



# SHELL-O-GRAM

Official Publication of the  
**JACKSONVILLE SHELL CLUB, INC.**

**November -December, 2000**

**Volume 41(6)**

**Editorial Board:**

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**Claire Newsome, President**

**Carol Rishel, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Pres.**

**Harry Lee, Secretary**

**Teresa St. John, Treasurer**

## **November Meeting**

The Monday, November 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Jacksonville Shell Club will be held at the Southeast Branch Public Library at 7:00 PM. The change in meeting day is do to the Thanksgiving Holiday.

Our featured speaker will be Dr. Chris Meyer, who is a new post-doctoral fellow in the Division of Malacology at the Florida Museum of Natural History, Dickinson Hall, Gainesville. Chris will tell us how he has used techniques in **Molecular Systematics** and **Cladistics** to form a phylogeny for the living cowries. Shells are important, but the relationships among the various cowry species aren't fully apparent until other characters are investigated. Chris will help us understand how modern biology can help us know this, arguably the most popular of all families of seashells, better than we ever could before.

The Shell-Of-The-Month will be presented by Harry Lee on *Cypraea surinamensis* Perry, 1811 - an unusual and rare cowrie from the western Atlantic.

## **December Christmas Party**

The traditional Christmas party will take the place of our December meeting. It will be held at the home of Charlotte Lloyd in Jacksonville Beach on Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup> beginning at 6:30 PM.

As is customary, each attending member is asked to bring a shell-related gift (about \$10 in value) for a member of the same sex. Plan to eat dinner at the party as the club is providing the meat course(s). Attendees are also requested to bring a side dish, dessert, or *Hors d'oeuvre*. Soft drinks will be provided and Charlotte will again have "Fishhouse Punch." If you desire anything else, BYOB.

Coordinate with Charlotte (Phone 246-0874 or E-mail [clloyd6888@aol.com](mailto:clloyd6888@aol.com)) in regards to which side dish, etc., you plan to bring.

## **Offshore North Carolina Diving: A Story of Surprise**

By Mark Williams Johnson

The blue-gray water off the coast off North Carolina holds a fairly well kept secret: great shelling. This may be surprising to those who have limited their Carolina collecting to shallow-water wading and the exploration of sand flats. There are some who may even doubt the validity of my claim. True, it's widely known that our coastal underwater topography is mostly comprised of vast deserts of sand. Indeed, there are no coral reefs, few rocky outcroppings and only the scarcest bit of rubble occurring naturally. Over the centuries, however, hurricanes, treacherous shoals, unpredictable weather and war have conspired to sink an estimated 2,000 unfortunate ships off our coastline, of which perhaps 120 can be dived with a fair amount of ease. Now combine this with the fact that the Gulf Stream comes closest to the East Coast at North Carolina than anywhere else except the very tip of Florida, bathing these wrecks with warm, nutritious waters loaded with southern veligers, and you have a recipe for great shelling! **(Continued on page 3.)**



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The Shell-O-Gram is issued bimonthly and mailed to all regular members. Annual membership dues are \$12.50 individual and \$15.00 family (domestic) and \$20.00 (foreign). Lifetime membership is available.

Send dues to: Teresa St. John, Treasurer  
2605 Emily Court  
Jacksonville, FL 32216-5101

The club meets each month, excluding December, at the Southeast Branch Public Library, 10599 Deerwood Park Boulevard, Jacksonville Florida. Please address any correspondence to the club's address shown above.

Closing date for article submission is two weeks prior to the first of each month of publication. Articles may be republished provided full credit is given the author and this newsletter and one copy of the complete publication in which the article appears is mailed to Editor at the above address.

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### Rest In Peace

Club lifetime member Fred Thompson passed-away during the first week of September. Fred and his wife Iris (who passed away during February of last year) had been members of the club since 1983 and lifetime members since 1989.

Long time shell dealer and former club member Charles Cardin passed away September 10<sup>th</sup> at the age of 59 after a long battle with cancer.

