

Recycling A Shell Collection

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It is not uncommon for a collector of shells to have little shared interest in the collection by family members or to leave questions about what to do with a collection inherited by a family member. What will happen to the shells for which one has put their life and soul into gathering and curating? In this essay I explore elements and suggestions for the disposition of a shell collection.

It is unfortunate if a collection of inspired beauty, assembled with passion is sent to “the landfill” which aside from the emotional cost, is a waste of an increasingly precious resource. If no instructions or action prior to the passing of yourself or a relative have been made, that is a distinct possibility if the collection ends up the hands of a person harried by time constraints and or little knowledge of the shells.

Assessing a Shell Collection

As with any collectable, knowledge of the objects enhances the chance for a satisfying result.

Emotions cannot be a factor in the equation when moving the shells to a new collection. The thrill derived from the personal experience at discovering a shell is an example of an emotion that does not transfer to the next owner. A shell may hold great significance to the person who found it but in reality may have little value to any other collector. To be pragmatic the essay outlines options detached from emotion. Some parameters outlined are subject to change over time due to new regulations and or simply a sometimes fickle marketplace.

Shells in the Marketplace and Assessing the Collection

Shells have value and selling a collection can be a rewarding experience. A collection may be imagined a “golden nest egg,” ready for a handsome dividend when sold. If only it was that simple. The investment in a collection via purchases and or the expense of collecting shells oneself may prove to be challenging to realize at a full return of the funds invested, when it is sold.

Market Fluctuations

Shell value can be volatile. For each shell that gains value there are many more that lose it. A classic example is Glory of the Seas Cone. In the mid-20th century a large, fine condition specimen could require a couple thousand dollars to add to a collection. In 2024 in the advent of many more specimens on the market supplied by industrious fishermen, the value slipped to no more than a couple hundred dollars for an equivalent shell. If you purchased the shell in the past and sell it now, realize that a potential buyer who is familiar with the present market is not attempting to cheat you with an offer much less than you paid. A way to look at it is that you have rented a shell and certainly derived pleasure equal to or greater than its depreciated value. Market demand may improve value of a shell in which no relative abundance has been realized through the best efforts of collectors. A shell may be found in a place very difficult to access. Where they live in greater numbers may yet to be discovered. Despite the effort of collectors little improvement in abundance has been realized thus the value remains stable. A shell that remains costly is Roy Bells’ Bonnet. It’s found off New Zealand. It has defied effort by collectors to bring many to light. It is a large, attractive shell meeting a key requisite for desirability. The market for the shell remains robust in 2024.

A desirable shell which has always been and remains scarce to collectors

Roy Bell's Bonnet

Semicassis royana (Iredale, 1914)

146.2mm (5.75")

It lives in deep water off New Zealand. The species lives on hard bottom which damages fishing gear such as trawls. It lives too deep for divers. Specimens are typically caught in lobster traps where a hermit crab occupying the shell crawls into the trap. The shell may have been damaged by the crab and or degradation from exposure to the environment. Very fresh dead specimens in beautiful condition remain very scarce and command a premium price.



A hard to find shell which value kept pace with inflation.

Checkered Cowrie

Luria tessellata (Swainson, 1822)

32.7mm (1.25") Hawaii (endemic)

A shell only found in Hawaii is the endemic Checkered Cowrie. Specimens have always been scarce. 50 years ago a fine specimen in the size range of 30mm could be added to a collection for \$90. In 2024 an equivalent shell may cost upwards of \$600. A surge in the market a few years prior to 2024 raised the value to a level that appeared shocking. Adjusting for inflation, the new value had in reality changed little in the time span. Prior to 2024 it supported the premise shells are poor monetary investment. The change in the market made the shell an exception to the rule that such objects are not a good investment. Despite the effort of divers, no improved abundance of the shell has been realized thus when market demand improved, the value increased.



Abundance

Abundance lowers value. When a shell is highly valued, fishermen and collectors redouble the effort to collect additional specimens. The fisherman that collects a shell worth \$1000 certainly has a better result to the day's work than one worth \$10. The result of many successful quests for a rare shell is the value of new and existing specimens can decrease. Mollusks are always living and making new shells thus the chance that more will come to market may be good.

Scarcity

A shell is not necessarily rare. There needs to be enough living animals to maintain a viable population. Factors governing human enterprise to collect examples create scarcity in collections. Difficult to access places, where shells live or collecting regulations are examples of factors that can drive scarcity.

