

# The Drifting Seed

September, 2003

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## THE DRIFTING SEED

A triannual newsletter covering seeds and fruits dispersed by tropical currents  
and the people who collect and study them.

Distributed to more than 20 countries.

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**The 8th Annual International Sea Bean Symposium will be held at the  
Cocoa Beach Public Library, October 10th-11th, 2003.  
Contact the Sea Aire for Motel Reservations, mention the Symposium for  
a \$10 discount, 1-800-319-9637, <http://www.l-n.com/seaaire/>**

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## Fun-Stuff from Curt

Beachcombers, please keep an eye out for these objects while you are out looking for drift seeds. It's all tied together and by doing it we can continue learning about ocean currents—*editor*.

### “Small Craft Advisory”

By Dr. Curtis Ebbesmeyer  
curtisebbesmeyer@msn.com

Walking his dog along the English Channel, Isle of Wight, on Sandown Beach, **Tom McGlichey**, 45, discovered a nine-inch long toy boat. *"If found . . . Made in Quebec,"* read the brass plate screwed onto the miniature craft.

Tom consulted the website inscribed on the plate and found that in July 2002, school children launched 5,000 of the toy boats down the St Lawrence River. Between July and November, Tom's craft 'sailed' 3,600 miles across the North Atlantic. The elapsed time and distance equate to 30 miles per day, about the fastest that a message in a bottle has been known to drift the sea.

Given the large number of small craft launched, beachcombers round the North Atlantic can expect to find Quebec vessels during 2003. Unfortunately, the information thus far received does not indicate the website address or how Tom may be contacted.

I wonder if the Quebec children re-enacted **Holling Clancy Holling's** classic childrens' tale *Paddle-To-The-Sea*? In that epic, an Indian boy carved a wooden Indian named Paddle-To-The-Sea in a foot-long canoe. On the canoe bottom, the boy carved *"Please put me back in water—I am Paddle-To-The-Sea."* A year after setting him adrift on Lake Superior, *Paddle* arrives on the Grand Banks off Newfoundland having survived adventures in each Great Lake and 1,000 miles from Lake Ontario down the St Lawrence River and through the Gulf of St Lawrence. (Information from *Daily Telegraph* November 30, 2002, courtesy **Stella Turk**)

### “\$4,000 African Logs Due in Florida”

*"Two or three years ago, a ship carrying a load of Mahogany logs felled in central Africa sank in the Mozambique Channel separating Africa and Madagascar,"* writes **Mel Miller**, Cape Town, South Africa. *"In the ship's hold were up to four-foot-diameter, forty-foot-long logs each weighing tons. Now that the wreck is disintegrating on the sea floor, these logs are popping to the sea surface and drifting south. They've stranded along the African coast south and east to Cape Town. One even found its way into the next bay from where I live!"*

*"Obviously a danger to small fishing craft, these partially submerged timber 'torpedoes' have a life of their own. Many lie on inaccessible coastlines in Nature Conservation Areas. Last year, my daughter and I hiked a wilderness trail in the DeHoop Nature Reserve area known as the Whale Walk. During the 5-day trek along desolate beaches, we spotted no less than five of these huge tree trunks."*

*"Up close, they look furry as time in the water and friction with sand and rocks caused the grain to stand out rendering them splintery when dry and greyish in color rather than rich Mahogany red. As these logs were destined for the manufacturing of veneer for the furniture industry, some had metal 'S' shapes hammered into their ends to prevent longitudinal splitting during the drying process."*

The Cape Town sightings imply the logs drifted 2,000 miles. Rounding Africa places them in position to reach Brazil, Venezuela, Central America, Texas, Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas. Strong currents—Benguela, South Atlantic Drift, South Equatorial, North Equatorial, Caribbean, Loop Current, Gulf Stream—transport flotsam between these locations. For example, a plastic drift card (#A5203) released off Cape Town on April 17, 1966, was recovered 19 months later on September 25, 1968, at Stuart Beach, fifty miles north of Miami along southeastern Florida, having drifted 8.9 nautical miles per day. Since Mahogany is a very hard, fine-grained timber, I'd guess the logs could remain afloat for the 8,000-mile, 2.4-year African-American voyage. After four years, some may wash ashore in England.