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### Upcoming Events

\*\*\***Jan. 26-28, 2001 - Greater Miami Shell Club Show** at Nova Southwest University, Fiscoer Graduate School of Education & Human Services, 1750 NE 167<sup>th</sup> Street, N. Miami Beach, FL. Contact Mark Bethke, 3001 South Ocean Dr., Suite 4V, Hollywood, FL 333019-2804, E-mail: [ferreter@gate.net](mailto:ferreter@gate.net), or Phone: (954) 922-8189.

\*\*\***Feb. 2-4 - Broward Shell Club Show** at Pompano Beach Recreation Center, NE 18<sup>th</sup> Av. & NE 6<sup>th</sup> St., Pompano Beach, FL. Contact Jim VunKannon, 2219 N.E. 16th Court, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33305, Phone: (954) 561-0120.

\*\*\***Feb. 16-18 - Sarasota Shell Club Show** at Sarasota Municipal Auditorium, Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, FL. Contact Lynn Gaulin, 3417 58<sup>th</sup> Ave., W. Bradenton, FL 34210, E-mail: [ehgaulin@worldnet.att.net](mailto:ehgaulin@worldnet.att.net), Phone: (941) 755-1270.

\*\*\***Feb. 16-18 - Naples Shell Club Show** at The Nature Conservancy, 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue N., Naples, FL. Contact Gary Schmelz, 5575 12<sup>th</sup> Ave. S.W., Naples, FL 34116, E-mail: [schmelz@att.net](mailto:schmelz@att.net), Phone: (941) 455-4984.

\*\*\***Feb. 23-25 - St. Petersburg Shell Club Show** at the Treasure Island Community Center, 1 Park Place, Treasure Island, FL. Contact Bob & Betty Lipe, 348 Corey Ave., St. Petersburg Beach, FL 33706, Email: [rlipel@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:rlipel@tampabay.rr.com), Phone: (727) 360-0586.

\*\*\***Mar. 1 - 4 - Sanibel Shell Show** at the Sanibel Community Center, Periwinkle Way, Sanibel, FL. Contact: Richard Willis, 5305 Darby Ct., Cape Coral, FL 33904, E-mail: [rwwillis@ix.netcom.com](mailto:rwwillis@ix.netcom.com), Phone: (941) 540-7380.

\*\*\***Mar. 8-10 - Marco Island Shell Club Show** at the Wesleyan United Methodist Church, Barfield Rd., Marco Is., FL. Contact Jean Sungheim, P.O. Box 633 Marco Island, FL 34146, Phone: (941) 642-7247.

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### Membership Dues – A Final Reminder

Did you forget your dues? Jacksonville Shell Club membership dues for the year 2001 were due for a vast majority of club members on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September.

You can determine when your membership expires (or when it expired) by checking the numerical entry which appears before your name on the newsletter mailing label. An entry of "8/00" would indicate that your membership expired on the last day of August, 2000.

Don't miss out on being listed in the club membership list, which will be published in January. Mail your check to the Club Treasurer, Teresa St. John, whose address appears on this page or see her at the next meeting.

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### Club News

On Saturday, September 16<sup>th</sup>, three members of the Jacksonville Shell Club, assisted by friends, participated in the second annual "Vilano Waterfront Festival" held at the Vilano Beach Pier (the old bridge between Vilano Beach and St.

Augustine). Club Vice-president Carol Rishel transported the club's shell sales material from the storage unit in Jacksonville Beach to the pier, where Gertrude Moller and Trudy Doerr handled the sales duties at the clubs tent.

Gertrude reported that the weather was beautiful all day until about 3:30 PM when dark clouds hovered above. Within fifteen minutes it became a deluge accompanied by lightning and hurricane-force winds that blew rain into the tent and "melted" the corrugated storage boxes. By this time, most of the other vendors had already departed the pier and only Gertrude and Sacha Martin (Vilano Beach event coordinator) were left to pack up the 20 shell boxes and other items including books and craft items.

