

# A day with Mitsuo Chino, President of the Tokyo Malacological Society

Kristina Joyce

On a Tuesday, June 4, 2013, Kristina and Bill Joyce of the Boston Malacological Club traveled to a suburb near Yokohama, Japan, to meet with Mitsuo Chino, President of the Tokyo Malacological Society; he is also Vice President of the Malacological Society of Japan to represent the non-professional sector for better collaboration between scientists and local shell clubs. Passionate about molluscs, he is fluent in English, lives in a beautiful apartment, and devotes at least one room to molluscs. Larger shells are kept in his parents' home a short distance from the apartment.

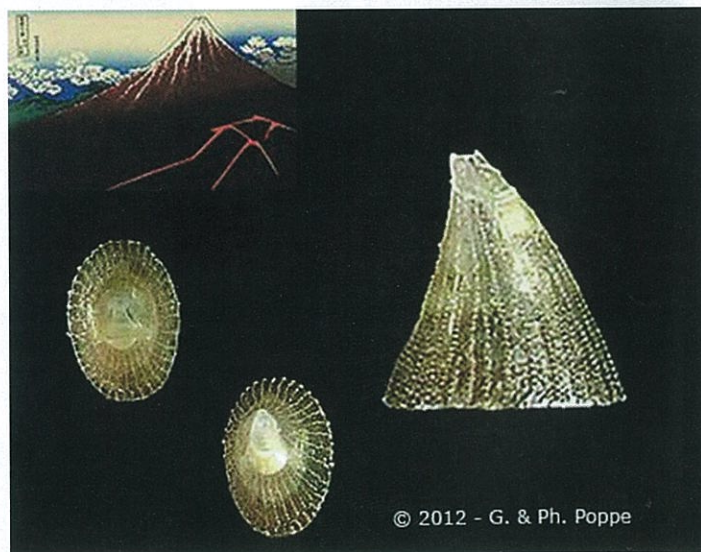
About 10 a.m. the day began with tea and chocolates in the apartment where we talked about the differences and similarities between shell clubs in Boston and Tokyo. Both clubs are interested in their local shells but more so in Japan. Members in Boston do not speak Japanese generally and the same for English in Tokyo. The striking difference was the Japanese club's success in discovering and naming new species. As Mitsuo described the situation, many fisherman (not just in Japan, but worldwide) face a lack of income due to a host of problems. Fishermen will dredge for shells (especially micro shells) to earn additional income. Once the shells are delivered and examined, club members will select the shells to be saved and studied. The fishermen will then dredge for more of these specific shells that are sometimes rare and new species. After many such discoveries, Mitsuo is especially delighted with a 2.2 mm *Cornisepta monsufuji* Chino, 2009, which carries his authorship and resembles a snow covered Mt. Fuji - in Japan an important natural icon, which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This mollusc was collected in deepwater mud off Akune, Kagoshima, Japan, and described in the *Venus* publication of the Japanese Malacological Society. Excellent photography in Japan makes observation of the beauty of small shells possible for a wide audience.

Over a generous tempura lunch at a local restaurant (Mitsuo's treat) conversation continued. He has a wife, Hiromi, two married grown children and five grandchildren, visits his mother in a nursing home, takes care of two family homes, is retired as an auditor from the Japanese insurance industry, and loves to travel, especially to collect molluscs and visit shell shows. He has been to most parts of the globe.