*The Drifting Seed*, September 2003

**Carolínians, Georgians, Floridians take note!** Some of these logs could arrive on the Gulf Stream in time for the easterly winds of fall 2003 to blow them ashore along the Carolinas, Georgia, and eastern Florida. During a typical year, the months of September, October and November account for most of the flotsam that comes ashore. As you seek sea beans, keep a sharp eye out for these logs, each potentially worth \$4,000!

*"Incidentally, Cape Agulhas was where the British troopship HMS Birkenhead carrying infantrymen to fight the Xhosas, sank in the 1820s," Mel adds. "It was here that the captain first gave the immortal order 'Women and children first.' With the men standing aside and the military band playing, the ship sank losing many lives in the process—a very British thing to do in those days (it happened long before James Cameron immortalized it in his epic movie Titanic). By the way, the most powerful tug in the southern hemisphere is based in the port of Cape Town."*

*"This afternoon, I was on the beach being washed with a typical winter's high tide. I found two miniature plastic Roman gladiators approximately 25 millimeters (mm) high and khaki in color—the sort of toy that you might find in a cereal packet. Whether these two items were left by kids on our beach in summer and have now been uncovered by the heavy sea or whether they were part of a consignment, I don't know. Also found were numerous thin plastic straws about 75 mm long and 2 mm in diameter. I have seen these washed up before. Some 25 years ago, a ship carrying a supply of Tupperware ran aground off Cape Town. For years, you could always find some along the beaches."*

Detailed reports from South Africa are important for comparing with Floridian flotsam, but reports adequate for quantitatively documenting the Africa-Florida connection are lacking. Combers report!

### **"Where The Toys Are"**

**Kids**—Next time you're in a store, look to see where the toys are made. Most come from China. That's where the yellow ducks were made, too. Before you were born, *The First Years, Inc.* molded 29,000—blue turtles, yellow ducks, red beavers, green frogs—called floatees for bath time. All were loaded into a cargo container and later the container was placed on a large ship.

During January 1992—more than 11 years ago—after the great container ship steamed halfway across the wild North Pacific, a storm knocked the container overboard letting loose all 29,000 floatees, including the yellow ducks. At first, the toys drifted close together, then the currents swirled them hundreds of miles apart. After drifting two thousand miles, they first reached North America at Sitka, Alaska, where beachcombers reported thousands of the floatees.

Beachcombers sent many curious stories. One saw a blue turtle in a sea otter nest. Toys filled hot tubs and decorated kayaks. People started calling me Doctor Duck and Doctor Froggie, and I got a yellow duck pin in the mail. Others told of their yellow duck collections, one numbering 1,439 (possibly a Guinness World record by **Charlotte Lee**, Santa Monica, California).

After the currents transported the toys to Sitka, thousands streaked along Alaska to Japan and then back again across the North Pacific crossing the place where they went overboard. After three years, having drifted 15,000 miles, they reached Washington State. There, **Karen Gerber** found a blue turtle and **Vern Krause** chanced upon a faded white duck. These discoveries helped **Jim Ingraham** prove that his computer predicted the path of the toys around the Pacific after three years, longer than ever before for any drifter.

As the toys grew older, the red beavers and yellow ducks faded to white much like grandpa's hair. The blue turtles and green frogs did not fade very much.

Some of the floatees escaped the North Pacific Ocean. Many floated north into the Arctic Ocean and after five years emerged into the North Atlantic about the year 2001. *The First Years* is offering a \$100 reward to any beachcomber finding a floatee anywhere around the North Atlantic. So far, none of the right toys have been confirmed. I know they are in the Atlantic because many waterborne messages (in bottles and on plastic cards) have traveled the Pacific-Arctic-Atlantic route. Other toys escaped to the south out of the Pacific into the Indian Ocean. These travel 15 times faster than the toys trapped on the slow-moving ice (one versus fifteen miles per day). After crossing the Indian Ocean, some rounded Africa, then headed north through the Atlantic Ocean also arriving in

England about the same time as the cold ducks that went through the Arctic Ocean. Over the years, the sands will bury some of the toys, the sun will disintegrate others to plastic dust, and sea life will consume others.

