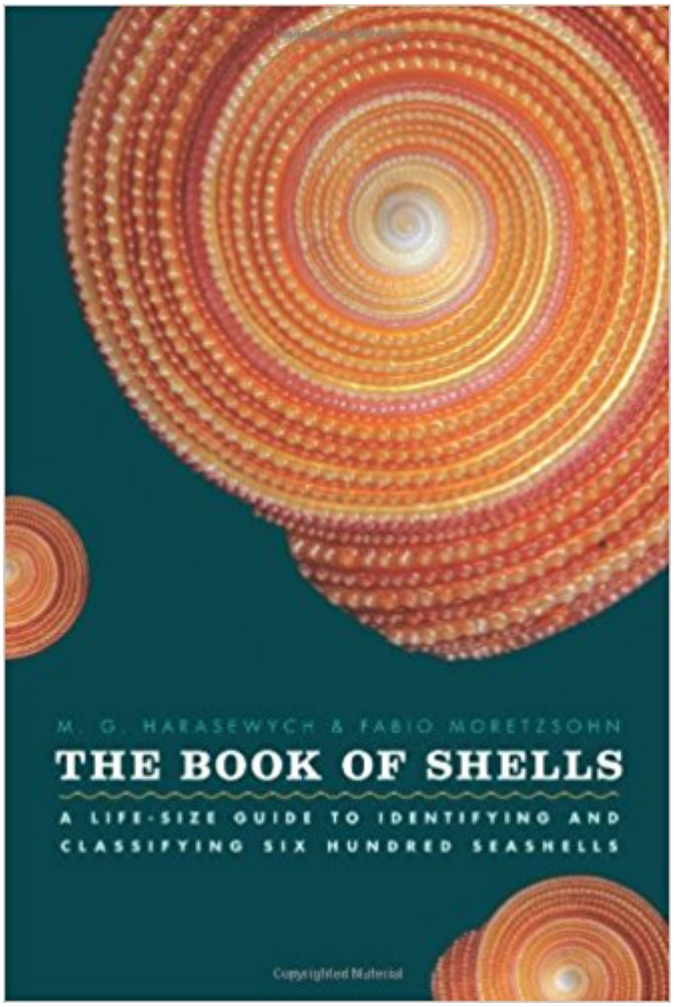
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The Book Of Shells: A Life-Size Guide To Identifying And Classifying Six Hundred Seashells



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Synopsis

Who among us hasnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t marveled at the diversity and beauty of shells? Or picked one up, held it to our ear, and then gazed in wonder at its shape and hue? Many a lifelong shell collector has cut teeth (and toes) on the beaches of the Jersey Shore, the Outer Banks, or the coasts of Sanibel Island. Some have even dived to the depths of the ocean. But most of us are not familiar with the biological origin of shells, their role in explaining evolutionary history, and the incredible variety of forms in which they come.Shells are the external skeletons of mollusks, an ancient and diverse phylum of invertebrates that are in the earliest fossil record of multicellular life over 500 million years ago. There are over 100,000 kinds of recorded mollusks, and some estimate that there are over a million more that have yet to be discovered. Some breathe air, others live in fresh water, but most live in the ocean. They range in size from a grain of sand to a beach ball and in weight from a few grams to several hundred pounds. And in this lavishly illustrated volume, they finally get their full due.The Book of Shells offers a visually stunning and scientifically engaging guide to six hundred of the most intriguing mollusk shells, each chosen to convey the range of shapes and sizes that occur across a range of species. Each shell is reproduced here at its actual size, in full color, and is accompanied by an explanation of the shellÃ¢â ¬â„¢s range, distribution, abundance, habitat, and operculumÃ¢â ¬â •the piece that protects the mollusk when itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s in the shell. Brief scientific and historical accounts of each shell and related species include fun-filled facts and anecdotes that broaden its portrait.The Matchless Cone, for instance, or Conus cedonulli, was one of the rarest shells collected during the eighteenth century. So much so, in fact, that a specimen in 1796 was sold for more than six times as much as a painting by Vermeer at the same auction. But since the advent of scuba diving, this shell has become far more accessible to collectorsÃ¢â ¬â •though not without certain risks. Some species of Conus produce venom that has caused more than thirty known human deaths.The Zebra Nerite, the Heart Cockle, the Indian Babylon, the Junonia, the Atlantic Thorny OysterÃ¢â ¬â •shells from habitats spanning the poles and the tropics, from the highest mountains to the oceanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s deepest recesses, are all on display in this definitive work.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Beachcombing for beautiful or unusual seashells remains a popular pastime. Identification of the many thousands of species of shell-producing mollusks can pose a challenge, however. Authored by a pair of subject specialists with an emphasis on larger and more familiar species, The Book of Shells provides an excellent introduction to the major classes of sea-living mollusks worldwide. Students and the lay enthusiast will find the 600 entries accessible and engaging. Representing a small portion of the known species of mollusks, the shells depicted here are generally the most familiar, although a few rare and newly discovered forms are included as well. Uniformly one page in length, each entry follows a standard format. A table lists the family, shell-size range, distribution, abundance, depth, habitat, feeding habit, and the presence or absence of an operculum. A color range map, genus and species and common name, a paragraph-long description of the species, a listing of related species, a color life-size illustration, and, for small shells, a larger, more detailed image complete the information. A taxonomic organization defines the five sections: chitons, bivalves, scaphopods, gastropods, and cephalopods. Species are arranged by physical size, from smallest to largest, within each family. Supplementary materials include essays on shell characteristics and shell collecting and a basic guide to identifying seashells. The 2,400 illustrations comprise nineteenth-century engravings as well as photographs. To capture detail, tiny shells were photographed using a scanning electron microscope. Appendixes include a glossary, the evolutionary classification of the Mollusca, an index of species by common name, and an index of species by scientific name. Distinguished by outstanding color visuals, The Book of Shells is highly recommended for libraries in need of an overview of seashells worldwide. --Nancy Cannon

