

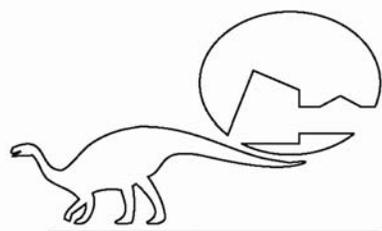


The 1st International Cone Meeting

António Monteiro

The 1st International Cone Meeting that took place in Stuttgart, Germany, from 1 to 3 October 2010, was a big success. In all, we managed to bring together more than fifty attendees, both collectors and researchers; over 15 different countries were represented, which in itself clearly reveals the great interest that everybody felt for the event.

The members of the Organizing Committee (in alphabetical order, Bill Fenzan, Klaus Groh, Paul Kersten, António Monteiro, Hans-Jörg Niederhöfer and Manuel Jimenez Tenorio) heartily thank all participants and especially all those who presented talks. Without the enthusiasm of everybody we certainly couldn't have made it.



**STAATLICHES
MUSEUM FÜR
NATURKUNDE
STUTT GART**

Forschungsmuseum
Am Löwentor und
Schloss Rosenstein

As was widely publicized, the meeting took place at the Staatliches Museum für Naturkunde, in Stuttgart. The museum is very well situated, in a beautiful park and within easy reach by subway from the hotel where most of the attendees stayed; the hotel itself was quite comfortable, with ample dining facilities of which many of us took advantage.

From the point of view of the general public, the section of the museum where the meeting took place is dedicated to palaeontology, presenting many fine exhibits in permanent display. It also houses a number of important collections, made by such well known names as Dieter Röckel, A. J. (Bob) da Motta, Dietmar Greifeneder, H. Nordsieck, etc.



Entrance to the Museum

We must thank our host, Hans-Jörg Niderhöfer and all the staff from the museum not only for having us there but for providing to our every need with exemplary efficiency.



Hans-Jörg Niderhöfer and the staff from the museum

The only thing that really didn't go according to plan was the absence of our guest of honour, Dieter Röckel. Only a few days before the meeting, Dieter had some health problems that, although fortunately not too serious, prevented him from attending. That notwithstanding, he was still the guest of honour and I had the pleasure of introducing him, in the following terms:

As has been mentioned in our program, we have invited Dr. Dieter Röckel to be the Guest of Honour in this meeting.

Dieter has been a good personal friend of mine – just as, I am sure, of many others here gathered – for many years. He was an enthusiastic collector (his collection is currently housed in this very museum) and a serious student of the taxonomy of Cones. He published many papers and described a vast number of species. I was privileged to work with him occasionally and we co-authored (also with Emilio Rolán) the first revision of Cape Verde Cones.

Dr. Dieter Röckel, doubling as an advanced Cone collector and a researcher, neatly embodied the spirit that presides at our bulletin and current organization. For this reason he would be an obvious choice for Guest of Honour in this meeting that moreover takes place in his own country.

Unfortunately, I must explain that a health problem – not too serious, we hope – has prevented Dieter from being with us here today. Never mind, he is still our Guest of Honour in absentia. We had prepared a little memento that we would present to him personally, should he be present. As it is, we will of course make sure he gets it with the shortest possible delay.

Dieter Röckel was born in 1922 in Eberbach, near Heidelberg. He studied Law and headed the legal department of a big pharmaceutical company in Darmstadt. He retired in 1986 and returned to Eberbach with his wife Else.

His research led him to describe a total of 55 new species of Cones, either alone or with co-authors. His papers reach a total of 128. Dieter Röckel's work on Cones culminated with the co-authorship – with Alan J. Kohn and Werner Corner – of the well known Manual of the Living Conidae, of which the first volume has appeared in 1995.

Dieter Röckel's collection is currently housed at this very museum, as we all know.

As an advanced collector, an enlightened and thoroughly enthusiastic amateur, Dieter Röckel embodies the spirit that presided to the foundation of our magazine *The Cone Collector*. For all these reasons, he well deserves to be the Guest of Honour in this meeting.

Unable to be present, Dr. Dieter Röckel sent us a letter, which as translated from the German original and read to the audience:

Dear friends,

It has touched me deeply that you have invited me as a Guest of Honour for this historical meeting. My sincere thanks to the organizers, especially António Monteiro and the host Hans-Jörg Niderhöfer, for organizing the meeting, facing so many time consuming difficulties.

I deeply regret that I am not able to attend, but sincerely want to convey a few words of greeting.

I would like to refer to the beginning of my interest in shells, back in the 70s. At that time, I started to collect marine shells, beginning with a few specimens that I saw in the window of a small handcraft shop. Such masterpieces had never captured my attention before and only step by step did I recognize that there must exist a vast number of such shells in an unbelievable richness of forms and colours. All of them I collected with great passion. But when even the tiniest space in my house was crowded, I understood that I had to restrict my interest to a single group of shells and give away all the rest. So I arrived at Cones, which had always fascinated me the most.

By chance, I heard that other collectors of approximately the same age had just founded the German Club Conchylia and I joined them directly. Even my wife immediately shared my passion and for decades she took over the editing of the Club's journal.

But back to Cones now.

In the 70s, a wealth of shells, mainly from Thailand and the Philippines, arrived at the market. A good Italian friend recommended that I subscribe to Hawaiian Shell News and soon I started to write short articles myself. However, my English being terrible, I accepted the offer of the Editor, Elmer Leehman, who was of German origin, to revise my texts.