I hope you will trace out these drift routes with your parents and teachers. You will learn a lot about the world following the routes of the floatees on a world map.

**Most Wanted Duck. Darlene Hollywood** (dhollywood@thefirstyears.com), publication relations director at *The First Years*, issued the following All Points Bulletin. "MAKE WAY FOR (RUBBER) DUCKS! It's a boat, it's a buoy, it's a...RUBBER DUCK?! Beachgoers in New England may be spotting more than shells on the shore this summer. Any day now, a flock of rubber ducks could waddle their way onto area beaches.

Avon, Massachusetts-based The First Years, Inc., a leading maker of infant and toddler care, feeding and play products, including the famed rubber ducks, is planning to welcome the flock home with open arms. Anyone who finds one of the ducks [or any of the floatees] is encouraged to call The First Years' Parents Service Center at 1-800-317-3194.

Once *The First Years* confirms the authenticity of the floatee(s) sighting, the discoverer will receive a \$100 U.S. Savings Bond. *The First Years* will report the duck [or any floatee] discoveries to Curt who will incorporate the data into his studies seeking to better understand the earth's ocean currents."

**Possible Atlantic Sightings.** In 2003, three (turtle, duck, frog, no beaver) out of the four floatees matching the posted descriptions were spotted around the North Atlantic. The \$100 reward remains unclaimed because no one has positively shown me the right floatee. I've received quite a few photos and reports of false canards. The following sightings are the most reliable received to date but only show that the floatees **POSSIBLY** have arrived in the Atlantic.

**1995: Florida (~27.9°N, 80.5°W).** In 1995, along eastern Florida near Sebastian Inlet, **Ed Perry** discovered a turtle and a beaver. **Gayle Heath** also found a turtle. The turtles were the wrong colors and Gayle's had the wrong platelet pattern. The beaver, however, was a match and had faded from red to white as Pacific recoveries had done.

Back in 1995, I put a damper on Florida excitement. Finding a beaver in Florida that year would have required too quick a trip: 2 years from the mid-Pacific spill site to the Bering Strait, plus 5 years on the ice across the Arctic Ocean, plus 2 years from eastern Greenland to Florida. The earliest Florida arrival was 2001 making the 1995 Florida sighting too early by 6 years!

Though each of the following sightings is open to question, the locations where they were found (Maine, Florida, Scotland) agree with known drift routes. By 2003, the floatees may be found anywhere around the North Atlantic and connecting estuaries, bays and seas.

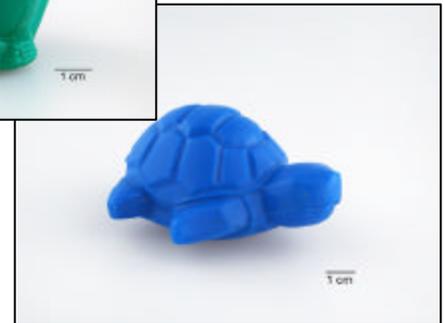
**2003: Scotland (~58.2°N, 7°W).** "I think, but am not sure because I did not pick it up," writes **Sonali Naik** "That on Monday 18 August 2003, I found one of the famous toys—in this case a green frog—in Scotland on Uig Sands, west coast of the Isle of Lewis (Outer Hebrides). My fellow guests at the hotel urged me to email you. I was not aware of the spill or else would have picked it up and when I did, it was too late. The tide was in and I had to leave early next morning. I would only know if I saw a picture of one—can you email me a photo so I can confirm whilst it is still fresh in my mind?" After examining at the emailed photo, Sonali responded. "I am not absolutely sure but it is the right size. I only saw it buried upside down in the sand with only the outline of the legs visible. It was particularly noticeable because there were only a few shells all of the same type on the beach. I thought how strange that looks like a frog but it can't be!"