An example of why viewing shells as a good investment is unwise

Lister’s Conch

Mirastrombus listeri (T. Gray, 1852)

136.3mm (5 3/8”)

This is a story of loss of value in a shell. In the mid 20th century, specimens of the shell were very scarce to collectors and a nice one could easily cost \$1000 or adjusted for inflation in 2024, \$13,062.

When fishermen in Thailand discovered where to find them in abundance the value fell. In 2024 a fine specimen cost \$20 or adjusted for inflation, \$1.53 in 1950 dollars. This shell would have been a terrible financial investment.



Politics and Environmental Concerns

Market demand must be robust to maintain or raise value of a shell where few new examples are being found. Regulations may be implemented to conserve a fishery and or completely shut it down. A desirable shell that is no longer available freshly collected may jump considerably in market value as the only way to get one is out of the limited resource such as existing collections.

Politics change availability of shells. Shells once generally available to the worldwide market may become difficult or impossible to obtain due to conflict zones or regulations. Collectors that want one of a given species may have to look to acquiring one from an existing collection where it was acquired before trade limits excluded acquiring a recently collected specimen.

Bear Paw (Giant) Clam

Hippopus hippopus (Linnaeus, 1758)

80.5mm (3 1/8”)

S.W. Pacific

This shell is listed by CITES as a species of concern (CITES II). Importing and exporting must be done with approved permits from the originating and receiving countries. Due the complexity of obtaining permits most importers have opted to no longer trade in shells listed by CITES. There are seldom limitations on trade of those shells already within USA prior to a listing, thus obtaining one from an existing collection is a viable alternative. The value by result has increased. Stony corals which are often associated with shell collections, fall within this category of collectables.



Condition

Shells are no different than any other collectable concerning condition. A live collected shell in pristine condition is worth more than the same species recovered dead, damaged, worn and or faded.

Storage of a collection may impact value of a shell. Byne's Disease defines a shell that has been damaged through being stored in an acidic environment. The surface of the shell has been etched and dulled. The degraded shell has lost significant value.

Color fading of a specimen reduces value. Some species no matter what effort is practiced to slow or stop it, fade. Golden Cowrie is a well-known shell of potentially high value where the color fades no matter what one does. Keeping the shell in a dark cabinet can slow the fading but it will still lose color over a span of many years. Shells displayed in a sunny room may fade significantly.

If a shell has been broken, the value is significantly reduced. Shells found already damaged are significantly less valued than undamaged ones. A mollusk whose shell was damaged and then repaired through natural growth is less valuable than one without such marks. Many collectors have dropped and broken a shell. The event can be a heartbreaking. Gluing it back together does not restore lost value.



A Shell that Fades

Golden Cowrie

Callistocypraea aurantium (Gmelin, 1791)
97.1mm (3 13/16")

A shell collected in 1984 that has lost a high percentage of its original color. \$250 was paid for it at the time. Today the value is likely less than \$100. When it was purchased the value of the famous species had begun to come down due to more specimens being found. The market has recovered some from a low due to export restrictions implemented on shells found in the Philippines, a country where many of the shells on the world market originated.



Golden Cowrie

Callistocypraea aurantium (Gmelin, 1791)

A very fresh collected shell showing the vivid deep orange color the species is famous for. The shell was featured in a listing on the auction site eBay.

Fresh shells are sometimes termed "Tomato Cowrie." The color rapidly fades to orange.

Collecting Data

Full collecting data with a shell increases the value to many collectors. Collecting data records where the shell was found. It is of utmost importance to science. Scientifically minded collectors require that a collecting record be included with all of the shells they own. The more detailed the collecting data, the better! Shells with no data are worthless to science.

In the present moment as a collector adds shells to the collection, a note or data tag recording where the shell was collected is created and kept with the shell. A separate catalog is very helpful and encouraged. A catalog provides a valuable safety in keeping track of the data. An India ink control number corresponding to the catalog is written on the specimen. If a data tag is separated from the shell, the control number on it can be matched to the record in a catalog. Be sure to keep the catalog with the collection. I have handled collections where data tags are absent and there is no known catalog. Control numbers are written on the shells indicating there was a catalog at some point.

