



A bible for beach-goers



The seashells of Tasmania: a comprehensive guide
 by Simon Grove
 Taroon Publications, \$32.99



SEASHORES are a great place to walk at any time of the year. How often have you seen a strange shell and wondered what it is? With this book in hand, you have the opportunity to greatly increase your knowledge of what lies at your feet as you walk along the shore.

About 1400 mollusc species can be found around Tasmania's coast. However, many of those only live offshore, and some do not have shells or are very small (less than 10mm long).

This book features photos of the 350 most likely species for the general beachcomber to spot. These are so clear that they constitute an excellent aid to identification in their own right. Another 100 species are described in the text.

Dr Simon Grove wrote the book while he was recovering from acute myeloid leukaemia in 2010. He took the photographs from shells he had previously collected when in better health.

Now recovered from his illness, he says the quantity of shells on a beach fluctuates. The best beaches tend to be the ones that are neither too exposed nor too sheltered, but almost any beach holds the hope of an interesting discovery.

The serendipitous nature of finding shells is one of its appeals. Many beaches are only good intermittently. The waves, currents and tides can give and taketh away. Sometimes they risk taking humans away, too. Grove still has flashbacks to an incident when he and his young family were nearly swept off rocks at South Arm a few years back.

This book is full of interesting information. For example, it reveals that the delicate shell of the knobbly paper nautilus is the temporary brood chamber of a female pelagic octopus. And that the Hobart suburb of Taroon takes its name from the Aboriginal word for the tenacious armour-plated chitons, of which there are several species on Tasmania's rocky shores. Four of these are illustrated in the book.

This book has a comprehensive alphabetical index, giving both zoological and common names.

Despite his expertise, Grove calls himself a lapsed marine biologist. He studied the subject at undergraduate level because of his lifelong interest in marine life, particularly shells. His career, however, has been decidedly terrestrial.

He has a PhD in forest ecology and for the past decade has worked as a conservation biologist at Forestry Tasmania. He is the author of numerous scientific papers on forestry, forest ecology and conservation. The aim of his research is to find ways of better managing biodiversity in production forests.

His research interests encompass beetle biodiversity, birds, fire, deadwoodology, alternatives to clearfelling, and landscape ecology. One of his jobs is to co-ordinate research at the Warra long-term ecological research site, situated beyond the Tahune airwalk.

The Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club has financed the book's publication. While you should be able to buy it over the counter at local bookstores, it is also available for sale through the club's website and there is a discount to members. The club also offers a lively program of field trips and lectures that should appeal to anyone with an interest in natural history.