At one point, a man running off the pier yelled; "Ladies, your tent is blowing away!" but the two unflappable ladies held onto the two metal stanchions and kept it in place. Although now soaked to the skin, the fearless duo continued diligently packing and were ultimately rescued by Gertude's friend Carmela, who arrived with umbrellas and assisted in loading everything onto wheeled carts for transport to Carmela's enclosed truck.

The rain had been so heavy that even the metal cash box was soaked inside and all the paper bills had to be laid out to dry on a thirsty towel. All this for the love of the seashell!

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### Our Web Pages

In early 1998, your editor, upon the continued prompting of then Club President Charlotte Lloyd, undertook the quest of getting the Jacksonville Shell Club on the Internet with a web page. Using my personal dial-up account and free software, I was, after a lot of trial and error, ultimately able to compose and post a single page. This basic informational page was later modified to include an early version of Harry Lee's Cedar Key Mollusk Checklist. One should note that building a web page isn't all that difficult, but figuring out how to upload it to the appropriate server, without assistance, is another matter.

As your editor's knowledge grew, so did the web pages. Free software comes with no instructional manual, so it was strictly an "experimental" exercise at this point.

Over the years contributions by our own Harry Lee and Charlotte Lloyd have enabled expansion of the pages (both with images and taxonomic advice). However, other visionaries who appreciated our first efforts Tom Eichhorst (New Mexico), Phil Poland (Clearwater), Wes Thorsson (Honolulu), George Sangiologlou (Athens, Greece), and a diverse grouping of others from all over the world, were quite forthcoming with their inputs including digital images and hard copy photographs. Such is the magic of electronic mail and instant communications.

From this single page humble beginning, we have now expanded to a total of 635 pages (a total of 805 images), as of November 8<sup>th</sup>, and have had a total of over 20,300 visitors to our home page.

Our pages include a wide variety of topics. Among these are mollusk checklists (Cedar Key, Peanut Island, and Northeast Florida Terrestrial, Freshwater, and Marine),

Sinistral Mollusks, Rare Shells, State Shells, Western Atlantic Shells, Spider Conchs, Atlantic Strombus, a pictorial study of the Crown Conch (*Melongena corona*), and past newsletter articles dating back to 1976, among many others – all updated regularly.

It has been stated by some that the Jacksonville Shell Club web pages are the finest shell club pages on the Internet. Don't take their word on it. Use or get your own computer and judge it for yourself. It's there 24 hours a day for your perusal.

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### September Meeting Notes

At the September 28<sup>th</sup> regular meeting of the Jacksonville Shell Club, the membership unanimously approved the nominating committees proposed slate of officers/board of directors for the 2000-2001 fiscal year which were:

**President** - Claire Newsome, Phone: 398-6383

**First Vice-President** - Carol Rishel, Phone: 247-7876

**Secretary** - Harry Lee, Phone: 389-4049

**Treasurer** - Teresa St. John, Phone: 725-1501

**Board Members:**

Charlotte Lloyd, Phone: 246-0874

George Hapsis, Phone: 220-2156

Billie Brown, Phone: 241-3755

Cathy Williams, Phone: 744-3201

Bill Frank, Phone: 724-5326

John Fatu, Phone: 221-4230

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### Offshore North Carolina Diving – Continued.

You will find that offshore North Carolina shipwrecks can become an oasis for mollusks typical of the Carolinas as well as many species of mollusk normally associated with the Caribbean. Thus, if you have the time, energy, and desire to do a little diving, the "Graveyard of the Atlantic" will provide the opportunity for you to collect a wonderfully wide range of shells from both the Carolinian and Caribbean faunal provinces.

Growing up in Wilmington, North Carolina, I had the opportunity to "get wet" often. I have a lot of diving stories to tell. Most are funny, others a little scary, and a few might never be told without the aid of a late evening and a few beers, but I can think of one North Carolina dive trip story that I think you will find remarkable. I know we did.