Another factor driving absence of data is human memory. Our minds become cluttered with many things to remember and it's easy to forget. Create a tag and keep it with the shell as soon as you get it at minimum until you make time to add it to the catalog. Identifying the shell on the tag is important. If the data tag is separated from the shell but still in hand, there is a better chance it can be reunited to the shell. When a collection is packed, tags may end up in a pile separate from the shells. Being able to match the tags to the shells is important to their value. Without the identification, matching data tags to shells can be daunting especially concerning a large collection. If a data tag is completely mislaid a catalog with corresponding control numbers is crucial to recovering data for the shell. There are computer based catalog programs. Be sure to back it up!

If you have forgotten where a shell came from do not attempt to create data. Experienced collectors will find inconsistencies in a created record and if glaringly incorrect, the entire collection may become suspect in their assessment.

Memory of Others

Word of mouth can be a fickle resource for accurate collection data. A frequently encountered situation is a now deceased relative related they personally collected the shells from sounds, bays, the ocean or beaches in a specific region, but some of the shells could never have been found there as they are from different parts of the world. Perhaps they were purchased from a shop where the original owner also collected shells but it was not found to naturally occur there. A shop keeper may in error have informed the customer a shell they were purchasing did indeed live there.

Purchased Shells

Purchased shells span the gambit from the scientific specimen in pristine condition including detailed collecting data, to a specimen purchased at a curio shop as a souvenir and or decoration for the home or office. Souvenir or "commercial" shells generally lack collecting data. Using a reference book that identifies a shell is from for example, "Indo-Pacific" is not the definition of the scientific collecting data that enhances value.

Make a Shell Prettier

Making a shell prettier seems like an oxymoron. Shells may be modified by the human hand to render them more attractive for market. Treating a shell with acid can make color appear more vivid and the surface more glossy. Coating such as varnish may be applied to the shell. Polishing and other mechanical applications are intended to render a shell more attractive to the eye. Naturally shiny shells such as cowries that have become dull may be polished to return the sheen but it is never as good as the gloss the mollusk first made its shell with. Painting may replace lost markings or color. Though some of the treatments are very well done, any of them can significantly reduce scientific value.

Forgeries

Modification of shells is not limited to the commercial trade. Within the scientific shell trade modifications by humans to enhance shell value is practiced. The efforts are often referred to as “doctoring.” Doctoring can be incredibly skilled and fool even the experienced collector. Discovering a doctored shell in your collection is disappointing, especially if someone else identifies it as such. Don’t shoot the messenger! Doctored shells have a niche market for the skill they represent and or for humor, as long as one did not spend a small fortune buying a rare shell only to discover later it was dead taken and in very poor condition! The market in doctored shells never matches the value of ones not retouched. Some doctoring goes to the extreme of creating something rarely or never seen in nature. Albino and reverse turned shells are popular subjects. Even minor doctoring such as smoothing a nicked lip can reduce the value.

Counterfeit Shell

Marble Cone

Conus marmoreus Linnaeus, 1758

Left, a genuine shell 90.6mm (3 9/16”)

Right, counterfeit 90.1mm (3.5”)

Some sinistral or left- turned gastropods or snails are exceedingly rare or completely unknown in a species that normally spiral clock-wise or dextrally. In this instance the sinistral shell was created by cutting up dextrally turned shells and reassembling them with a generous amount of cement filler and paint, yielding a “once in a life-time shell.” No naturally occurring sinistral marble cones are known to naturally exist.

To the trained eye the forgery stands out immediately. It is so well done that for the inexperienced collector it could prove to be a costly lesson about such shells. If the forger can get away with it they may ask a high premium for a shell no one has ever seen. When I first saw this shell the painting of the markings immediately stood out as false. However, the reverse turn of the spire did not immediately register as I was focused on the painting, pondering why someone would spend time covering up damage on a common species where the work would not yield an improvement in value worth the effort. The shell was offered by a reputable dealer who charged very little for it. They had acquired the shell from an estate that was being recycled. There is no telling if the original “shell doctor” attempted to sell it at a high premium.

