

Shell club member discovers 'supe



John Timmerman, left, and Amy Dick at the N.C. Shell Club meeting on Ocracoke.

Text and photos by Peter Vankevich

Shell collecting has been a life-long passion for Amy Dick which started as a teenager with beachcombing forays with her mother.

From Smithfield, Va., she has kept good records over the years and may have come up with the most significant find of her life during the two-day North Carolina spring meeting held at the Ocracoke Community Center the weekend of March 24.

Although Ocracoke beach has an excellent reputation for shell collecting, the nearly 50 members attending this yearly meeting were more interested in Saturday's Portsmouth Island excursion.

Due to its closeness to the Gulf Stream, isolation and long expansive beaches and dunes, shell collecting on Portsmouth

Island can be extraordinary.

"Within 15 minutes of getting off the boat, I noticed a very unusual shape in the sand beneath some shrubs," Dick said. "When I pulled it out, I knew it was something very unusual."

Club member John Timmerman, who chairs the annual shell show, identified it as a subfossil of a *Scaphella junonia* which has two common names, the *junonia* and *Juno's volute*.

A subfossil is a specimen

that's not fully fossilized.

"It's a super find for North Carolina," he said while examining the grayish brown shell. Live *junonias* are white with large, rich brown spots.

"They live in deep water throughout their entire range and are usually found by sponge and scuba divers and pulled in by deep water trawlers," Timmerman said. "So, to find one on the beach is extraordinary."

Everett Long, club president, said this shell is from Florida and most likely followed the Gulf Stream up here many years ago.

Dick's shell was awarded the "super find" of the meeting.

After feasting on chili, shrimp and lots of desserts, the Friday evening kick-off featured islander and former director of the Ocracoke Preservation Society, Amy Howard.

She talked about the unusual finds on her many beach walks over the years.

Some of the highlights were an old machine gun casing, large chunks of coal probably from steam ships and interesting pieces of glass.

Both evenings featured silent auctions to bid on unusual shells collected throughout the world. Saturday's gathering featured taking shell measurements.

Members Ann Sommers and Brady Semmel received new state records for shells they had