A globalization of Cone collectors was just starting worldwide I had established many contacts, letters and parcels filled my letterbox and visitors from all over the world – from America, Africa, Asia and Australia – came and enlarged my knowledge. It was thus that I got in touch with the well known Cone specialist Bob da Motta. We visited several museums together to study type material and our friendship lasted, even though we often had different opinions.

I have much to thank my Iberian friends António Monteiro and Emilio Rolán, who made me aware of the importance of the radula for taxonomical purposes. I am also thankful to many who paved the way for my progress in the study of Cones, namely Robert Moolenbeek, Mike Filmer and Gabriella Raybaudi.

Someone I really wanted to emulate was Prof. Alan Kohn, who trusted me enough to take over the scientific and linguistic treatment of our Cone book, for which I will always be thankful.

But all of that now belongs to a different era, as new scientific approaches have led to breathtaking changes in our taxonomical concepts. I cannot be a judge of that, because it's nearly 20 years ago that I gave my collection to the Stuttgart Museum, under the supervision of Hans-Jörg Niederhöfer. I think that it was an ideal place to put it, alongside with the da Motta collection, to help to solve problems of today and to enable future research.

I wish all of you an intensive exchange of views, with the aim to find common answers and solutions for the problems that are currently being discussed. I presume that there will still be enough room left for Cone research for the future generations and I wish that all of you will return home with the feeling that it was worth coming to Stuttgart.

D.R.
October, 2010

We had prepared for Dr. Dieter Röckel a modest souvenir in the form of a metal engraved plaque with the inscription "To Dr. Dieter Röckel, on the occasion of the 1st International Cone Meeting, acknowledging his outstanding role and his unfailing interest in the study of Cones, which inspired generations of collectors". This was later sent to Dieter and much appreciated by him.

Registration of participants began early on Friday, the 1st October, as each in turn arrived at the museum, following the very detailed instructions that Bill Fenzan had prepared. During the day there was plenty of time for everybody to meet and talk informally and it was a good opportunity for many of us to find old friends once again or else to put faces to well known names.



From left to right: António Monteiro, Alan J. Kohn, Thomas Duda Jr, Baldomero (Toto) Olivera

The organizers kept busy, making sure that everything was ready, that everybody was there and being properly taken care of and that no detail was overlooked for the official sessions that would take place in the following days. The program was checked and a few last minute modifications in the order of presentations were made, to accommodate different times of arrival of some of our speakers. At the same time, the tables for the mini-bourse, which opened at 16:00 hours, were being prepared; we had a total of six tables with specimens offered for sale, plus three others with publications (one belonging to ConchBooks, one to the Cone Snail Genome Project for Health = CONCO and one to the German Club Conchylia).

On Saturday morning the 1st International Cone Meeting had its official opening, by the Director of the Museum, Prof. Dr. Johanna Eder. After her kind words of welcome, we got into full speed with a succession of talks of the highest quality and interest. It is only fair to say that no one could really ask for more, the only problem being that the high standard set will be tough to maintain in future opportunities!

In an event of this kind it is particularly hard to have any a priori guarantees of success. No matter how care-

fully we organize things, no matter how much interest the whole project awakens in potential participants, there is always a certain possibility that something will go wrong at the last minute, or that the final result does not live up to everybody's expectations. However, we began to feel at ease immediately on Saturday afternoon, when several of those present began asking us where and when the second meeting would be taking place. Now, that is surely a sign of success if there ever was one!

Our goals for this meeting were multiple. We wanted to hear some of the top experts in the field speak about their research, we wanted to learn from them; we wanted to exchange information about Cones; we wanted to profit from the mini-bourse to get some new species for our collections; we wanted to meet people with similar interests. But above all that we wanted to spend a pleasant weekend and generally have a good time. And that we certainly did!



A view of the audience

Besides the talks, we had the identification workshop. Ten mystery specimens from the museum's collections were subjected to the scrutiny of a number of teams, who tried their best to come up with reasonable identifications.

International Cone Meeting continued...



Two of the teams working in the identification workshop

The results will be brought to our readers' attention at a later date. Suffice it to say for now that if in certain cases the different teams seemed to converge on their opinions, in others they arrived at vastly different conclusions. That only shows how hard the problems posed by the chosen specimens actually were.

Another high point of the event was the official dinner. Everybody was in high spirits and conversation flowed easily, under an overall climate of good friendship and communion of interests. Shortly before dessert, a surprise was reserved for participants, as two specimens

had been offered to be given to two lucky winners among those present: Paulo Granja, well known Portuguese dealer offered a *Conus pennaceus bazarutensis* Fernandes & Monteiro, 1988, and Reto Stöcklin, from the CONCO project, offered a *Conus consors* Sowerby, 1833. Everybody's names went into a nice metal box topped with a snail and an impromptu draw was organized. Luck determined that the *consors* went to Guido Poppe and the *bazarutensis* to Bill Cargile; both lucky winners were of course quite pleased.

On Sunday morning the sessions went on, according to the program, with more outstanding talks. After lunch – or even slightly before that – it was time for many of us to pack and prepare to leave. Cars, trains and planes awaited and Monday would mean work for most. We said our goodbyes feeling that we had accomplished something of importance, of historical significance even, to use the word Dieter Röckel had used in his address. We parted with the certainty that we must do it again. It's merely a matter of choosing the right timing and the appropriate place. We hope to see even more of you there and then.

António Monteiro