"Violet Moon, True Tulip, and Peruvian Hat are a few of my favorite names from a gorgeous new guide to identifying shellsÃ¢â ¬â •600 shells, to be exact, a number that constitutes less than 1

percent of the known species of seashells. (Some scientists estimate that more than 1,000,000 shells have yet to be discovered.) The Book of Shells by M.G. Harasewych, curator of marine mollusks at the Smithsonian Institution, and researcher Fabio Moretzsohn is a beautifully designed reference work with exquisite photographs of shells that range in size from a grain of sand to a beach ball." (Boston Globe)"This time of year, the beach beckons. Instead of just lying around in a stupefied, sun-drenched drowse, however, why not turn those vacation hours at the seaside into a learning experience? The Book of Shells: A Life-Size Guide to Identifying and Classifying Six Hundred Seashells is a fascinating guide to the external skeletons of molluskså ¬â •also known as seashellså ¬â •that routinely turn the ocean's fringe into a scattering of treasures. With this book in tow, you can, after an afternoon of shell-collecting, sit down and classify your finds. The Book of Shells includes full-color photos of hundreds of shells and a guide to each mollusk's stomping grounds. M.G. Harasewych and Fabio Moretzsohn, the zoologists who put together this jumbo joyå ¬â •at 665 pages and a hard cover, you'll need two hands to lift itå ¬â •have done a splendid job. The book is filled with scientific data but it will intrigue å ¬â • not intimidate å ¬â • those of us who are nonscientists. And these gorgeous shells with poetic names like Snowflake Marginella, Imperial Harp, Lettered Olive, Gaping Ancilla, Du Petit's Spindle, Rough-Ribbed Nerite and Reddish Callista have a delicate, almost unearthly beauty."å ¬â •Chicago Tribune (Chicago Tribune)"This encyclopedia of 600 seashells . . . is enough to inspire even the laziest beachcomber to rush out at low tide to find something beautiful." (Washington Post)"How many different kinds of seashells are there? No one can say for sure. Tens of thousands of mollusks are known to science and there are certainly far, far more out there waiting to be discovered. So a book that describes 600 species is only scratching the surface. But what a surface! . . . Dr. Harasewych, curator of marine mollusks at the Smithsonian Institution and Dr. Moretzsohn, a researcher at the Harte Research Institute in Texas, offer detailed images, crisp descriptions and helpful information about things like mollusk family trees, guides to shells by geographical region and useful Web sites.å ¬Â• (Cornelia Dean New York Times)

I bought this book in the hopes that it would be a great starting point as a shell collecting reference, and I have to say that I am extremely pleased with my purchase.PROS: Judging from what I have seen available this seems to be without a doubt the best value on your dollar. For $35 you are getting a beautiful hardcover book with excellent photos (NOT ILLUSTRATIONS) of 600 different species of mollusks. The species covered range from all over the world as well, even down to Anarctica. The descriptions are clear and concise, the related species sections are extremely

helpful in identifying a species that may resemble what you are looking at, and this book also clearly shows range and distribution of each species described. Photos taken are both of the entire shell and accompanied by ones taken to indicate actual size.CONS: Although this book covers 600 species as I said in the title of this review it is quite broad but rather brief on each family of species. I live in the Marshall Islands so I bought this book in hopes of being able to identify a broader range of cowry shells I find on a regular basis but it only shows the major, more common species in the region. If you are looking for a more focused reference it may serve you better to find a book geared more towards the specific region in which you are doing your identifications.CONCLUSION: An EXCELLENT value for the quality of this product and an excellent coffee table ornament for any shell enthusiast. If you are an amature collector just getting started out like myself you will not be dissapointed, but for those with a more serious desire to know exactly what they are looking at I would suggest a pricier more specialized piece of reference literature.

Awesome book! The best information I've ever had about shells I've collected around the world!!

This is another great book by Jerry (Curator of Mollusks at the Smithsonian)The ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“life sizeÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• image concept is a great twist on books.Jerry's credentials make this more than just a coffee-table book by a compiler, but a serious quality work on shells for the hobbyist and enthusiast.

I BOUGHT THE BOOK FOR MY WIFE, AND SHE SAID THAT IT WAS EVERYTHING SHE NEEDED TO IDENTIFY SEA SHELLS.

This book is better than I had regarding shells. It does not have the comprehensive one that I had hoped to get, and the price seems a little too high for what I hoped to get.

Amazing book Thanks

Excellent book for beachcombers looking to identify shells they find for their collection.

WOW this is the Bible of Sea Shells. I love it. Being a retired U. S. Navy man that spent lots of years at sea and diving for sea shells, I just love to look at these shells that brings back many great memories. Thanks.

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