



The Epitonium

Houston Conchology Society

Annual Banquet

MAY 18TH 2024 - NOON

Tickets \$24 per-person

To Reserve a spot call or text
or email _____ by end-of-day 5/12



MONUMENT INN
RESTAURANT

4406 Independence Pkwy. La Porte, TX 77571

See menu on Page 2.

President's Message

Another year of meetings and events is coming to a close, as we prepare for our annual luncheon on **May 18** at Monument Inn. It is interesting how this one event has become a somewhat of a tradition with our club. Everyone seems to enjoy the location and certainly the great food, especially the seafood. I hope you have already purchased your tickets and made plans to attend, but if not, I will have tickets for sale at the door just in case. The price for club members is \$24.00 and for non-members or guests, the price is \$28.00. Hope we see you there, as it is always a fun time. It will be our last gathering of the HCS year.

(Editor's note: To reserve a spot, email Dave at dgreen2@entouch.net by the end of the day on **May 12**.)



Please mark your calendar for the Summer Social on Monday evening, **August 12**, at **Cleburne Cafeteria**, starting at **5:30 pm**. We will gather, all acquire their diner, and we will meet in the private dining room. The food will be terrific as usual, and the program will be just absolutely outstanding. I will show the presentation on COA 2025 that I will present at COA 2024 in Melbourne next month, and answer any questions you may have concerning the convention and Corpus Christi. After 31 years, COA is returning to Corpus Christi and we will be utilizing the same hotel we used in 1994, but it is now the Omni Corpus Christi Hotel. Hope we will see you at the Summer Social on August 12 and kick off the new club calendar for 2024-2025.

Linda and I hope each of our members will have a safe and enjoyable summer and free from Harm's Way. Take care and see you at Monument Inn. It has been a pleasure serving as your President this past year and I look forward to the upcoming year.

Dave

President:
David Green

Vice President:
Tina Petway

Treasurer:
Angie Haneiko

Recording Secretary:
Rusti Stover

Corresponding Secretary:
Jerry Clampit

Visit HCS online at
www.houstonshellclub.com

CALENDAR

5/18/24	HCS Banquet
6/12/24	COA Melbourne, FL
8/12/24	HCS Social
9/15/24	HCS Meeting
10/18/24	Texas Jamboree
7/13/25	COA Coupus Christi

Banquet Menu Choices
Monument Inn, May 18, 2024

Fried Fisherman’s Platter
Fried Shrimp (12)
Broiled Tilapia with Pontchartrain Sauce
Grilled 10 oz Angus Ribeye Steak
Chicken Brest with Sauteed Onions, Mushrooms and Red Wine Sauce

HCS members and guests will make their choices on the menu upon arrival at The Monument Inn on May 18.

April MINUTES

Submitted by Rusti Stover

President Dave Green called the meeting to order at 2:05 PM on Sunday, April 21, 2024 at the meeting place, Immanuel Lutheran Church. All Board members were present. A motion was made by Steven Coker and seconded by Frank Petway to approve the minutes of the March meeting. All approved. Treasurer Angie Haneiko gave a report, and stated that the club storage unit is under new management, but the fee for the room has not changed, it is \$94 a month, and the club pays it yearly along with insurance.

Membership Chair Lucy Clampit stated it’s time to pay membership dues and that 4 members present at the meeting have not paid yet.

Dave mentioned that the date for the Summer Social would be Monday August 12, again at the Cleburne Cafeteria location, starting at 5:30 PM and going until 7:30 pm. He also stated that tickets for the May 18th end of season banquet at the Monument Inn can be purchased today. More information for this event will be in the May newsletter. Dave will be giving a short program at the Summer Social, about the COA 2025 convention which will be held in Corpus Christi, Texas. COA this year is in Melbourne, Florida, running from June 12th through 16th. All Field Trips for this year’s convention have been canceled.

Dave and Wanda Coker talked about the Sea Shell Searchers Shell Show in October of this year, along with the biannual Shellers Jamboree which will be held October 18th and 19th. More information will be upcoming in the fall newsletters and announcements. There will also be no October meeting because of the Jamboree.

Wanda Coker mentioned that the last meeting of this season for the Sea Shell Searchers will be Saturday May 4th, and there should be more information and forms on the Brazoria Museum website for the October Shell show, soon, at www.bmns.org

Angie Haneiko mentioned she received a large envelope with photos and information from Richard Wittington about his wife, who died in 2017, and apparently, was a club member back in the 1960s. She brought the packet to the meeting to see if anyone remembered her.