Once back in the apartment, Mitsuo shared books with beautiful color plates such as *World Seashells of Rarity and Beauty* published in 1991 by the National Science Museum in Tokyo; publications such as *Illustrations and annotated checklist of the molluscan specimens contained in the Sakurai Collection in the National Museum of Science and Nature Tokyo*, published in 1995, and many papers from *Visaya* describing some of the new species he has helped



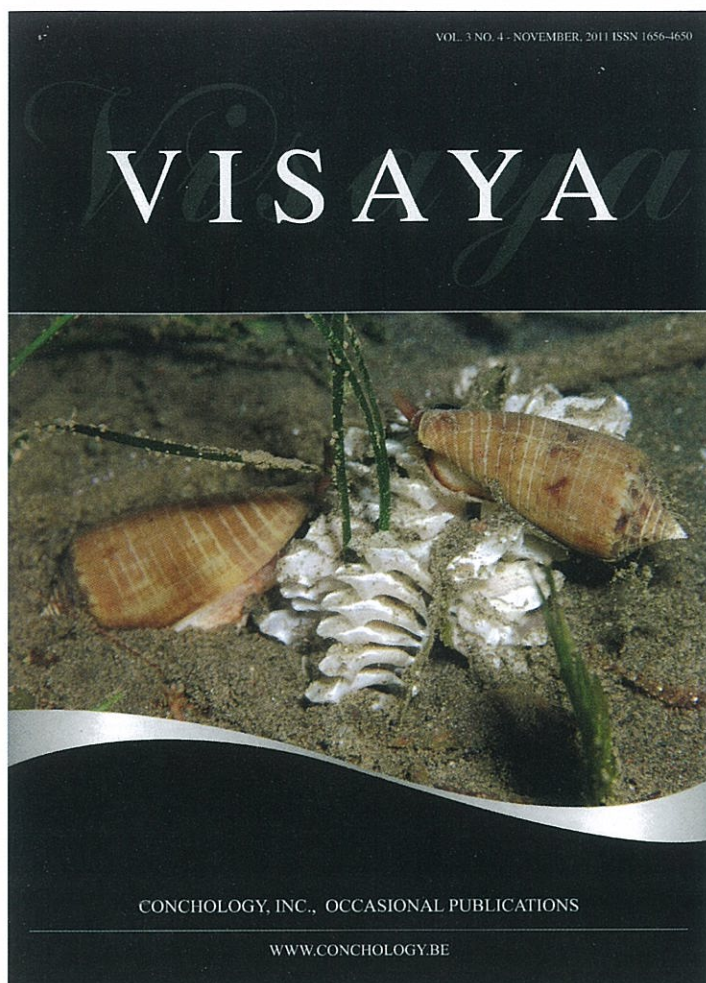
Mitsuo Chino, President of the Tokyo Malacological Society, and the author.



The rare *Cornisepta monsufuji* as shown on the web site [www.conchology.be](http://www.conchology.be). Courtesy of Guido & Philippe Poppe.

describe, such as A New Species of *Conopleura* (Gastropoda – Turridae) from the Philippine Islands, published in *Visaya*, Nov. 2011. Mitsuo also invited viewing of his land, sea, and freshwater shell collections. Especially noteworthy were the *Neptunea* and *Pleurotomaria* which were so beautiful and varied. Exquisite specimens of *Crenovolva* (*Rotaovula*) *hirohitoi* Cate & Azuma, 1973, dived from 60 meters in Izu, Shizuoka Prefecture, were just visible to the naked eye, but well photographed in a book entirely in Japanese (not trans-





The November 2011 issue of *Visaya* in which *Conopleura latiaxisa* Chino, 2011 is described.



Mitsuo Chino's specimen racks in his shell room.

For further information about Japanese shells, books, articles, and craft, contact Mitsuo Chino at [mchino@tbj.t-com.ne.jp](mailto:mchino@tbj.t-com.ne.jp). His mailing address is 6-23-18-202, Arima, Miyamae-Ku, Kawasaki, 216-0003, Japan and Tel. & fax 81-44-861-6602.



The 1991 *World Seashells of Rarity and Beauty* published in Tokyo.

lated except for the shell nomenclature).