#### August 8, 1998, 7:30 a.m., At the Dock

Tim Blades, my North Carolina diving partner, and I leave the dock at Wrightsville Beach early, as always. We are never late for diving! We are heading out to the wreck of the freighter *John D. Gill*, some 23 miles offshore. As always, we have chartered our friend and dive captain, Charles Ussery, to take us there aboard the *Dive Buddy*, a 25' C-Hawk perfectly outfitted for a diving day-trip. As usual, first mate and general sidekick, 15 year-old Ian Whererhauser, has brought his spear gun to catch tonight's dinner. This is not the first time the four

of us have dived together, it's more like the 100<sup>th</sup>, so the camaraderie is good and the anticipation high as the sun climbs in the sky and we depart on our two hour trip to blue water. The unseasonably warm 1998 winter and spring has helped in the flourishing of seemingly all aspects of observable marine life, so we are in high hopes of a fun and productive trip. Since the water visibility has been greater than 80' in previous weeks, and because none of us has anything else better to do, all four of us have brought three air tanks to allow for longer exploration time. We are all delighted when a pod of porpoises joins us for a few minutes as we head east from the Masonboro Jetty. We take turns leaning over the gunwale and touching their dorsal fins as the big mammals ride our bow wake. The day is starting off good already!

### 9:30 a.m., 23 Miles Offshore

First stop: 100 feet of water between us and the bottom and nothing but sand on the fish finder. This is how we want it, because initially we are looking for helmets [*Cassis madagascariensis spinella* Clench, 1944 – Clench's Helmet]. Charles stays on the boat while Ian, Tim and I hit the water and head down the anchor line. Once on the bottom, we each attach one end of a 50' cord to the anchor and the other end to ourselves. Next, we position the anchor so it drags slowly across the sand with the current, allowing us to "drift" with the boat, which is drifting in the slow current. If anyone wants to stop, he simply sets the anchor. The cord allows us to wander from the anchor without losing sight of it, plus we know where each other is at all times. With this accomplished, we start looking for the sand-dwellers of the Carolinian Province. It's not long before we start seeing dead and broken sea biscuits, excellent signs of feeding Cassids. Tim breaks the ice, finding two beautiful Scotch Bonnets [*Phalium granulatum* (Born, 1778)] plowing trails in the sand. Although the Scotch Bonnet is our official state shell, this is actually an unusual find because bonnets are normally nocturnal, and seeing them in the daylight is a rarity. They are big and beautiful, and I start to focus on collecting bonnets, but all I see is an endless expanse of sand in every direction I turn. We drift a few meters up and another dead sea biscuit is lying broken in the sand, then another! This is definite predation, but where is the predator? I swim on, and on, and on...nothing. After drifting for what seems like forever with nothing seen but sand and broken sea biscuits, we begin to signal at each other the thumbs down sign. This is loosely interpreted as the "I think this area stinks, and I want to go up and save air for somewhere else" sign, but you won't find that in the dive instruction book. Even Tim, steely-eyed collector of big bonnets, has lost his adrenaline rush. Just as we are collecting ourselves to ascend the anchor line, I spot a large displacement in the sand. I swim over to observe, and a big Clench's Helmet (12" across the shield and a beauty) which comes into my collection! Suddenly inspired, Tim and Ian launch a helmet hunt that would have made Linnaeus proud, and that's when we started finding lots of goodies. After a few minutes hunt, Tim finds an equally nice but smaller helmet. Ian has found a cluster of Milk Conchs [*Strombus*