Dave mentioned he is downsizing his shell collection, and he brought some fine specimens to the meeting for anyone interested to peruse after the program. Lucy also

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Minutes from page 2 mentioned there are 3 covered tables of free shells and shell related items in the back of the room, which will be uncovered after the program, for members to go through and take. There is a donation box if anyone feels like giving a donation for the items.

Mary Harris made a motion to end the meeting at 2:35 PM, Frank Petway seconded, all approved.

Shell Show/Jamboree

The Sea Shell Searchers will be hosting their Shell Show in conjunction with the San Antonio Shell Club's Texas Shellers Jamboree **October 17-19**, at the Civic Center in Lake Jackson, so please mark your calendars. Shell Show setup and activities will begin on **Thursday, October 17**. The Jamboree will begin on **Friday, October 18**. Both events will end on the 19th. The Shell Show is free, but you will need to pay a registration fee to participate in the Jamboree activities. More information will be available soon, so stay tuned.

COA 2024

It's not too late to register for the **June 12-16** convention in Melbourne, FL at the Hilton Melbourne hotel. The field trips have been canceled, but there are many interesting things to do on your own in the area. Also, there will be interesting and informative programs presented by a wide variety of speakers. And we can't forget the Bourse where shell dealers from around the world sell shells that will take your breath away. Many of the foreign dealers will be returning this year. Registration forms can be found here: [2024-COA-Registration-Forms.pdf](https://conchologistssofamerica.org/2024-COA-Registration-Forms.pdf) (conchologistssofamerica.org). For hotel reservations call: 321-768-0200. Use Group Code COA24.

Membership renewals

The HCS year is **June 1-May 31**, so it's time to renew your membership if you have not already done so. If you read the newsletter on-line, and you have not paid, you will receive an email with a membership form attached. If you receive a paper copy of the newsletter, and you have not paid, a form is included with this issue. You can pay with check or cash at the banquet

Molluscs on Currency

by John Jacobs

Today, I created a new Facebook page called "Molluscs on Currency". Thematic collecting in the world of numismatics is a growing area so I thought I would start this for us coin and banknote collectors who have a bent towards molluscs. Coins, tokens, medals and banknotes from ancient times and continuing have depicted molluscs in various forms. If you are interested, please check out this new page.



Austria 20240417, 25euro, Silver .900 Niobium 998, 34mm, 16.5g, mintage 65000 obverse

A new collector coin from Austria was issued Apr 17, 2024. The obverse depicts an ammonite, while the reverse shows a land snail. The 25 euro coin is made of .900 silver and niobium. It is 34mm in diameter and weighs 16.5 grams. The mintage is 65,000.

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Austria 20240417, 25euro, Silver .900 Niobium 998, 34mm, 16.5g, mintage 65000 reverse

From the Austrian Mint website:

The latest silver-niobium coin turns the bottom upside down: it shows us what we otherwise hardly notice. It shows all the life that makes our life possible in the first place: the Edaphon, which refers to the totality of living beings in the soil. All of them together create a meaningful chaos that ensures growth and always gives rise to new life.

Diverse life in the soil

Without them, nothing works, without all the small and large creatures, without the microorganisms, bacteria, worms, fungi, insect larvae, springtails, without earthworms and moles. They make things thrive, they help farmers to produce successfully.

The edaphon breaks down organic matter, i.e. what falls from the trees as waste or remains from the harvest. It ensures that the cycle of life keeps going. It produces humus, which has very important properties: humus provides nutrients to the plants, protects the soil from erosion, ensures a granular soil structure, stores water and compensates for temperature fluctuations.

The Edaphon is exposed to various threats. One of them reduces the quality of the soil and is related to climate change. When it gets warmer, there is a risk that the humus levels will decrease and the soil will dry out. If a heavy rain event occurs, the soil is no longer able to absorb these large amounts of water. This increases the tendency to erode, for example.

A second threat is more than that: it means the complete destruction of the Edaphon. With the sealing of natural soil, its useful functions are also lost: water storage, filtering of pollutants, sequestration of carbon. At present, about 11.5 hectares of natural soil are used per day in Austria, about 50% of which is built upon.

