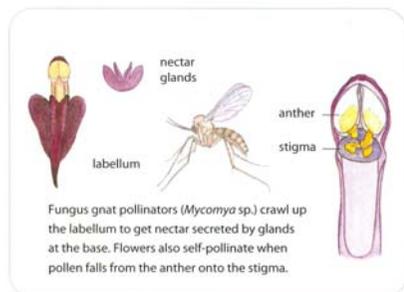


regarded as several quite unrelated families).



So why review a book on Victorian flora for *The Tasmanian Naturalist*? Because of the c. 140-150 species illustrated, 131 occur in Tasmania. You won't find a better, easier to use and fascinating guide to the petaloid monocots in Tasmania. I don't know what the promised number 2 in the series will include and when it is due but I am eagerly awaiting its arrival to complement this first volume.

Reflections on “the seashells of Tasmania”: a review of *The Seashells of Tasmania: a Comprehensive Guide* by Simon Grove, Taroona Publications (2011), softback, 82 pages (ISBN 9780646551173)

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Identifying Tasmanian seashells hasn't always been so easy. When my family moved here from warmer waters in the early 1980s, the only readily available guides in bookshops were the Wilson & Gillett field guides, which focussed on the larger, showier gastropods. The locally specific *Illustrated Index of Tasmanian Shells* by May & Macpherson (1958 – really Macpherson's minor update of a

much rarer 1923 edition by May) was not too hard to get hold of but the little black and white drawings accompanied by only very skimpy information, plus the outdatedness of the names and the exclusion of some obvious suspects, made that a difficult work to use. The situation was improved with Margaret Richmond's two large volumes in the 1990s but there has still been a need for a single, comprehensive, informative and thorough coverage of the species most likely to interest beachcombers, collectors and naturalists.

As a club committee member observing the creation of this book, it was remarkable how quickly it seemed to come together. Seemingly in the space of only a handful of committee meetings, it had gone from being a proposal to appearing on the table in front of us in a stack of photocopies. Yet these were not easy times for the book's author, working on the volume as he recovered from the impacts of (and treatment for) a major medical condition.

By way of basic description, the book illustrates 350 species with colour photos of representative beach specimens; another 100 species are mentioned in text. The mission statement is to cover “all species over 10 mm in length that are likely to be encountered on shore.” A fair few slightly smaller species make the grade as well, including a plate of representative micromolluscs. The notes on each species generally cover suggested common names, habitat, frequency, distribution within and outside the State, and notes on identification features, as well as useful cautions about variation within species and the effects of wear and tear on specimens.

Browsing the book it is interesting to come across some old favourites from decades past and see what has become of

them in the science of today. For instance, on p. 49 (pl. 22, fig. 10) we see an odd-looking elongate reddish shell. I first encountered a very fresh specimen at the Tessellated Pavement – a good place to look for it, by the way – sometime in the 1980s and was stunned by the prettiness and delicacy of what seemed to be some kind of strange volute or mitre. I took it into the Tasmanian Museum, where Liz Turner identified it as the then *Ratifyus mestayerae*. At the time it was placed as a triton (Cymatidae) or a “whelk” of sorts (Buccinidae). Simon’s book gives its new family name, Colubrariidae, and its new genus name, *Cumia*. I was curious about the colourful name “Bloodsucker whelks” for this family. It turns out that at least some of the few dozen worldwide species make their livings by conducting vampire attacks (without even a radula!) on fish. I don’t know whether this species is one of those, but I’ll never be able to pick little *Cumia* up again without imagining it lurking in the shadows to pounce savagely on some unsuspecting blenny or baby flounder.

An oddity in the May books was the diversity of tiny marginellids (pp. 56-7 in Simon’s book). I remember coming across the pages of them and thinking that they all looked much the same. Familiar only with the Marion Bay favourite *Austroginella muscaria* and a couple of smaller species, to my teenage eyes this looked like splitterdom run rampant; surely at most five of these were real? Simon’s book shows some of the commoner species and the genuine variety of forms in what is actually a diverse grouping in our waters (though doubtless some of the more obscure old names need work). Using Simon’s website (www.molluscsoftasmania.net) – which, by the way, is an excellent companion to the book for full distribution details – it can be seen that

some of these even occur as far upriver as Howrah Beach, a place I never realised was of any malacological interest.

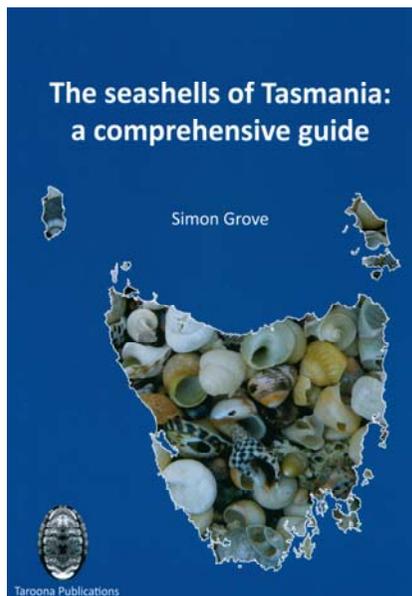


Plate 29 (p. 63) includes a few of the “saltmarsh snails” also often included in guides of non-marine mollusca such as Smith & Kershaw (1981) Here the old gang I knew as *Salinator fragilis* and *S. solida*, two very similar-shaped estuarine crawlers that are often ludicrously abundant, have parted ways into separate families, and the reader can only wonder (until they find Golding et al. 2007) what oddity has earned the latter the new genus name *Phallomedusa*. The species picture has not stood still either, with new species in both genera added from the northwest coast.

