State Park guided by senior Shell Museum staff (located on isolated and undeveloped Cayo

Costa, the park offers pristine views of the Gulf, dunes, lagoons, and opportunities for shell collecting; no live-mollusk collecting is allowed in the park or elsewhere in Lee County); and a visit to a Plio-Pleistocene fossil pit in Sarasota County guided by Roger Portell, invertebrate paleontologist at the Florida Museum of Natural History.

For further information, check the meeting Web site: [www.shellmuseum.org/AMS/index.htm](http://www.shellmuseum.org/AMS/index.htm).

Any individuals and businesses wishing to help sponsor the meeting should contact Dr. Leal.



## Adopt-a-Class Campaign Helps Fourth Graders Take Field Trips to the Museum

Members and friends know the Museum is committed to always offering its fully-funded educational tours to Lee County public school students. A few weeks ago, the Museum began its sixth academic year of hosting the environmental education program. It is hoped that about 2,500 schoolchildren will be able to take part, just like last year.

"Unfortunately, transportation costs recently soared," reports group tour and education coordinator Anna Marie Nyquist. "So it would be wonderful if Museum supporters could 'adopt' individual class field trips.

"On average, it costs \$195 to pay for the bus

and reduced group admission for each class."

For the 2003-2004 school year, it is primarily fourth graders who will be scheduled for the field trip program because they study Florida and teachers report that the Museum program works best with that grade.

Most Lee County public elementary schools have six to seven classes of fourth graders. In addition, some high school biology classes will also be scheduled.

Teachers, students, and parents are thrilled that the Museum offers such a program because the Lee County School District provides very limited funds for field trips.

Mrs. Nyquist trains more than a dozen volunteer educational docents to conduct the school tour program throughout the academic year. The docents include retired teachers, guidance counselors, and professors who love children, love shells, and are dedicated to devoting their time and expertise in helping the Museum maintain its reputation as a renowned educational facility.

Persons interested in sponsoring a class may send their tax-deductible contribution to the Museum. If you have questions or want further information, please contact the Museum at 239/395-2233, toll-free at 888/679-6450 or e-mail shell@shellmuseum.org.

## Multitalented Volunteer Always Happy To Help

Routine maintenance of exhibits in the Great Hall of Shells is performed by the Museum's jack-of-all-trades building and grounds supervisor, Jerry Brown. But once in awhile specialized repairs are necessary, as was the case recently with the microscope in the "Mollusks, Medicine, and Man" exhibit.

Fortunately, longtime Museum volunteer Hal Pilcher was able to get the microscope back in working order, after donating several hours of his problem-solving skills and elbow grease. That kind of dedication is typical of Mr. Pilcher, who has been with the Museum since it opened.

All day on Wednesdays, he volunteers upstairs in the Collection Department. As a collections specialist, he has entered data and worked with four or five families of shells.

Currently, Mr. Pilcher explains, "My favorite hobby is sorting grunge looking for micromollusks." His wife, Marguerite, also volunteers in the Collection Department, inputting data.

During the morning shift on Fridays, he can be found in the Great Hall of Shells, volunteering as an exhibit docent. In this capacity, Mr. Pilcher answers visitors' questions about exhibits and shells in general.

A native of Illinois, Mr. Pilcher graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy and was a career officer in the Air Force. After retiring from the service in 1975, he worked for the state of Maryland as a capital improvements programmer.



Hal Pilcher curates shells in the Museum Collection Department.

Photo: José H. Leal

"I first became interested in shells in 1990 when we started vacationing on Sanibel," he explains. "I found a nice big shell and that solidified things." When he retired from his second career in 1992, the Pilchers moved to Fort Myers.

Director Dr. José H. Leal notes, "Hal has been fully devoted to the Museum in many areas since it opened eight years ago. Not only does he volunteer in the Collection Department and Great Hall of Shells, but he is also involved in answering e-mail questions about shells that the Museum receives on a regular basis.

"We really appreciate this kind of multifaceted help and it'd be hard to get along without Hal."