**2003: Maine (~43.5°N, 70.5°W).** "You won't believe this," writes **Bethe Hagens** "But two weeks ago (July 2003), I found one of your ducks on Gooch's Beach in Kennebunk, Maine. We were walking and my boyfriend **Waynn Welton** picked it up. It was white, incredibly weathered, and very worn. I remember the writing on its stomach: 'The First Years.' That's why I thought it was so odd when we found it. It came back to me when I heard you talking on the radio. I thought about keeping it, but didn't. I just can't believe I didn't keep it, but it wasn't mine. So, no proof. No science, I guess. But, they're here!"

*The Drifting Seed*, September 2003

"Waynn finally got back from a trip and took a look at your picture of the duck. We both feel pretty confident that we saw your duck. I think I also saw your turtle. I was so amazed that (on the one I saw, which was weathered and small like the picture you sent) the carapace was anatomically correct. You just never see the correct pattern—five platelets down the middle, and four on each side.

I am a beachcomber and I see all kinds of things out of the corner of my eye. I'm also an anthropologist and Waynn's an engineer with DeLorme Maps, so we pay attention to detail. I don't know whether to trust myself about the turtle. We both feel pretty sure about the duck, though. Waynn said that it appeared to be much more faded than the other things we saw with it. Looked as if a child had picked it up on the beach and left it there with other scavenged stuff."



Floatees photos by Karna McKinney, NOAA Fisheries



Photo by Dave Ingraham

above photo: Curt Ebbesmeyer and Jim Ingraham—two odd ducks—in a sea of ducks. Okay, a pool.

*There are some things that are so serious that you have to laugh at them.*  
Niels Bohr, physicist

## A seed of the Para rubber tree *Hevea brasiliensis* from the Dutch coast

By Gerhard C. Cadée & Herman Nijhuis

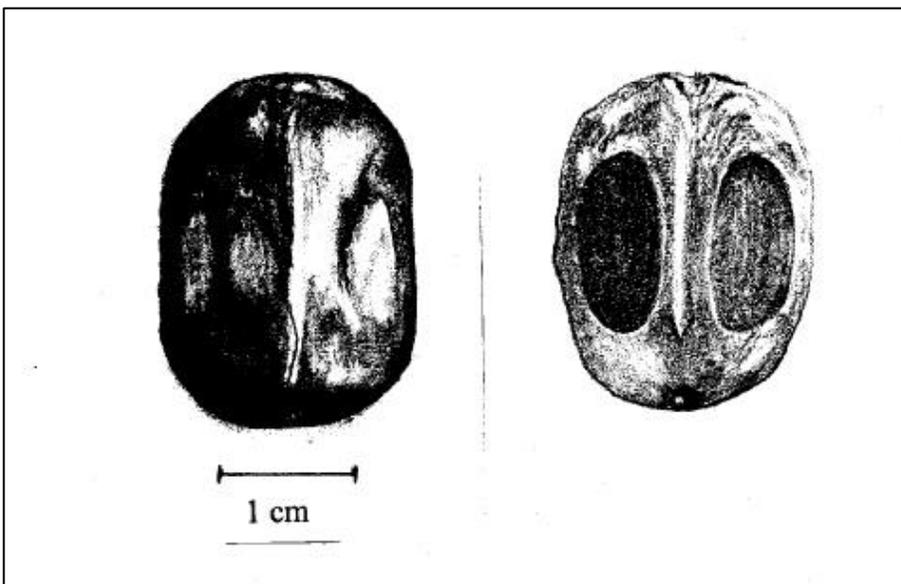
Royal Netherlands Institute Sea Research. P.O. Box 59, 1790 AB Den Burg, Texel, Netherlands  
(cadee@nioz.nl)

In the summer of 1996 a seed of the Para rubber tree *Hevea brasiliensis* was collected on the Dutch coast on the “Maasvlakte” near Europoort, Rotterdam (Cadée & Nijhuis, 2003). This was the first record from the Netherlands and the second from Europe (Nelson, 2000).

