

**Shelling in the Falkland Islands** by Linda Schroeder



Linda Schroeder photo

**A crab on a shore far far away**

Linda Schroeder photographed this little shore crab, *Acanthocyclus hassleri* Rathburn, 1898, in Stanley on the Falkland Islands. It is a common species in the rocky and mussel-covered intertidal areas around the Falklands where it feeds on molluscs and barnacles. **[See Linda's article about *Shelling in the Falkland Islands* on page 3]**



Stanley with the beach in front

In January 2009 I was on a cruise, which included a stop at Stanley in the Falkland Islands. Stanley is on the eastern coast of East Falkland Island, facing the Atlantic Ocean. We had the great luck of fairly calm seas and sun the day we arrived so were able to go ashore. This is not always a guarantee in the Falklands. Due to the common high winds in the area, the seas are often too rough for ships to anchor outside the harbor. Even if they can anchor, it may still be too rough for the tenders to bring you to shore.

While the cruise was not a shelling excursion, it's always a bonus when one can find a few minutes on a bit of beach to

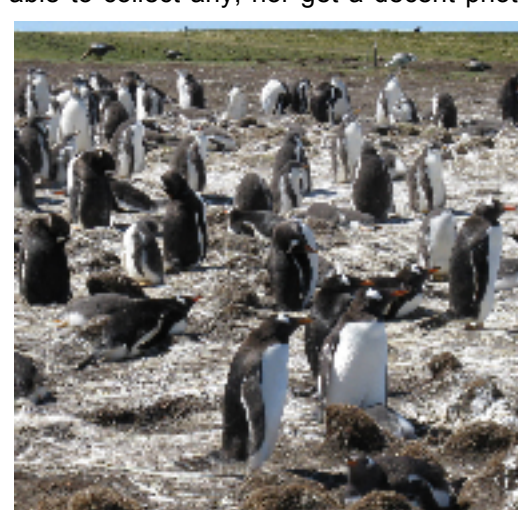
search out the local molluscan life. I managed to find two such instances that day. I arrived ashore in the late morning and had a chance to walk along the waterfront. Stanley is situated right on the water and there was a long gravelly shoreline. As luck would have it, it was low tide when I arrived. I found an accessible point to the shoreline and was able to spend twenty minutes exploring.

There wasn't a wide variety of marine life evident. It was a pretty typical city shoreline – gravel covered with algae and garbage strewn about the rocks. But numerous live limpets and mussels were present. However, I only collected dead material as I didn't know the regulations and had no desire to lug around messy live stuff all day.

The live species I saw included *Nacella deaurata* (Gmelin, 1791) [fig 1], which was the most common large limpet. Some were absolutely huge. I also saw what I think were *Scurria cecilians* var. *magellanica* (d'Orbigny 1841) [above]. *Siphonaria lessoni* (Blainville, 1824) [fig. 6] was abundant and I saw a few *Siphonaria maura* Sowerby, 1835 [above]. Two mussel species were present - *Aulacomya atra* (Molina, 1782) [fig. 20] and *Mytilus edulis* Linnaeus, 1758 [fig.19]. There were also some very small *Littorinas* scattered amongst the barnacles but I wasn't able to collect any, nor get a decent photo of them.



*Scurria cecilians* var. *magellanica* and *Siphonaria maura*



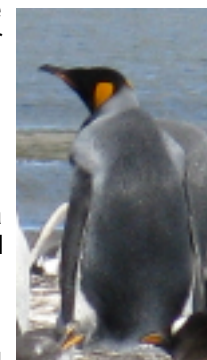
Gentoo penguins on their nests

There were several other species washed up among the rocks as well. *Trophon geversianus* (Pallus, 1774) [12] and *Pareuthria powelli* Cernohorsky, 1977 [fig 7] were fairly easy to find. I collected a few single valves of *Eurhomalea exalbida* (Chemnitz, 1795) [fig. 14] and one small, fresh dead *Entodesma patagonica* (d'Orbigny, 1846) [fig. 13], which was intact. I even found a tiny echinoderm, *Arbacia dufresnii* (Blainville, 1825) [fig. 4].

Then it became time to leave for my tour to a penguin colony. We headed to Bluff Cove, which is south of Stanley. It is the site of a colony of Gentoo penguins. There are also a few King penguins present there. Getting to the colony is an adventure in itself. Outside of town there are few roads and you simply drive over the countryside in Land Rovers. It's a barren landscape of rock, peat-covered ground, grass and some low scrubby bushes. This makes for a bumpy, jarring, but very fun, ride to your destination.