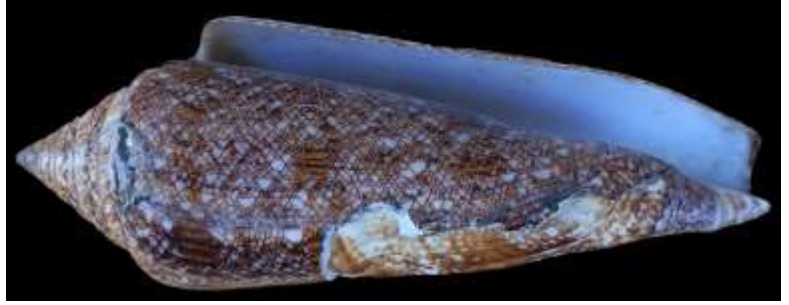


Glory-of-the-seas Cone

Conus gloriamaris Chemnitz, 1777

126.3mm (4 15/16")

This is a glory-of-the-seas cone with a significant growth mend from a crab attack. The damage greatly reduced the value despite an impressive sized shell, for the species.



Doctored Shell

Glory-of-the-seas Cone

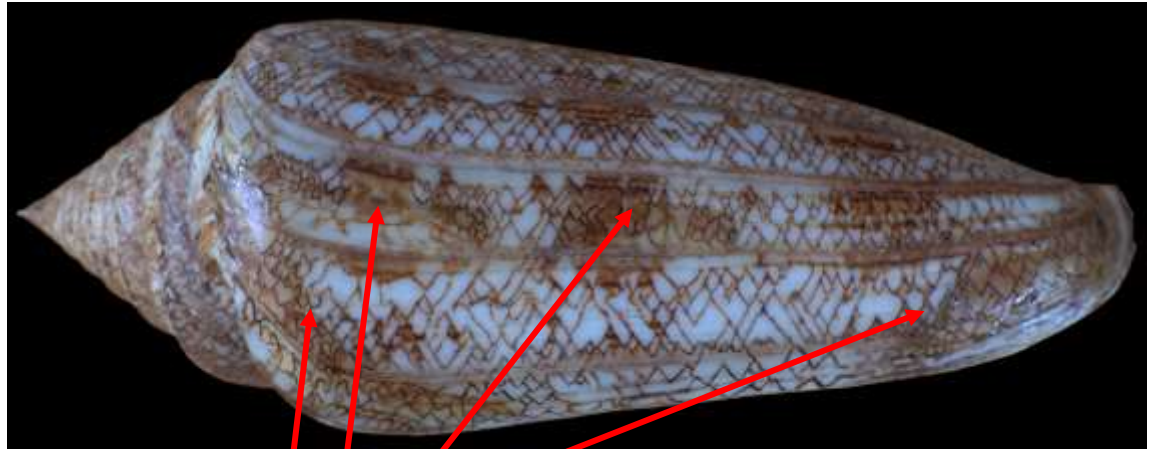
Conus gloriamaris

Chemnitz, 1777

141.4mm (5 9/16")

A valuable shell

especially in an extra-large dimension is this Glory-of-the-seas Cone. At 141mm it approaches the dimension of 150mm that is considered a giant in the species. Skilled shell doctors filled the rough areas around the growth mends and painted the filled in areas to match the adjacent natural markings. At first glance the shell appears to be stand out by size and perfection.



A "Perfect" Shell

Glory-of-the-seas Cone

Conus gloriamaris Chemnitz, 1777

Average size for the species is 3" to 5" with a maximum size at a bit over 6"

This is a relatively large and flawless shell measuring 116.3mm (4 9/16")

Shells may have repaired breaks, commonly referred to as growth mends. The mollusk is food to other sea life, especially crabs which are not always successful at destroying the cone's shell in order to make a meal of it. Few shells are truly perfect but some are very close. That exceptional cone which escaped notice of predators and has a flawless shell is worth a premium to collectors. The larger a specimen in relation to the species maximum size, the scarcer it is. Jumbo glory-of-the-seas cones in excess of six inches in perfect condition with no growth mends, remain rare and have maintained better value than smaller examples.



Becoming Familiar with the Market

Research the value of shells. There are Internet shells for sale sites where the going rate for shells can be discovered. Keep in mind the factors of quality. It also depends on the seller. For an exact equivalent shell one dealer may ask considerably more than the next. The more you browse price lists the more your confidence in value. Some sites include notes concerning the market and or biology of shells. There are purely informational websites on mollusks including little in the way of pricing/value but are important to knowledge about shells.

A Significant Condition Issue

Golden Cowrie

Callistocypraea aurantium (Gmelin, 1791)

93.2mm (3 5/8")

For a shell like this where a clear, perfect exterior adds to its attractiveness the obvious and by many standards ugly growth mend, detracts from the presentation. Some people will not consider including a shell like this in their collection.