The seed is black, ellipsoidal, somewhat compressed, 2.7 cm long and 2 cm broad (see Figure). It is larger but very similar in shape and color of castor-beans, *Ricinus communis*, which are 1 to 1.5 cm long and sometimes drift ashore in large numbers in the Netherlands (Cadée, 1983, 2000). This likeness needs not surprise us: both species belong to the Euphorbiaceae. The fresh seeds are grayish-brown with lighter spots. Apparently these colors fade rapidly when exposed to seawater and sun, just like in castor-beans (Cadée, 1983, 2000). A nice picture of fresh seeds is given by Nowak & Schulz (1998) albeit under the wrong name of Tahiti nuts (*Inocarpus edulis*)! We thank Stans Kofman from the National Herbarium in Leiden for this information.

Nelson (2000) mentions only one other European record from the Isle of Barra, Outer Hebrides U.K., collected between 1908 and 1919 by William L. MacGillivray—nephew of the more famous naturalist William MacGillivray (1796-1852). Darke (2003) does not mention them among the surprisingly large collection of 803 tropical drift seeds he and his wife collected in Cornwall between 1999 and 2003. We agree with Nelson (2000) that although *Hevea* seeds can drift, it is unlikely that they could travel the entire Atlantic Ocean. If they could, they should be found more often, in Europe as well as elsewhere. They are, however, seldom mentioned in literature on drift seeds. Gunn (1968) mentions them from the southeast coast of Florida, but they are not in Gunn & Dennis' (1976) *World Guide*. It is dealt with, however, in the new and long-awaited book by Perry & Dennis (2003). They observed a maximum flotation under test conditions of six months, which is too short to cross the Atlantic. They also enumerate seeds from Yucatan and only a few from the east coast of Florida, the Florida Keys and the vicinity of Palm Beach, but not from Gulf Coast beaches.

If not a real long-distance tropical drift seed, how did this seed then arrive in the Netherlands? From the Internet ([www.hort.purdue.edu](http://www.hort.purdue.edu)) we learned that the seeds contain oil, which is used in soap, paints, varnishes and effective against houseflies and lice. This might indicate that seeds are imported in Europe and some may get lost near a harbor such as Rotterdam e.g. during transshipment.



Figure

Seed of *Hevea brasiliensis* from the Dutch coast—the collection of Herman Nijhuis. (drawing by Hans Cadée-Coenen)

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### **Sea-Bean Collection at University of Texas at Austin Marine Science Institute** by Dr. Gerald Sullivan

The University of Texas at Austin Marine Science Institute is located on the northeast tip of Mustang Island, a barrier island between coastal bays and the Gulf of Mexico. Since 1997 UTMSI at Port Aransas has had a sea-bean collection on display for educational purposes as well as public viewing. The collection is showcased in the Visitor Center along with seven aquaria, an extensive display of sand samples from beaches worldwide, and much, much more. (Further information can be obtained from [www.utmsi.utexas.edu](http://www.utmsi.utexas.edu).)

Each year in excess of 2,500 Texas school children, approximately 1,000 Elder-hostels and thousands of the general public are introduced to the world of sea-beans. In addition, this year, Dr. Gerald Sullivan was invited to speak in their Public Lecture Series on the topic—"Everything you NEVER-EVER wanted to know about SEABEANS." The audience of eighty-eight experienced the fantastic voyage of the awesome tropical drift seeds from their origin in South America to their final destination a world away. In 2002-3 this display of sea-beans has undergone a complete revision. Ninety percent of the original sea-beans have been replaced since a well-meaning soul coated them with urethane or similar shiny substance in order to enhance their beauty. The overall number of stranded drift seeds from Mustang Island has been increased by more than one third and now totals 56 species. Ninety-five percent of these were collected on a four mile stretch of beach one mile northeast of Horace Caldwell Pier to three miles southwest. The site is located but one mile from the Visitor Center. In addition, a limited collection of Kauai drift seeds has been added for international flavor, and a section composed of "look-alikes" and non-sea-beans are exhibited.