*costatus* Gmelin, 1791] and sets the anchor, but they all still have juvenile lips, so we move on. Suddenly, its Shell City: beautiful Florida Spiny Jewelboxes [*Arcinella cornuta* Conrad, 1866] and colorful Lady-in-waiting Venus clams [*Puberella intapurpurea* (Conrad, 1849)] begin to appear in the sand, and we each get nice representations. Huge and colorful Imperial Venus clams [*Lirophora latilirata* (Conrad, 1841)] are plowing trails in the sand. I already have these shells in my collection, but, as luck would have it, an albino appears in the sand in front of me! I quickly scoop it into my collecting bag, searching the area for more. I don't find any more albinos, but this area has trails everywhere! Colorful Eastern Augers [*Terebra dislocata* (Say, 1822)] and Lettered Olives [*Olivella sayana* Ravenel, 1834] are crossing dozens of paths in the sand in front of us. Florida Fighting Conchs [*Strombus alatus* Gmelin, 1791], larger and more elongate than the typical West Florida form, start appearing in the sand and we each get a nice one. I cannot believe the quality and quantity of the shells we are all finding. Tim paddles over to show me the Brown Baby Ear [*Sinum maculatum* (Say, 1831)] he has captured. It is a great shell, alive and with excellent periostracum. Two minutes later I happen upon what I consider to be a very unusual shell: A very heavy and fully adult Cameo Helmet [*Cassis madagascariensis* Lamarck, 1822 - not form *spinella*) just five inches long. It is only the second I have ever seen from these waters. The shell may be a dwarf, heavy *spinella* with large knobs on the dorsum, but it is certainly different from typical *spinella* at any rate. Another two minutes later and Tim, Ian and I are all finding the northern form of the Lightning Olive [*Oliva fulgurator* (Röding, 1798)]. As our air runs low, a bright red nine-inch True Tulip [*Fasciolaria tulipa* (Linnaeus, 1758)] crawls across my path, becoming one of my most treasured shells from North Carolina. I don't want to leave, but I still have two more dives to make, and its time to move on. Ian spears a large flounder for dinner just as we ascend.

We munch a few snacks, guzzle soft drinks, and sort shells while Charles pilots the *Dive Buddy* to our next destination. Inspired by our good luck during the first dive, we are all really pumped-up and ready to get back in the water; only this time we will be exploring a shipwreck 22 miles off the coast. It is decided that Tim and I will dive first while Charles and Ian watch the boat. We change tanks, check our dive computers for our bottom times, and again slip into the warm Atlantic to find shells. Twenty feet below the surface, I am always awe-inspired when the 528' wreck of the freighter *John D. Gill* comes into hazy view, this time more than 60' below me.

### 12:00 p.m., Wreck Diving

The *Gill* is indeed like a large, eerie oasis in the sand desert. She suffered the misfortune of arriving here a little after 10:00 p.m., March 12, 1942, when a German U-boat slammed a torpedo into one of her starboard fuel tanks. She floundered on the surface for a few hours, then all 12,000 tons slipped quietly beneath the waves. Twenty-three lives were lost. I take a moment to think about those souls when I'm down there; it's almost impossible not to.