Browsing shell lists you will see notations about condition and learn how damage such as this can negatively impact value.



An always desirable shell that was once easy to obtain but now isn't

Junoia (Volute)

Scaphella junonia (Lamarck, 1804)

119.6mm (4 11/16")

The shell many years ago was very affordable. The specimen shown was purchased in the late 1970s for \$10. Adjusting for inflation the value in 2024 is \$48.28. By 2024 the market value for the species had improved greatly due to the elimination of an important resource for new specimens. Many were formerly recovered from the tailings of scallop trawlers. Subsequent regulation removed the source. In 2024 specimens like this, sell for the range of \$200. It's an example of a shell where the value of the investment was good when viewed for monetary return.

Price lists depending on publishing date, may reflect wild swings in market value.



Disposition of a Collection

Before considering the disposition of a collection, double check with your family that there is no interest in it. There may be a desire for a specimen or two to remind them of their “nutty” relative? After it is gone there is virtually no chance of getting it back.

Auctions

Internet auctions often come to mind for selling a collection. Some sites have world-wide reach.

Twenty years ago some internet auctions were not frequented by knowledgeable collectors. I often heard that there was little trust in the knowledge of sellers and buyers thus the serious collector did not want to risk doing business there for the chance of an unsatisfactory result. That has changed. The venues now have many knowledgeable sellers and collectors. There is still the chance of encountering less knowledgeable sellers and buyers. Selecting a site with a feedback system greatly enhances confidence. Auction markets can be fickle. What one week will sit unsold will generate lots of interest the following week. Factor the time it takes to document listings especially with good photographs which are a must, packing and shipping safely to winners. In focus pictures of both sides of the shell are important as well as noting any damage or defects. Guard against exaggerated color of the shells via preparing photographs for a listing. For a very large collection this may represent a significant time investment but the return of a good financial return for your shells can be superior to other options. The owners of the sites will require payment of a percentage of your sale. You are benefitting from the market they have established and maintained and the fee paid may be less than other sales options as you are providing a lot of the labor.

Specimen Shell Dealers

Reputable specimen shell dealers purchase collections for resale. Selling to a dealer can be handy in that they come to where the collection is. If they buy the collection they pack and remove it, write you a check and it's done. Unlike doing it yourself via an auction site there is no worry about marketing and additional time invested for tasks such as shipping. They save you a lot of time in not having to learn about the market.

A dealer may sell shells on consignment. The percentage share for the dealer may be considerably lower than if they purchased the collection. Over time you will receive payments amounting to a favorable return compared to an outright sale. They may be willing to sponsor an auction of your shells.

An important factor to interest a professional dealer is the collection must include valuable shells to make it worth time invested in a transaction. They will spend as much time marketing a \$500 shell as a \$10 one. Obviously the \$500 shell will better pay their bills. With enough of the “expensive” shells they will tolerate less desirable shells to purchase an entire collection. They may have no interest in less valuable shells.

The value realized in selling to a dealer is wholesale. They have to curate and prepare the shells for their customers to be displayed at shows, sold via the Internet and or mail order. If you sell it to a dealer it saves a lot of time on your part and the shells will end up in new collections. There must be enough excellent shells to make it worth the dealer's time. Initially providing a list and or photographs via email saves time and prevents frustration for all parties involved.

Dealers may have a customer that has provided them with a want list. Your shell may already have a buyer. It is one example of the benefit of the transaction with the person who has invested the time and established trust in a client base.

Reputable dealers willingly provide a list of references. It's important to request it!

Seek proposals from more than one dealer.

Exercise Caution if thinking about Dividing a Collection

Selling an entire collection as a unit may be preferable. It answers the question of what to do with it quickly. If you allow a buyer to “cherry pick” the best of a collection, the remaining shells may hold significantly reduced or no value for the next buyer as the incentive to buy the collection has been reduced by removal of the best items. A combination of sale and donation of the collection (explored later in this essay) can be a satisfying solution of the question of liquidating the collection.

Making the Sale

If you are inviting a dealer to review your collection but want to keep a few personal favorites, remove them before any contact with the dealer. Be careful about removing too much value off the top lest it damage the overall attractiveness of the collection to the prospective buyer. A dealer wants you to be happy with the transaction. If you display uncertainty and or remove shells from the equation as they work, they may conclude you are not ready to sell and hesitate to make an offer. This is frustrating to the dealer who has in good faith, invested time to that point and may not agree to a “date” in the future. Your catalog may reflect gaps of shells removed. Delete the entry or add a note recording the shell was removed. Missing shells in the database implies sloppiness in managing a collection.