More and more human actors are becoming aware of the fact that we need the actors working in the ground to survive. It is important to prevent our land, this precious and indispensable resource, from becoming a scarce commodity. – Let's not trample on the foundations of our lives. If the ground is doing well, we are all doing well.

MOLLUSKAN MYSTERIES FROM GALVESTON, TEXAS

(Editor: This article was written by Tina Petway for the Houston Museum of Natural Science "Member News." The photo is used with the permission of photographer Ken Groue. This is an amazing shell. If you haven't seen in in the Strake Hall of Malacology, plan to do so.)

There are many mysteries surrounding mollusks that intrigue and inspire us. Several years ago two sisters offered the donation of a mysterious shell which I did add to the Houston Museum Of Natural Science Malacology Collection after hearing a brief history of the shell. The sisters had inherited it from their father, Robert Webb who had inherited it from his father, both of which had been residents of Galveston, Texas. When I was first contacted about the shell, I assumed it would turn out to be another offer of a "Much-Loved-Shell" such as the "Queen Conch Doorstop" we are all so familiar with. So I asked to be sent an image of the shell to my cell phone. That image just blew me away! I asked our photographer to get me an enlargement of the shell's image so that I could better appreciate the details which were so extensive that even shading on the windows was visible. There was so much to delight the eye as well as historic information which included the image of a beautiful Victorian building, the name of the building, the artist's name and the date: 1895!

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Thus began the quest to learn as much as possible about it from the donating family. Unfortunately, they were not able to provide me with much more than their Father's and Grandfather's names and that some family members had lived in Galveston during the time period mentioned on the shell itself. OK, so if you have not already taken a good look at the details of the shell, now is the time. The shell is of course, a Tiger Cowrie; *Cypraeidae Cypraea tigris*. But now the first mystery: where was the specimen from; The Philippine Islands, Indonesia, Solomon Islands, Australia, East Africa or one of the myriad other localities known to be habitat for this common species? And what was it doing in Galveston, Texas in 1895? Next question, was the date on the shell real or was this a forgery done for the tourist trade in Galveston. Well my first thought to begin that search was to verify that there had been a building called "Harmony Hall" in Galveston in 1895. After checking several sites on the internet, I found a photo of Harmony Hall in Galveston dated "1895". It did match the image engraved on the shell, but that could have been done any time since 1895 and the 1895 date might have been added to make the shell appear to be an antique. Whoa, now we add the complication of the Great Hurricane of 1900 to Galveston. That infamous storm destroyed much of the city and its buildings, homes, businesses and population. So did this building also survive? Yes, it had survived with major flooding and moderate damage to the building itself. The damage was repaired with only very minor revisions and ownership of the building changed hands. Incidentally, this beautiful Victorian building was only completed in 1888.

At this point I had some facts surrounding the image on the shell, but what about the artist who managed to capture this scene of Victorian life in Galveston and signed the piece of artwork? Did the artist produce any other works of art? Was the artist a resident of Galveston? Remember that Galveston was a major port city and a Port of Entry to the U.S. for hundreds of thousands of immigrants from Europe and other countries around the world in the 1800's. Was he or she a resident of Galveston or just moving through and trying to raise money to move further into Texas or beyond? I began by looking up H. P. Nettleton on the



internet, and there was nothing about him or her that I was able to find. My next step would have been to go to Galveston and look through their records, but time was not on my side and I was needed to resume work on other projects for the Museum's Malacology Dept. So here ended my search for answers about this fantastic shell and its amazing image; or so I thought. There still remained unanswered questions in my mind such as how did this Pacific species get to Galveston and who brought it? Had it been a treasured item brought from distant shores by the person who commissioned the image to be done? Why was this building so important to the shell's owner that he must have spent a lot of money on the production of the image? Were there other images produced by the artist? What was the artist's background **Continued on page 6**

into the technique used to produce this intricate image (the Dremel Tool didn't exist in 1895). Thus proving that the artist was highly trained and educated in the fine art of engraving. But for me, it was time to move on to other projects awaiting my attention not to mention the desk piled high with books and papers.