Mitsuo also showed us miniature shell sculptures of flora and fauna made by a friend who would like to market them outside of Japan. The figures are delicate, created without any cutting of the shells, and really enchanting. Examples of past holiday letters that Mitsuo writes every year to his global friends included a note that he has spoken in his club on "How shell lover child becomes adult for joyful shell life." He is now educating his grandchildren with trips to the National Museum of Nature and Science and there is some next generation interest in shells it seems.

This meaningful and informative day concluded with a drive to the train station for Kristina and Bill's return to their hotel in Tokyo. After many thanks and a hope to see Mitsuo in the USA, the Joyces felt privileged with this experience to be part of the world mollusc community.

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**Chino, M. 2009.** A New Species of the Genus *Cornisepta* McLean, 1988 (Gastropoda: Fissurellidae) from Japan), *Venus*, vol. 68 (1-2), pp. 63-66.



# The shell collection of His Majesty The Emperor Showa of Japan

Kristina Joyce

The late Emperor Hirohito was born April 29, 1901, died January 7, 1989, and is known in Japan as The Emperor Showa for the era in which he lived. When he was a fifth grade student in 1913 at the Primary School Department of the Peers' School, he saw an enormous collection of shells at a private museum in Kyoto owned by Mr. Yoichiro Hirase, (1859-1925) a pioneer malacologist. This experience led the Emperor to eventually study marine biology and malacology. He carried out his work at the Biological Laboratory, Imperial Household, located in the Imperial Palace (in Tokyo), and in biological field laboratories built for invertebrate study on the grounds of the Imperial Summer Villas at Hayama and Suzaki on Sagami Bay. After his death, his entire collection and library were donated to the National Science Museum (now the National Museum of Nature and Science) and transferred to the Showa Memorial Institute, which was founded in the Tsukuba Branch of the museum in 1993

(four years after his death). [Tsukuba is about an hour and a half by train and bus from Tokyo.] Some facilities and collection rooms in the Tsukuba Branch of the National Museum of Nature and Science are open to the general public on one day of the year. Even then, the Showa Memorial Institute is not open to the public, but only to professional researchers. Dr. Kazunori Hasegawa is Senior Curator of Invertebrates (Mollusca) at the Showa Memorial Institute and is researching small gastropods. See *A Review of Bathyal Shell-bearing Gastropods in Sagami Bay*, Kazunori Hasegawa and Takashi Okutani, Mem. Natl. Mus. Nat. Sci., Tokyo, (47): 97-144, April 15, 2011.\*

The Showa collection is housed in well-designed and kept rooms at the Institute. In one is the drag-net that the emperor employed with a boat in Sagami Bay, an important habitat because of its great diversity of marine fauna. There are various Mollusca with other flora and fauna, photographs, and art displayed in an exhibition room. In the special collections room, types and paratypes of various groups of animals are kept along with the soft parts. Dry shell specimens are preserved in a climate controlled environment, and special cabinets for specimens lock tightly together as a large unit. Once rolled apart, there are drawers with a clear front and inside, each specimen has its own

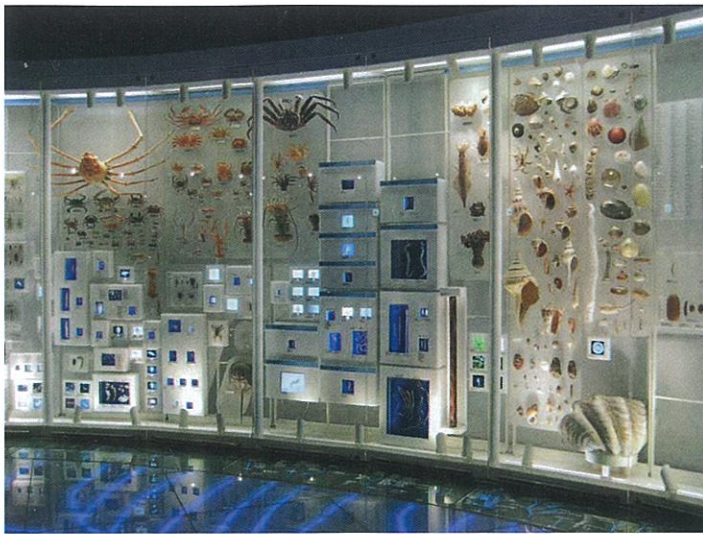


**The National Museum of Nature and Science in Tokyo, Japan. Opened in 1871, it has had several names over the years (the present name dates from 2007). Much of the Emperor's collection is housed here and accessible by the public. Image from Wikipedia commons.**



