

La Conchiglia

The Shell



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A portrait : Two closely related deep water Cowries

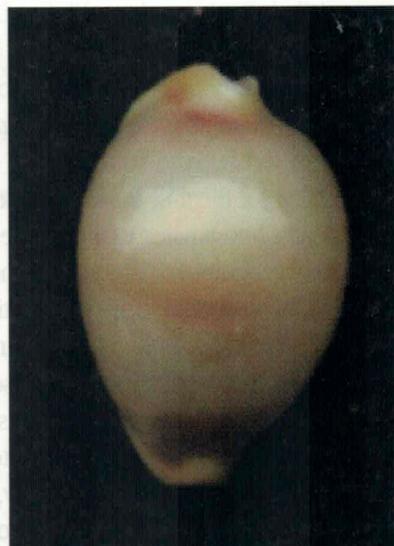
Felix Lorenz jr.

Once a cowry collection has reached a certain level of completeness, there will be a point where the collector realizes that a list remains of about 10-15 species which seem never available at any time.

Among these ten or fifteen species there are the two look-alikes illustrated here:

Nesiocypraea lisetae Kilburn, 1975
(syn. *maricola* Cate, 1976)

is a widespread Indo-Pacific species which inhabits the lower sublittoral to about 150m but has also been found in shallow water just below the low tide level. In the Pacific, a more rostrate variety occurs which was named *maricola*. The typical *lisetae* has rather blunt extremities, a pinkish-orange ground color, with a faint mid-dorsal blotch and a darker blotch towards the anterior. The margins and also the dorsum may be faintly spotted with brown. The characteristic formation of the



anterior columellar teeth is well visible in the 13mm specimen figured here which was taken ex pisce in Richards Bay, South Africa, from approximately 40 m in 1986.

Further illustrations of *lisetae* can be found in the "Guide to worldwide cowries" p. 309 fig. 16-19.

Nesiocypraea midwayensis Azuma & Kurohara 1967

Currently this may be the most sought-after cowry species; in any case it attains the highest prices. It is found in the area between Taiwan and Japan, most specimens are found by Taiwanese trawlers. It seems to be restricted to depths between 300 and 550m.

The illustrated specimen is a bit subadult: although it has developed teeth and fossula, the extremities are still short and the marginal calluses are not well developed. What can be seen very well is a characteristic irregular blotch on the labrum and towards the spire which is not that well preserved in adult shells. It is an outstanding feature not found in other species of Cypraeidae. Adult specimens of *midwayensis* resemble miniature *N. teramachii*, which however, is much larger and has a smooth fossula.

This particular specimen reminded me of *lisetae*, also because of its small size (19mm) and the very similar dorsal coloration. It was trawled from deep water between Taiwan and Okinawa.



Erronea succincta adusta

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These specimens of what most people better know as "onyx" make a perfect pair: both have a peculiar bump caused by commensal barnacles incorporated into the shell.

These specimens were found in the area of North Reef, Dar-es-Salaam.



That cowry-quiz again...

Felix Lorenz jr.

In *La Conchiglia* No. 270 p. 61 a specimen of *Erosaria* is illustrated, with a comment of mine that it was *E. marginalis melocellata*.

Recently Alistair Moncur submitted a 21.6mm shell (from Masirah Is.) for identification, quite similar to the one illustrated in *La Conchiglia*. I did not hesitate to identify it as a subfossil specimen of *E. ocellata*, an opinion shared by my friend Alex Hubert.

This shell shows more details than the poor photo, which also seems to be tilted. There are stripes on the base which also seems more flattened, typical for *ocellata* but not visible in the photo which is reproduced here.



If the shell illustrated in *La Conchiglia* No. 270 is still available, I would like to investigate it; possibly my opinion requires a critical revision.