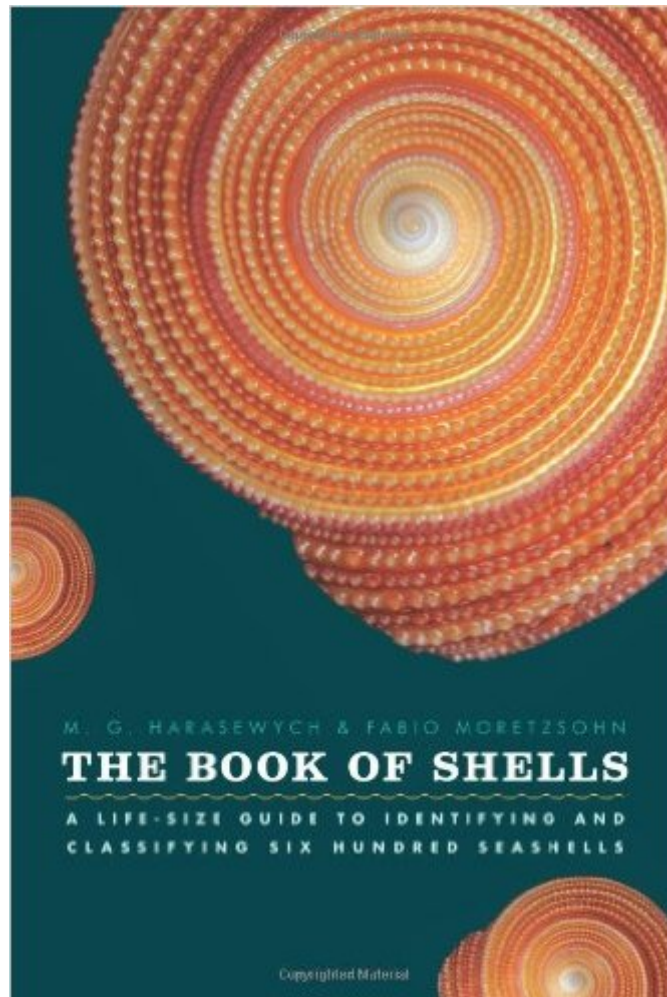


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The Book Of Shells: A Life-Size Guide To Identifying And Classifying Six Hundred Seashells



Synopsis

Who among us hasn'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 shell's range, distribution, abundance, habitat, and operculum—the piece that protects the mollusk when it'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 collectors—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 Oyster—shells from habitats spanning the poles and the tropics, from the highest mountains to the ocean's deepest recesses, are all on display in this definitive work.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I first read about this book in the New York Times. It had good reviews and from the Times recommendation, I bought it. It is not the best of books for shell identification. Abbott's "Compendium of Seashells", is so far the best for identification. As a collector, naming the shells that you see or have is a great pleasure. This book still lacks the comprehensiveness of Abbott's, but it is fair enough. Compared to most other books, which are just art photographs, this one combines beautiful photography with enough entries to place your specimen. One wishes that there are more entries, but it is heavy enough. For the more advanced collector, it is sufficient. A point in its favor, that Abbott's doesn't have, is its "actual size" posting. For the professional collector, one has to go to regional books of shells of the regions. Alan Hinton's books of shells of the Australian and Papua New Guinea, and Fely Leobrera's "Shells of the Philippines", are very good in connecting one's knowledge about very common and rare shells. And for those who are starting, "Fields Guide to Shells" is the best.

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 amateur collector just getting started out like myself you will not be dissatisfied, 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.

This is another great book by Jerry (Curator of Mollusks at the Smithsonian) The *Life Size* 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.

The Book of Shells is a fascinating look at one of nature's free gifts, seashells. Filled with beautiful life-size photos of shells, this book is a feast for the eyes. It's really interesting to see all of the varieties of sizes and colors. At 655 pages, this book contains much more than pretty pictures of 600 different shells from all over the world. Each page is dedicated to a different shell and like any good guidebook, The Book of Shells contains general knowledge pertaining to each shell, information on related shell species as well as maps for locating where each specific shell can be found. The introduction of this book also contains valuable lessons on shell and mollusk anatomy, the history of shell collecting and tips for identifying seashells. I am not a collector of shells, so I can't speak to the book's professional worthiness. I am a homeschooling mom who used this book to enhance a study of the ocean. For the price, this book is way out of my budget range (I got this book at the library), however as an educational resource this book is quite valuable.

Very thorough, great photographs, plenty of science. And it's a cross between a coffee table book and a reference source; easy to leave it out so you're more likely to use/browse it.

As a jewelry designer I found this book to be a rich, luxurious compendium of mind boggling and inspiring images, countless variations of one main subject!

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.

This was a gift for my father-in-law who is in the local shell club here in Panama City, Florida. He was super thrilled to receive this wealth of information on shells that he so is enthralled with. Great find for him.

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