**This is a fossil slit shell (Pleurotomariidae) in the museum, both genus and species unknown. Photo by author.**





Two different sea life displays in the museum. The one on the left (from Wikipedia commons) is quite modern looking with fauna separated into phyla and electronically displayed educational text. The display on the right is a bit dated by modern standards, with portions of the emperor's collection on display. Photo by the author.

plastic box with computer data. In another area, the wet preservation room for example, nudibranchs have been recorded with hand paintings of original color and pattern, fixed in formalin, and then preserved in alcohol (these specimens are not usable for DNA studies). Also in the facility are the Emperor's books, papers, various publications, and the on-going work of the Institute; all are variously used to discover, describe, and photograph new species of mollusca.

In July, 1971, Drs. Tokubei Kuroda, Tadashige Habe, and Katsura Oyama published *The Sea Shells of Sagami Bay* from the Biological Laboratory in the Imperial Household, based on the collection compiled by the Emperor. This 741 page book with 121 plates (105 in color) describes, in English and Japanese, Mollusca named for the Emperor and also many that he studied. An expensive book (now at least \$300) it is still available in Japan, on the web at Amazon, through inter-library loan, and at Harvard University (from an imperial gift). Inside the volume is the story of the slit shell, a deep water marine gastropod, long believed to be extinct. Beautiful examples of 20 million-year-old fossils (the family name *Pleurotomariidae* was primarily proposed by paleontologists) are on view in the National Museum of Nature and Science in Ueno Park, Tokyo. The slit on the last whorl of the shell is for elimination of waste from the mantle. Since the first more recent Japanese *Pleurotomariid* was discovered in Sagami Bay in 1887, there are now seven living species known from Japan: *Mikadotrochus hirasei*, *M. beyrichii*, *M. salmiana*, *M. gotoi*, *Entemnotrochus rumphii*, *Bayerotrochus teramachii*, and *B. diluculum*. At the National Museum there was also a temporary exhibit on schistosomiasis, a devastating human disease spread from rice paddies where freshwater snails carry the parasite *Trematode schistosoma*. Photos, mollusk specimens, and descriptions

of the Emperor's work were prominently featured in that exhibit.

The Japanese Imperial tradition of scholarly work is carried on by the eldest son and reigning Emperor, Akihito, an ichthyological researcher who has published more than 30 original articles in scientific journals and described new species. He has specialized in the taxonomy of the family Gobiidae. In 2005, a newly described goby was named *Exyrias akihito* in his honor. Crown Prince Naruhito, eldest son of Akihito, is interested in water policy and is the honorary president of the Third World Water Forum. He also gave the keynote address at the Fourth World Water Forum and a commemorative talk at the First Asia-Pacific Water Summit, "Humans and Water: From Japan to the Asia-Pacific Region."

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**\*Additional reading:**

*Catalogues of the Collections in the Showa Memorial Institute, No. 1. – Type Specimens described in Publications from the Biological Laboratory, Imperial Household, Tokyo, Japan.* Tokyo: National Science Museum: March 2002.

Hasegawa, Kazunori. 2009. *Upper Bathyal Gastropods of the Pacific Coast of Northern Honshu, Japan, Chiefly Collected by R/V Wakataka-maru.* Tokyo: National Museum of Nature and Science. May 2009.

*World Seashells of Rarity and Beauty* (Revised and Enlarged Edition). Tokyo: National Science Museum, 1991.