When in 2018, I was told that I would be able to design a completely new Hall of Malacology for the Museum to be completed in 2019, my mind whirled and my heart beat faster! Of course one of my first thoughts was of the *Cypraea tigris* with the engraving of the building in Galveston and how could I incorporate it into one of the exhibits. I knew this special shell had to be shared with our hundreds of thousands of yearly museum visitors. During the planning stages of the new Hall I was asked to give several lectures about mollusks and what would be the focus of the Malacology Hall. Some of the lectures were for our hundreds of volunteers and Docents during what we call "Brown Bag Lunches" to show images of some of the special shells and artifacts that would be exhibited and why they were important. I always included a slide of the Tiger Cowrie and spoke of some of the mysteries surrounding that shell. It was during one of these lectures that one of our volunteers, Kayla Hatch, was struck by all the unknowns about this shell and ignited in her a passion for finding out more. Kayla began a search of her own, which took her to the Genealogy Library in Galveston. She relates that going through stacks and stacks of dusty old volumes took months and months, especially since all this research had to be done in her time off from work.

After several weeks of looking through a certain volume of former residents of Galveston, Kayla found the name, H. P. Nettleton. He had worked in a curio shop in Galveston. Further research found that the Rosenberg Public Library in Galveston had in its collection of artifacts another shell that had been engraved by H. P. Nettleton, and it also had an image of a Victorian building in Galveston in 1895. Kayla called me to ask if I wanted to accompany her and Ryan to Galveston to see the shell in the collection of the Rosenberg Public Library. (Incidentally, this amazing Library was the first free public library in Texas.) We were met by Eleanor Barton, one of the Library's curators who produced 3 other carved or engraved shell artifacts. She was able to add to our knowledge about our Nettleton shell, which included the information that he had owned a curio shop in Galveston and had also produced engravings on shells of other local buildings. These were reproduced in a book, but they did not have a copy of the book either.

Searching the internet has not produced that book for us to acquire and we continue to hope to find a copy of it for the history and images it contains. There are many of us collectors who have purchased shells that were special and even antique. It is our hope that after seeing this shell and its image and reading of the work of H. P. Nettleton, others may contact us about a shell in their possession that was part of the original set of shells with these amazing images of Victorian life in Galveston before the Hurricane of 1900. There remain more mysteries about the work of Mr. Nettleton in the late 1800's and early 1900's. If there are any of you who have knowledge of these shells or Mr. Nettleton, the Houston Museum of Natural Science and the Richmond Public Library in Galveston, Texas would love to hear from you. Mollusks have taken us to so many places and have been so important to the history of man. We continue learning of the ways they have influenced the lives of humans since our history began. We hope to locate others of Mr. Nettleton's works of art and will continue this search and answer some of the remaining mysteries surrounding this shell's creator and life in Texas in the late 1800's to the early 1900's.

In Memoriam

Darwin Alder was born in Utah on April 6, 1949. He was the third of seven children. He spent his growing up years in Brigham City and Layton, Utah and graduated from Utah State University.

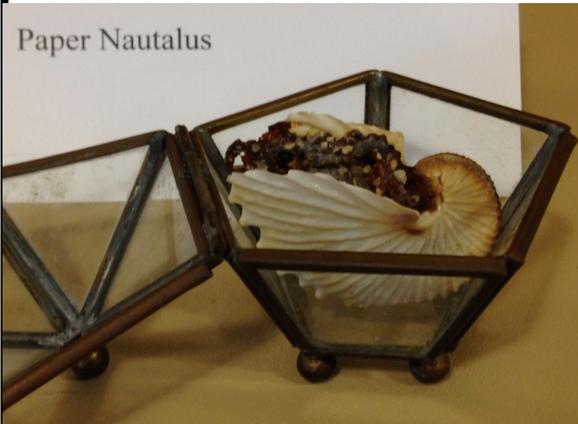
If you spent much time around Darwin, you soon realized that he loved looking for and finding things in nature and traveling. When he was 16, he combined both interests on a trip to Oregon with his grandparents. When he saw the beautiful marine critters in the Pacific Ocean, he was hooked!

He moved to Houston in the early 1980s. While he was beachcombing, he met Houston Conchology Society member Connie Boone. She convinced him to join the HCS.

Darwin rapidly became an integral part of the club. Through the years, he served in almost every office, including president. For several years, he served as assistant editor or editor of the club's scientific publication the *Texas Conchologist*. Among other things, he wrote articles for the club's publications, gave programs, and used his craft skills to help with the making of ornaments and decorating the annual Christmas tree at the Houston Museum of Natural Science. He was always willing to help.