Even as a fairly experienced collector of Tasmanian shells, there are plenty of things I have learned from having this book. Another of my favourites, as one of the petite outliers of more tropical groups that we get down here, is the little yellow sundial *Phillipea lutea* (pp 62-3). I wasn’t

aware that we have more than one sundial, with the larger *Adelphotectonica reevei* (which I thought of as a much warmer water species) being now and then recorded.

An advantage of this release is you can now go to any coastline in Tasmania and be very confident of identifying whatever shells have washed up there. So, for instance, one day on impulse I got off a bus going through Sandy Bay and walked over to the tiny beach in the corner by the Casino. I was able to use Simon's book to identify one of the few shells present as the tranquilly named placid venus (*Placamen placidum* – pp. 22-3). After failing despite persistent attempts to open the two halves of this rather striking, if common, bivalve, I concluded it was alive and returned it the water to hopefully continue its peaceful existence.

Lastly I can't help mentioning that this is the first popular guidebook to include as a full species the endemic or-nearly-so *Notocypraea subcarnea* (pp. 42-3), the

moderately rare “plump cowrie” (or cowry) that has caused quite a bit of excitement (and even more confusion) in the global cypraeid-collecting world since being recognised as a full species over 100 years after it was described.

In conclusion, the Club can be very proud of contributing to this milestone in Tasmanian malacology. May no shack be without it!

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Cowries (Family Cypraeidae)

1. *Umbilicostrea* (Redde, 1936)

Unribbed cowrie. 100 mm. Lives subtidally and offshore, on mud (usually for a cowrie). Widespread but rarely beached. QLD, NSW, TAS and VIC. *Peliosipho moccosi* (Family Ovulidae; 20 mm, not illustrated) is a largely offshore species of spindle-cowrie (a group related to the true cowries) that lives on sea-fans; it has been recorded as a beached shell in NE Tas.

2. *Notocypraea angustata* (Smellin, 1791). Brown cowrie. 30 mm. Shell outline quite broad. Dorsum may be pale or dark brown; most beached shells are paler and duller than those of living animals. Combination of lack of dorsal stripes and large, blurred spots on ventral margin is characteristic. Lives subtidally among sea-squirts on rocks. Widespread and common. NSW, TAS, VIC and SA.

3. *Notocypraea comptoni* (Gray, 1847). Compton's cowrie. 25 mm. Shell outline often narrow in specimens from the N coast, but broader elsewhere. Dorsum may be pale or dark brown, but generally bears traces of uninterrupted darker stripes, while the whole shell often has a peachy background colour. Lives subtidally among sea-squirts on rocks. Widespread, common in the N, but rarer to the S. NSW, TAS, VIC, SA and WA.

4. *Notocypraea declivis* (Sowerby, 1870). Freckled cowrie. 25 mm. Shell outline broad. Dorsum is covered with darker spots when alive but these are readily worn away, often leaving zones of different shades of fawn-brown, while the many small dark spots on the ventral margin tend to persist. Lives subtidally among sea-squirts on rocks. Widespread and common, especially in the S. NSW and VIC.

5. *Notocypraea piperita* (Gray, 1825). Peppered cowrie. 20 mm. Shell outline narrow. Dorsum usually bears interrupted peach-coloured bands on a paler background; ventral margin bears many very small dark spots. In Tas. only found in the N, where sometimes quite common. NSW, TAS, VIC, SA and WA.

6. *Notocypraea subcarnea* (Beddome, 1896). Plump cowrie. 20 mm. Shell outline very

broad. Dorsum uniformly pale, with no trace of darker bands; ventral margin bears very few spots, all of which are large, blurred and relatively unattached to the shell's very worn. Lives subtidally among sea-squirts on rocks. Widespread but rare, least so in the SE. TAS and perhaps VIC.

Ribbed-cowries (Family Triviidae)

7. *Clitvina merrisi* (Redde, 1936). Southern ribbed-cowrie. 13 mm. Lives subtidally among encrusting bryozoans on rocks. Widespread but generally uncommon, particularly towards the S. QLD, NSW, TAS, VIC, SA and WA, also NZ.

False-cowries (Family Erotylidae)

8. *Proterostolochmya* (Sowerby, 1852). Teardrop false-cowrie. 7 mm. Resembles a *Miosipho* (Plate 26), but outer lip densely toothed. Lives subtidally and offshore among sea-squirts on rocks. Rare in Tas.; most likely to be found in the N or NE. QLD, NSW, TAS, VIC, SA and WA.

Lamellarials (Family Velutinidae)

9. *Lamellaria ophiura* Gray, 1849 Titan lamellaria. 20 mm. As in all lamellarials, the animal is much larger than its shell. Shell resembles a *Sorium* (Plate 20) but smaller, thinner and lacking strabos. Lives subtidally among sea-squirts on rocks. Widespread but rare, least so in the N. NSW, TAS, VIC, SA and WA, also NZ. *L. australis* (20 mm, not illustrated) has an almost identical shell (though experts can distinguish the living animals), and may also occur in N or E Tas. *Myrtonocha wilsoni* (12 mm, not illustrated) is similar but has a less flattened shell; it has been found around Flinders Island and in E Tas.

Bonnet-limpets (Family Hipponicidae)

10. *Antiochus Pollicer* (Quoy and Gaimard, 1835). Leafy bonnet-limpet. 15 mm. Extent of scaliness of shell surface varies. Lives subtidally attached to stones or the shells of living molluscs. Widespread and common, especially in the N. NSW, TAS, VIC, SA and WA.

11. *Hipponicus australis* (Lamarck, 1819). Southern bonnet-limpet. 25 mm. Lives subtidally attached to the shells of living molluscs. Widespread and common, especially in the N. NSW, TAS, VIC, SA and WA.

