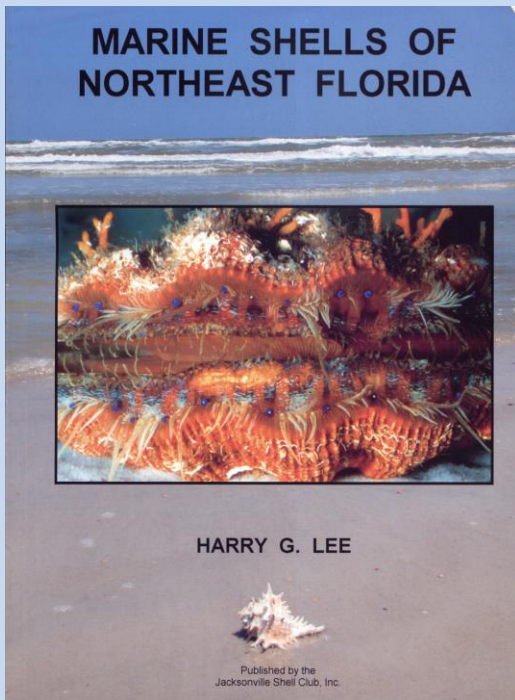


Book Review: Marine Shells of Northeast Florida

By Harry G. Lee, 2009

Jacksonville Shell Club, Jacksonville, FL
ISBN 0-9671254-0-5, pp. 204, approx. \$40



Every member of Conchologists of America who has attended an annual COA convention in the last few years knows about and has been waiting for this book. Harry Lee is well known in our community for both his open friendly demeanor and his vast knowledge of seashells (not to mention a library that would do any institution proud). The story of the development of this volume is told elsewhere in this magazine by the author. Here we will just take a look at the finished product, an in-depth survey of marine shells from the coastal area of NE Florida from approximately Nassau County, Florida (the Florida-Georgia state line), south to Flagler County, Florida (approximately 75 miles south of Jacksonville), and from estuarine waters out to the 30-fathom isobath.

The species accounts start with no. 1. *Ischnochiton papillosus* (C.B. Adams, 1845) and end with no. 798, *Octopus giganteus* A.E. Verrill, 1897. That is an amazing number of species (there are actually more than 798 species listed as some species were inserted after the numbers had been set, each indicated by a letter “a”) for an area that extends along just over 130 miles of coastline! Most species are illustrated in black and white with an additional 19 color plates (107 images) showing some of the more common shells encountered in the area and some images of living specimens. Families are presented in phylogenetic order with genera and species listed alphabetically. Each is listed by the scientific name (and author), followed by the official vernacular name, frequency of occurrence, maximum size recorded, locality data, and comments – including a reference to the color plate, if applicable, and quite often a link address to relevant coverage on the Jacksonville Shell Club web page (<http://www.jaxshells.org>).

This book is surprisingly useful for identification. At first I was put off by the small black and white images (a reason the price is so reasonable), but then I pulled out some Florida grunge I had and found that a 30mm image in the book is really a respectable enlargement when the shell is only a few millimeters in size. Few of us think we need much help in identifying the larger more common Florida shells as they can be found in a couple of dozen books around most shell collector’s homes. Still, you might find a surprise or two as the author has the most current information. The micros, on the other hand, have always proven most difficult and with “Marine Shells of Northeast

Florida” I at last have in hand a means of actually adding a name to data slips that had been restricted to locality information. Thank you Harry and all of the others involved in this project.

Finally, I offer a few words about the comments section of each species entry – a section that truly multiplies the value of this book. Here you may find clarifying notes on morphology, references where more information about the species may be found, and discussions of a species’ natural history. You will also find comparisons between similar species and more importantly, useful characters to use to distinguish between similar species. There are anecdotes from earlier writings concerning a species and a thorough taxonomic history if the name of the species is or was in question. This makes for some fascinating reading. There is a wealth of information in this small volume - \$40 very well spent.