Paper Nautilus



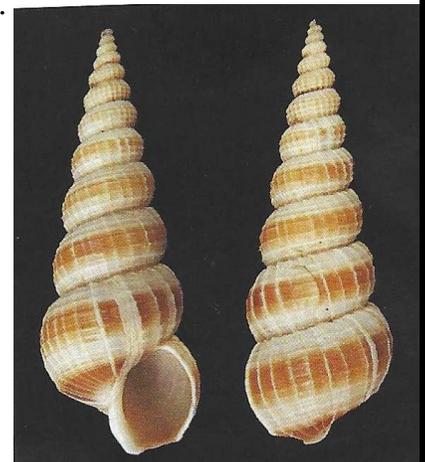
One of his favorite activities was working on the annual auction. He loved going through the boxes of donated shells, sorting them and identifying them. He also served as auctioneer for several years.

Through the years, he went on many shell collecting trips, some with other HCS members. In March 1993, while he was on a club trip to La Paz, Mexico, he was lucky enough to collect an intact Paper Nautilus, *Argonauta argo*, an unusual find.

Darwin loved to collect small shells. Epitoniums were his favorite. He was especially thrilled when he found an *Amaea mitchelli*, an uncommon Texas shell.

His persistence in searching through piles small shells paid off. In 2020, Ed Petuch and David Berschauer named *Stramonita alderi* for Darwin and published it in *The Festivus* – the journal published by the San Diego Shell Club. With their permission, it was reprinted in the HCS newsletter. You can see pictures of the shell and read the article here: [Epitonium May 2020](#).

HCS members send their condolences to Darwin's family. We will all miss him.



Amaea mitchelli picture from *Encyclopedia of Texas Shells* by Wes Tunnell, et al.

The *Epitonium* is published prior to each meeting August through May and is an official publication of the Houston Conchology Society. Items of interest concerning shells and shelling are welcome for publication. Credit will be given to contributors when known unless anonymity is requested.

Permission is granted for reprinting articles, provided credit is given to *The Epitonium*, the writer, and the Houston Conchology Society and a copy of the reprint is sent to the editor of the newsletter.

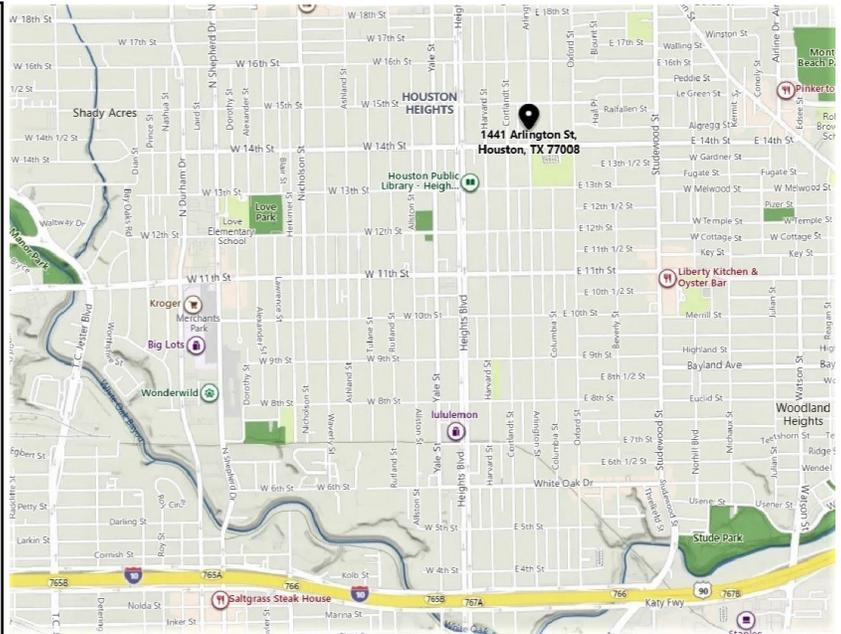
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The Society holds regular meetings on the third Sunday of September, October, November, January, February and April. There are seasonal events and a yearly shell auction scheduled in the other months.

VISITORS WELCOME!!!

Membership year extends from June 1 through May 31.
Annual membership dues: Family \$20; Single \$15; Junior (under 18) \$6.

Make checks payable to Houston Conchology Society and send to HCS Treasurer, 11407 Blackhawk Blvd., Houston, TX 77089.



Immanuel Lutheran Church

306 E. 15th Street

HOUSTON CONCHOLOGY SOCIETY

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