The *Gill* is a great wreck to explore and contemplate, but we are here for collecting shells today, and it's not long before we start finding them. Before we have been on the wreck one minute, it is apparent the *Gill* is covered with Atlantic Thorny Oysters [*Spondylus americanus* Hermann, 1781], Florida Rock Snails [*Stramonita haemastoma floridana* (Conrad, 1837)], Mossy and Turkey Wing Ark Shells [*Arca imbricata* Bruguière, 1789 and *Arca zebra* (Swainson, 1833)], Dark Ceriths [*Cerithium atratum* (Born, 1778)], and Atlantic Wing-Oysters [*Pteria colymbus* (Röding, 1798)], but we leave all of these alone for now and try to zero-in on the less conspicuous things that we know are hiding somewhere in the immense iron wreck. As we glide over the stern section, we both begin finding nice and large Lace Murex [*Chicoreus dilectus* (A. Adams, 1855)] with beautiful frills and spines. Turning over rubble produces both the Sculptured and Beautiful Top Snails for me [*Calliostoma euglyptum* (A. Adams, 1855) and *Calliostoma pulcrum* (C.B. Adams, 1850)]. Tim is busier exploring the vertical sides of the stern section and finds a nice, eight inch Giant Eastern Murex [*Hexaplex fulvescens* (G. B. Sowerby II, 1834)]. It's a great shell, and it's his first one ever! I consider cutting his air hose and taking the shell but decide against it. Away from the stern, Lion's Paw Scallops [*Nodipecten nodosus* (Linnaeus, 1758)] are hiding in the vegetation; I am lucky and happen upon one with good size and no broken knobs. This is turning out to be an excellent dive already, and we haven't been down five minutes! I pause at a large slab of metal that just might be turnable. I get Tim's attention, and we work together to turn the big piece of iron. Underneath: hermit crab piles! Hermit crab piles are worth their weight in gold to me because not only are they often very profitable to the collector, but they also signify exactly what you might find on the wreck if you search hard enough. I am particularly excited by this pile because some of the crabs are carrying perfect Pitted Murex [*Farvartia cellulosa* (Conrad, 1846)] and Graybeard Aspella [*Aspella senex* Dall, 1903]. Looking closer, a strange little miter [*Vexillum* cf. *histrion* (Reeve, 1844) – Harlequin Miter] is collected as well and remains unidentified in my collection to this day. We collect a few more shells, make some quick mental notes, and move on. My mental note: it would be wonderful to be able to explore this wreck at night! Coming to another slab, we repeat the previous maneuver. Instead of hermit crabs this time, we are delighted to see three beautiful *Babelomurex mansfieldi* (McGinty, 1840). I already have this fellow from previous dives, but Tim doesn't, so he takes the nicest one and leaves the other two to their business. Three's a crowd, anyway.

There is a large section of the hull that is broken apart, creating a large opening to the interior of the wreck. We check our air, turn on our lights, and head inside. I should pause here to say that any type of confinement diving can be extremely dangerous, and should never be undertaken without specialized training. More *Spondylus*, much nicer than the current-worn fellows on the exterior, line the walls. They are usually colored white, lavender, or rusty orange, and their spines are long and delicate. They are accompanied by Leafy Jewelboxes [*Chama macerophylla* Gmelin, 1791], also in a variety of colors. We leave these for now because any

specimen we might take would probably chip or break during the remainder of the dive (Ask me how I know that!). We have a time-honored tradition that if we see a *Spondylus* we simply must have, we will plan to get it on the way back out of the ship at the end of our dive. This seems to work in keeping chipping down to a minimum, especially if one diver carries both collecting bags and the other carries the *Spondylus*. (Note: Now it goes against every fiber in my being to hand another collector my shells, but I have found that if I grit my teeth really hard I can do it). Tim sees a big, purple fellow with very nice, long spines and points to it with his light, making a circular motion of light around the shell. It's understood: that one is his to get later!

As we go further into the wreck, we start finding one of my favorite all-time shells, the Giant Triton [*Cymatium parthenopeum* (von Salis, 1793)]. After searching closely for a few minutes, we have counted eleven of them crawling on the walls or fixed in the corners. Tim keeps a six-inch fellow with great periostracum and an intact protoconch. I find a seven and one-half inch monster, the biggest I have ever seen! The rest are nice as well, and I am tempted to take another, but resist the urge. Turning our lights to the beams above us, we see two nice Atlantic Deer Cowries [*Cypraea cervus* Linnaeus, 1758] crawling about, grazing on minute vegetation. We each already have good representations of this beautiful mollusk from years past, however, so we let these guys go about their business. A quick check of my dive computer indicates its time to start heading out of the ship. We pause a moment to collect Tim's *Spondylus*, then slowly trek back to ascend the anchor line. It is a great Thorny Oyster, beautiful lavender with long spines on both valves. Believe it or not; it doesn't get chipped!