The Mustang Island collection includes the following (scientific name followed by common name, \* indicates rarely found):

*The Drifting Seed*, September 2003

*Acrocomia* spp., prickly palms  
*Aleurites moluccana*, candlenut\*  
*Andira galeottiana*, Donovan's brain  
*Apeiba aspera*, monkeycomb\*  
*Astrocaryum* spp., starnut palms  
*Attalea cohune*, cohune  
*Avicennia germinans*, black mangrove  
*Barringtonia asiatica*, boxfruit\*  
*Bertholletia excelsa*, Brazil nut\*  
*Caesalpinia bonduc*, gray nickernut  
*Caesalpinia major*, brown nickernut  
*Calophyllum calaba*, laurelwood\*  
*Canavalia rosea*, bay bean\*  
*Carya aquatica*, water hickory  
*Carya glabra*, pignut (hickory)  
*Carya illinoensis*, pecan  
*Carya tomentosa*, mockernut\*  
*Caryocar microcarpum*, porcupineseed\*  
*Casuarina equisetifolia*, Australian pinecone\*  
*Coccoloba uvifera*, sea grape\*  
*Cocos nucifera*, coconut  
*Crescentia cujete*, calabash\*  
*Cycas circinalis*, fern palm/sago palm  
*Dioclea* spp., sea-purses  
*Elaeis guineensis*, African oil palm\*  
*Entada gigas*, sea heart  
*Erythrina* spp. Coralbeans\*  
*Fevillea cordifolia*, antidote vine\*  
*Hernandia sonora*, lantern tree\*  
*Hippomane mancinella*, manchineel  
*Juglans cinerea*, white walnut  
*Juglans jamaicensis*, Jamaican walnut\*  
*Juglans nigra*, black walnut  
*Mangifera indica*, mango  
*Manicaria saccifera*, sea coconut  
*Mastichodendron capiri*, mastic  
*Maximiliana caribaea*, cocoid plam  
*Merremia discoidesperma*, Mary's bean  
*Mora excelsa*, mora\*  
*Mucuna sloanei*, true sea-bean (brown)  
*Mucuna* sp., horseshoe mucuna  
*Mucuna* sp., thick-banded mucuna  
*Mucuna urens*, true sea-bean (red)  
*Mucuna* spp., hamburger beans  
*Myristica fragrans*, nutmeg\*  
*Nelumbo* spp., lotuses (sacred/American)  
*Omphalea diandra*, Jamaican navel-spurge\*  
*Phoenix dactylifera*, date palm  
*Quercus* spp., oak acorns  
*Rhizophora mangle*, red mangrove

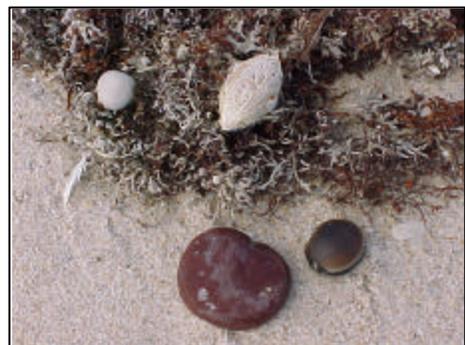
*Sacoglottis amazonica*, handgrenade (pod)  
*Sapindus saponaria*, black pearl\*  
*Spondias mombin*, hog plum  
*Taxodium distichum*, southern cypress  
*Terminalia catappa*, country almond  
*Terminalia* spp., country almonds (tropical almonds)

The Kauai Collection from Wailua Beach includes:

*Aleurites moluccana*, kukui  
*Casuarina equisetifolia*, toa  
*Canavalia cathartica*, mauna loa  
*Coix lacryma jobi*, Job's tears  
*Cocos nucifera*, coconut  
*Delonix regia*, royal poinciana  
*Dioclea* spp., sea-purses  
*Enterolobium cyclocarpum*, elephant's ear  
*Entada phaseoloides*, snuffbox sea-bean  
*Erythrina indica*, tiger's claw  
*Erythrina sandwichii*, wili wili  
*Merremia tuberosa*, woodrose  
*Mucuna* spp., hamburger beans  
*Mucuna* sp., thick-banded mucuna  
*Pandanus ovoratissimus*, lauhala