## Museum News

Since summer, persons renewing or taking out first-time Museum memberships now use a beautiful fold-out brochure. It features full-color photographs, including one of the much-acclaimed new exhibit, "Calusa - The Original Shell People."

*Mollusks in Action*, the 30-minute video shown five times a day to visitors, is now also available in DVD format from the Museum store. The slide program is still shown to school and adult groups. The Museum wishes to thank the following volunteers who presented the slide program to the general public, many of whom did so for several years: Dotty Devasure, Lowell Devasure, Barbara Hansen, Cleora Keeley, Dottie Mayol, Nancy Prevedel, Howard Schroeder, Debbie Staley, Dorothy Vaughn (always ably assisted by Frank Vaughn), and Dick Weiss.

Museum director Dr. José H. Leal taught a short course on scientific publishing at the 18th Brazilian Malacological Congress in Rio de Janeiro during July. In August, he spent 10 days in Costa Rica as part of a long-range collaboration with the University of Costa Rica in San José. Dr. Leal gave lectures and taught a course, and then did field work in La Cruz, which is located in the northernmost part of Costa Rica on the Pacific side. He is helping inventory the mollusks from that region. On Sept. 18, Dr. Leal gave a talk on "Coastal Invertebrates" at Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Naples, Florida.

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## Museum News...from page 3

The Museum appreciates recent donations of shells and accompanying data from the late Dr. William H. Loery, Ms. Vonda McIntyre, Mrs. Janet Paddison, Mrs. Laverne C. Runkle, and Col. (ret.) Jim Wilson.

Dr. Leal and his assistant, Tina Ajuria, were pleased to add three books to the Museum library, thanks to a substantial contribution from Mr. and Mrs. Paul Johnson of Coventry, England. The books are *Chitons of the World, and Cephalopods – A World Guide; Catalogue & Bibliography of Marine Shell-Bearing Mollusca of Japan, Type Figures.*

The advent of autumn brings a plethora of seasonal activities. Dr. Leal is to give a special program on Oct. 16 at the Museum, in conjunction with Ding Darling Days and National Wildlife Refuge Week (Oct. 12-18). He will talk about the Museum's online publication of a guide to shallow-water mollusks, which now includes 155 species. The Museum will have an information table at the refuge on Oct. 18, during Ding Darling Day 2003.

Museum info tables will also be in place during the Bailey Fest on Oct. 19, and at the fourth annual Retail & Business Expo on Nov. 23, at the Sanibel Community Association.

Dr. Peter R. Betzer, dean of the College of Marine Science of the University of South Florida, will speak at the Museum during the first meeting of the 2003-2004 season of the

Sanibel-Captiva Shell Club. His Oct. 28 talk is titled, "What Do Shelled Animals Tell Us About Ancient Climates?"

Visitors from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland are pleased to now have German-language versions of the Museum's Great Hall of Shells information sheet. Gabriela Meyer, of the University of Frankfurt, kindly translated capsule descriptions of the Museum's more than 30 exhibits.

Sarah Hamilton will work as an intern in the Museum Collection Department from Oct. 27

through Nov. 21. Her internship is sponsored by a Young Canada Works grant. The Museum is a recipient of the grant as a result of its participation in the Canadian Heritage Information Network's upcoming virtual exhibition on "Valentine's Day Traditions and Celebrations."

The Museum has lost two dedicated supporters. **Jana "Jenny" Aster** was a member of the board of trustees from 1989 to 1994. **Humbert "Bert" Porreca** donated his shell collection to the Museum, and one of his handmade sailor's valentines, which is on exhibit in the Great Hall of Shells.

The Museum would like to thank the following donors who recently contributed more than \$1,000 in designated and undesignated funds: the Marc Kolber Trust, Office Depot, and Winn-Dixie Stores, Inc.



M. G. Harasewych, of the Division of Mollusks at the Smithsonian Institution, is spending time periodically at the Museum taking photographs for a new book, *Atlas of Seashells*. He is writing the book with Paul Calomon of the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. Five-thousand species are to be featured in the book, which will be published by Trophon Publishing of Silver Spring, Maryland.

Photo: José H. Leal

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