Back on the boat, we stow our shells in the cooler while Charles and Ian take their turns diving. Charles and Ian are not shell collectors; they are more interested in collecting brass artifacts from the wreck and spearing fish. Basically, that means that Tim and I spend about an hour every dive trip making fun of brass collectors, and Charles and Ian spend about an hour every dive trip making fun of shell collectors. Actually, it works out great in the end because there is little competition for either brass or shells. It also works out great for Tim and me because Charles owns the boat and Ian is trying to catch dinner.

As we ready our gear for the next dive, I pack more tiny plastic collecting vials in my pockets for smaller critters. I am planning on closely exploring nooks and crannies for the smaller, less noticeable treasure. Tim has ingeniously outfitted himself with nylon cord in order to hang his vials from his buoyancy control units for quick access.

## 2:00 p.m., The Last Dive Surprise

After Charles and Ian arrive with lobster and a big grouper (I can already taste it with butter and garlic.), Tim and I splash back overboard and down into the depths. I make my way straight to the bottom of the *Gill*, at the sand, and begin to closely examine the rubble and debris for smaller shells that are hiding here during the daylight hours.

I find a nice fresh-dead Eastern Turretnail [*Turritella exoleta* (Linnaeus, 1758)] along with a Cydia Drillia [*Drillia cydia* (Bartsch, 1843)]. Under rubble, Ribbed Cantharus [*Cantharus multangulus* (Philippi, 1848)] and small but beautiful Sozon's Cones [*Conus delessertii* Récluz, 1843] are found hiding. We search for a few more minutes, but there is little else to see. I spy a pile of flat rocks and swim over to turn them. There, under a small rock, hides a beautiful specimen of the Lightweight Murex [*Murexiella levicula* (Dall, 1889)]. Intrigued, I swim away from the wreck, along the debris field, searching for more turnable rocks. I turn the next one and there is a 45mm. cone under it that I do not immediately recognize. With further investigation, it turns out to be the Mouse Cone [*Conus mus* Hwass, 1792]! I had no idea that they ranged this far north! To the best of my knowledge, this species is extremely rare in North Carolina and probably never would have survived had it not been for the unseasonably warm weather of the last two seasons. The very large size is not so surprising, however. Since this fellow is obviously at the edge of his range, there is typically much less competition with other reef cones for food. I search for a few more minutes in the surrounding area, but all the other Mouse Cones seem to be better at hiding than this first guy. I decide that I have burned enough air in this one spot, so I turn back towards the wreck to see what other shells await.

Luckily, I gave up on my second Mouse Cone just at the right time. As soon as I start back for the wreck, I spot a beautiful and live Kreb's Triton [*Cymatium krebsii* (Mørch, 1877)] amongst the rubble. I signal to Tim (he has been looking for this since last year), and, when he arrives, he is carrying a beautifully colored sixteen-inch Horse Conch [*Pleuroploca gigantea* (Kiener, 1840)]. Unfortunately, the lip is a bit ragged, so we release him to the wild to multiply (and grow a good lip). Tim is excited about the *Cymatium*, so we launch an exhaustive *krebsii* hunt. We spend at least ten minutes looking under every piece of debris and bit of rubble. Just as the air quantity in my tank begins to concern me, Tim finds his *C. krebsii*. It is a beautiful, dark gem in contrast to the light brown and white of my specimen. Happy and satisfied, we tap our watches and give the thumbs up sign - meaning we are low on air, and it is time return to the surface, sadly leaving this beautiful wreck and all its treasures.

As we ascend the thirty feet to the deck of the *Gill*, we see several large Reef sharks cruising the wreck as well. No doubt they smell the fish that Charles and Ian speared on the earlier dive. Actually, we have seen lots of sharks before, and we don't pay them much worry. If you use a little common sense, there is no reason why both diver and shark can't enjoy the wreck. We watch their sleek, graceful forms for a moment before we head up the anchor line for the last time of the day. I don't blame them for wanting the grouper; I can taste it already myself.

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