The Section Devoted to "Look-Alikes" and Non-Sea-Beans includes:

pumice stone, rocks  
 kapoc thorns, driftwood  
 tar, oak galls  
 peach/corn kernels  
 apricot seeds  
 pistachio seeds  
 avocado seeds  
 cherry pits, other galls  
 sea-beads, black plastic  
*Ban-beans* (roll-on deodorant plastic balls), peanuts



Attached to the wall above the showcase is a flat world map showing the major currents and color-coded as to the sea-bean's origin. To the right is a detailed map depicting the gulf coastal collection sites, i.e. Padre Island, etc. On the left is a wall plaque with a list of sea-bean trivia.

According to Gunn and Dennis, "the best sea-bean collecting on any Gulf Coast beach within the United States is at Padre Island, Texas. In late March, 1971, we collected some 40 species on a northern beach of Padre Island."

Local collectors are in full agreement since Padre Island seems to be a super destination for sea-beans. Mustang Island seems to receive a lesser number of sea-beans than Padre, and Matagordo Island less than Mustang. Apparently, as one ventures west to east the varieties and numbers of sea-beans diminish, probably due to the course of the Gulf Stream.

This sea-bean collection at UTMSI may well be a one-of-a-kind in the United States as well as the world.

Y'all are invited!

Special thanks to: Edward L. Perry IV for his identification expertise; and to Jan Cooper, a local seabeaner, for her contributions from her collection; also to Jerry "Seabeader" Sullivan for the revision of this collection.

### **Little Turtles, Sargassum Critters, Floating Garbage, and Drifting Seeds**

By Blair Witherington, Ph. D.

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

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August marks the beginning of our efforts to capture, release, and learn from neonate sea turtles found in weedlines near the Gulf Stream off Florida. Since 1992, Florida Marine Research Institute colleagues and I have studied what young-of-the-year sea turtles eat, how they behave, where they disperse, and what their open-ocean habitat is like.

In our first trip offshore this year, we did well in capturing 38 loggerhead post-hatchlings.



Although most of these turtles are approximately the size of hatchlings that are newly emerged from beach nests (20 grams), they are categorized as post-hatchlings because they have matured beyond the frenzied swimming seen in younger turtles. When we see small loggerheads offshore they are several days or weeks old and are relatively inactive, foraging lazily among sargassum and other buoyant material that concentrates in downwelling lines (weedlines) near the western Gulf Stream. It is fascinating to cruise in a small boat along these lines of stuff that the ocean presses together. "Stuff" best describes this material, as it falls into every category one can imagine.

Among these categories, the living things are certainly the most intriguing. Here in pelagic weedlines, the brown alga sargassum forms the basis of a unique community containing hundreds of organisms, many of which are found only in this habitat. Among the organisms adapted to this habitat are the sargassum anemone, sargassum shrimp, sargassum crab, sargassum snail, sargassum nudibranch, sargassum pipefish, sargassum triggerfish, sargassum anglerfish and, well... you see the pattern.

*The Drifting Seed*, September 2003

Other categories of stuff are considerably less appealing. Most weedlines are laced with abundant plastics and occasionally common lumps of tar. Although less appealing than the living community offshore, the plastics do tell an interesting story. They are every imaginable plastic object from bleach bottles to *Barbie* dolls. Their inscriptions bear writing from many nations and most of these objects have been adrift a while, evinced by their festoons of sessile animals and their occasional reduction to shreds and chips by the digestion of waves and sun. The picture is of masses of widely traveled cosmopolitan garbage that we could very well see more than once as it circles the Atlantic. Sadly, this oceanic trash forms a luringly deceptive array of harmful snacks that choke a high proportion of young sea turtles in weedlines. We've found that about 85% of post-hatchlings stranding on beaches after storms have plastic packed in their gut, and roughly 35% have tar in them. Three of the loggerheads on this recent trip were found floating dead; in the past, all turtles found this way have ingested plastic.

These trips offshore are always interesting, occasionally grim, and sometimes they foretell what we may soon see on our beaches. The beach is where some of the weed lines that we see offshore eventually meet their end.