Note: Your collection sold to a dealer will go on to grace many new collections and be enjoyed by new owners. Many dealers and collectors retain the data slips that come with the shells as a history of the collections the shells have been a part of. Your history may be part of the new collection. Recognize that it is highly unlikely the collection will remain as the cohesive unit you assembled.

Complete collecting data including a catalog, control numbering system and data tags greatly enhances the value of a collection to a specimen shell dealer. If you have no collecting data for the shells the collection likely has limited to no value to the dealer. This is where an introductory contact such as sharing a list and photos can save time and be an important first step in exploring a possible business relationship.

Reminder: Check your emotions at the door. Everyone knows collections can have significant emotional attachment for the owner. The more business-like it is kept the better the transaction.

North Carolina Shell Club does not favor any one dealer. We can provide you a list of reputable dealers on request.

A Friend or Acquaintance

A bit of creativity in selling the collection may provide a good dividend. Another collector you know may have interest in buying the collection. As with selling it to a professional dealer there may be enough valuable shells to make it worth handling the common and /or less desirable ones. It is common for collections to include many quality, well documented shells but which are common and of limited value. Either plan to donate parts of it elsewhere or require that it be purchased in its entirety. You may be able to cement a sale if a requirement to purchase less valuable shells is removed from the offer. As already noted, few buyers will pay for the seconds while someone keeps the best, whether it's the seller or a previous buyer.



Museum Donation

A dream of many a collector is that their shells are coveted and will eventually be prized by a museum. Even better, the museum will keep the collection intact and mount a display for the public to see and appreciate for generations to come. The collection will not be placed in vaults where the public cannot readily see it. This certainly has occurred but is not common practice. In the museum world there are long term exhibits but even permanent exhibits may be considered at the end of their life expectancy after 30 years. It's expensive to curate and mount an exhibit. If you find a museum interested in the collection, a generous monetary donation to support curating it into their collection and or mounting an exhibit is a definite plus. Curating and mounting exhibits is not a trivial investment in time and money. If you have purchased cases to store and display a collection you already know how expensive good ones can be. The museum will be able to provide you with a donation amount if it is needed. Be sure that is what the museum wants. Space is generally very limited at museums for collections care and exhibits so what gets exhibited can be subject to considerable thought and discussion. If you identify a museum that wants your collection and has the space to mount an exhibit, be sure they have the funding to do so and confirm a timeline for the opening of the new exhibit. Scientifically documented study collections, especially complete genus assemblages can be a good prospect for a donation. Museums seldom have the funding for staff to do all their own field work so an amateur collection curated at a professional level is appreciated and valuable.

Museums are very reluctant through experience, to accept a collection with stipulations of how it will be used, especially that it must be displayed in perpetuity. Museums are chastened through direct experience or horror stories at other institutions where such agreements have been made. The collection eventually becomes an unwanted hindrance when the contract of gift requires it stay on display. Many museums aren't large enough to leave exhibits in place indefinitely. They want to encourage repeat customers by changing exhibits. Very large museums may have enough exhibits that one visit will not be enough to see everything but they are the exception to the rule.

Research the museum before you inquire if they are interested in your collection. Knowing their mission is important. The museum may not be a good fit for your collection. A museum focused on a small or specific region may have limited or no interest in a worldwide shell collection.

An additional stipulation that a museum is likely to decline your offer is keeping the collection intact, even for research. If the museum says they want the collection, great, but their curators may determine at some point in the future that a specimen from your collection is no longer needed due to acquisition of finer examples or a change in mission. Inclusion in a permanent collection may not be forever. Museum professionals guard against being required to keep a material donation, no matter what. If it is no longer needed the option to offer it to another museum is a first choice, or a sale to support other aspects of their collection if no transfer to another museum can be identified. The shells may be preserved in vaults for scientific study, but never be on public display yet must retain fluidity in disposition.

Space to house the Collection at a Museum

Museums are often very limited in behind the scenes storage space just as they are in public exhibits spaces. They can be very judicious on what they accept. Your collection may not include specimens they do not already have and or not be an improvement or compliment to existing holdings. Even if the museum's mission aligns with your collection, the donation may be declined. Don't take it personally. Not all collections even if documented and curated at a professional level may find a home in a museum.