Once at the penguin colony we had just over an hour of time to spend. This colony is adjacent to a long beach front. The penguins only utilize a small portion of the beach and stay close to their nesting area. After a half hour of photographing the penguins

and watching their antics, I decided to go explore the remaining portion of the beach. From even a short distance away it looked to be a long stretch of empty sand, devoid of shells. But once I was up close, it quickly became apparent there were numerous shells imbedded in the sand.



A King penguin



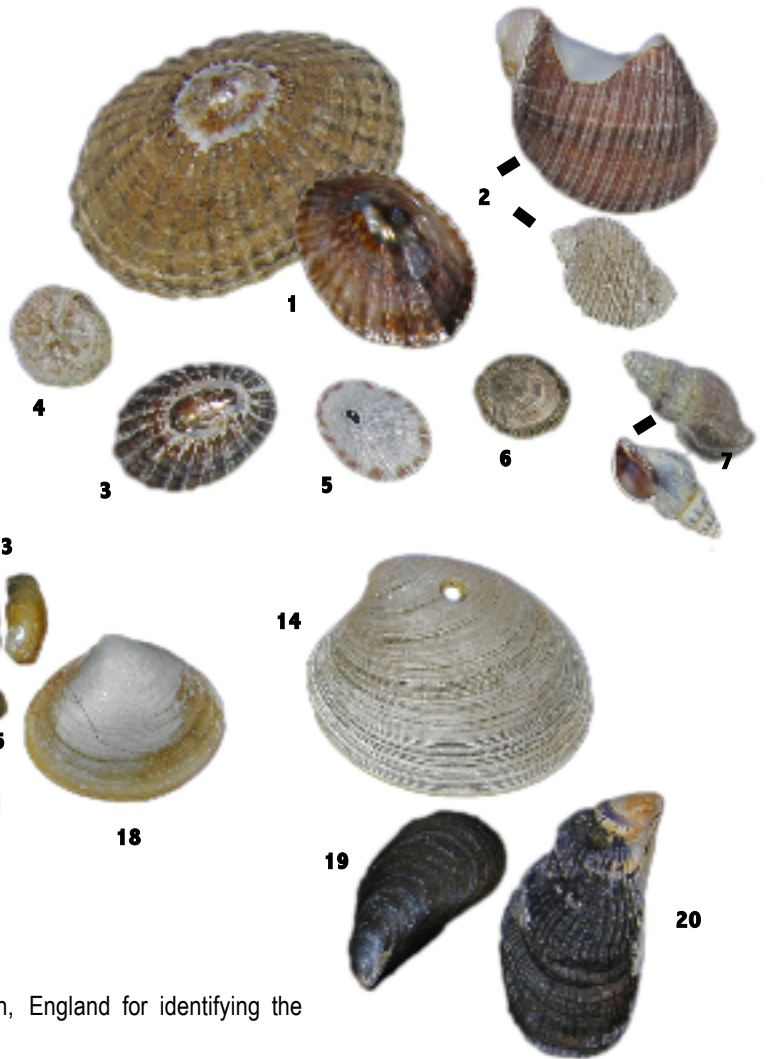
The beach at Bluff Cove

Multitudes of keyhole limpets were present. *Fissurella picta* (Gmelin, 1791) [fig 8] was the most common but *Fissurella radiosa* Lesson, 1831 [fig. 11] was a close second. *Nacella magellanica* (Gmelin, 1791) [fig. 3] was more common than the *Nacella deaurata* [fig. 1] here. I also found a single specimen of *Nacella delicatissima* Strebel, 1907 [fig. 5]. I have at least two other species of limpets [figs. 9-10], which I have yet to identify. Other gastropod species I found include *Calyptrea pileolus* (d'Orbigny, 1841) [fig 17] (common), *Crepidula dilatata* (Lamarck, 1822) [fig 16] (a few), *Nucella monodon* f. *iimbricata* Lamarck, 1816) (two) [fig 2], and

*Pareuthria powelli* Cernohorsky, 1977 (one) [fig 7].

Surprisingly there were very few bivalves on this sandy beach. The habitat just offshore was evidently very rocky, which was indicated by the large numbers of limpets present. The sand's depth was also probably fairly shallow. I did find *Aulacomya atra* and *Mytilus edulis* – further evidence of nearby rock. A few scarce valves of *Eurhomalea exalbida* were to be found and one single valve of a *Mactridae* species I haven't identified [fig 18]. I also collected several specimens of a small, fragile horse mussel species [fig 15].

My half hour passed quickly and then it was time to return to the ship and set sail for the next adventure – Antarctica!



Our thanks to Ann Brown of Falklands Conservation, London, England for identifying the shore crab for us.