Educational Programs

A museum may have an education division where the use of disposable props is desired. The props might be classified as a “demonstration collection.” As with permanent collections, storage space can be a significant challenge. Lack of space may render accepting a shell collection out of the question. A portion of a scientific donation may go to into a demonstration collection. Demonstration collections are cared for to the best effort by museum staff but if something is damaged or lost via handling during programming it is not a crisis compared to that specimen in the permanent collection. Recognize this aspect of use if you donate your collection to a museum. You may inspire a child to pursue a lifelong passion in shells by providing something they could touch, compared to one in a locked display case, even at the risk it’s broken or lost. Damaged or broken objects in a demonstration collection having served their purpose, may be discarded.

Tax Credit

When donating a shell collection to a museum, a tax deduction may be desired. Check with the museum to see if they accept collections from private donors seeking a tax credit. As you imagine, the process can be complicated. You may need to have the collection appraised by an independent third party. Some professional shell dealers provide appraisal services. The appraiser must be a person presently active in the commercial trade in shells. If the collection includes many purchased shells from a favorite dealer, that dealer may not be able to provide an appraisal per IRS guidelines. You will need to contact a dealer directly to determine a cost for the service and set up an appointment.

Schools, Universities, other Educational Institutions

Schools may be a hands-on option for a shell collection. Teachers may want shells for classes. The collection may not survive forever. As with museum demonstration collections, damage via use is an ever present risk. Lack of storage may limit interest by a school in a collection.

Universities and colleges may have departments interested in a shell collection. As with museums prior research is helpful to determine interest before reaching out to one. These institutions will likely want a well-documented collection as they may use it for scientific study and research.

Shell Clubs and related Not for Profit Organizations

Many shell clubs and similar organizations accept donations of shell collections. The shells are often sold to support programs such as public outreach via shell shows, research grants and or scholarship funds.

A list of shell clubs and their contacts can be found on the Conchologists of America website:
www.conchologistsofamerica.org

Conchologists of America is an example of a not for profit organization that accepts and appreciates donations of scientifically documented shells.

North Carolina Shell Club a 501c3 organization accepts donations of shell collections. The collections are sold via club sponsored auctions and or at the annual North Carolina Shell Show. The collection will not be preserved as a unit but divided up for sale. As with many clubs, proceeds of sales go to support club programs including the shell show and or scholarship funds. For shells of lower commercial value the club may opt to give them away to visitors of the shell show. All shell collections can be used by the club.

North Carolina Shell Club does not purchase collections.

If you wish to donate the collection for a tax credit, contact the club to determine if it is agreeable to the club. The IRS has strict rules governing the donation of a collection. It involves considerable time on the club's part, all performed by volunteers. If a donation is agreeable to the club you may need to have the collection appraised if the value of the donation is greater than a threshold defined by the IRS. An independent third party, generally a specimen shell dealer active in the market place is required to perform the appraisal. The club will be able to provide a list of professional shell dealers who you can hire for the service.

Conclusion

If you wish to explore this and or other questions for "recycling" a collection an email submitted to the club can expand the conversation.

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In appreciation for collaboration:

Donald Dan

Richard Goldberg

Mark Johnson

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www.molluscabase.org



Pearly Nautilus

Many shell collections include one or more specimens of chambered or pearly nautilus. All species are listed as CITES II which include import and export restrictions. Prior to the CITES listing the New Caledonia Nautilus was banned for export from by its namesake country.

Pre-listing shells already within the borders of USA remain legal to trade within USA. Importing and exporting require permits. International trade including USA in the shells has largely ceased. The popular shells have increased in value as the primary way to source one is from an existing collection.

Responsible shell collectors recognize the importance of preserving viable populations of mollusks for future generations to study and enjoy. The successful disposition of a collection enables its shells to be recycled and studied without negatively impacting remaining populations of animals.



1, Chambered Nautilus

Nautilus pompilius Linnaeus, 1758

S. W. Pacific

2, New Caledonia Nautilus

Nautilus macromphalus G. B. Sowerby II, 1849

New Caledonia

3, Umbilicate Nautilus

Allonautilus scrobiculatus ([Lightfoot], 1786)

New Guinea, Solomon Islands

4, Chambered Nautilus, Sectioned Shell

Nautilus pompilius Linnaeus, 1758

A popular modification revealing the interior structure of the shell