In beach wrack lines, the sargassum turns from a vibrant gold to a dull brown, most of the swimming critters have left for other weedlines, and the attached fauna are mere shadows of what they once were. Even sea-beans in the wrack have lost some of their biological luster. Sea beans we find at sea commonly have several species of critters clinging to these miniature rafts. On the beach, surf and sand abrasion have often scoured these delicate animals off the stony-hard slick seed coats.

Collecting data on sea turtle life history drives our work offshore, but it is difficult sometimes to fancy our work as anything more than preemptive beachcombing. Like raking leaves before they fall from the tree, this gives us a bit of a jump on the coming fall season. So in case you're interested in a sea-bean season forecast, on this first trip we did well with sea-beans as well as little loggerheads. With only modest attention to sea-beans, we picked up 2 seahearts, 1 sea purse, and 1 hamburger bean, and we passed up several (west) Indian almonds in various states of ageing. Because the beach wrack on any given day is generally composed of many lines of flotsam, finding this number of sea-beans in just a few weedlines is unusual. Thus, with great extrapolation of meager data, I predict an outstanding season for sea-beans ahead.



"It's not just about the future of sea turtles, but the relevance of their futures to our own."  
Dr. Sylvia Earle, speaking at the 2002 Sea Turtle Symposium in Miami, Florida

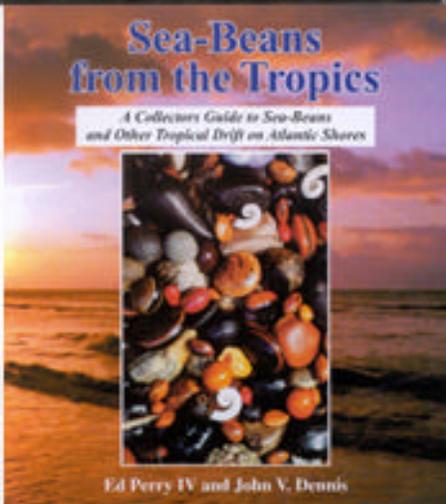
## News and Notes

A big "Thank You" to Roger Portell and John Beerensson for the donation of 35 copies of "Occurrence of the Atlantic Ghost Crab *Ocypode quadrata* from the Upper Pleistocene to Holocene Anastasia Formation of Florida," an article in the *Journal of Crustacean Biology*, 23(3) pp. 712-722, 2003. This is about our fossil ghost crabs from Melbourne, Florida. These donations will be "on sale" to raise money for this newsletter at the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium for \$5.00 each (cost of the printing). Anyone else interested in a copy can write to this newsletter. Thanks again to both of you!

"Knowing Beans About the Beach" is a featured article by Julie Powers in the high season, 2003, issue of *Coastwatch* magazine. This beautiful publication is an extension of the North Carolina Sea Grant, North Carolina State University. For a copy contact the magazine at Box 8605, Raleigh, NC 27695-8605, USA. Computer access: <http://www.ncsu.edu/seagrant>, or e-mail: [katie\\_mosher@ncsu.edu](mailto:katie_mosher@ncsu.edu).

Bruce and Nancy Haver, friends of Drifters Anne and Tom Walker, were fortunate enough to find not one, but TWO paper nautilus shells during a beachwalk in Stuart, Florida on Valentine's Day of this year! What an incredible find. Most people consider themselves lucky to come across even one in a lifetime!

Ed Perry wants to extend his sincere thanks to all those who generously donated to this year's subscription donations for the newsletter! The continued enthusiasm and interest for this publication has been phenomenal, and it reaffirms Ed's need to keep it going, even when the rest of the world seems to want to hold it back. Thank you everyone for your donations, patience, and compliments! Please, if we haven't heard back from you yet, just drop us a letter, even if you cannot make a donation, so we know you would like to stay on the mailing list.



**Sea-Beans  
from the Tropics**  
A Collector's Guide to Sea-Beans  
and Other Tropical Drift on Atlantic Shores  
**Ed Perry IV and John V. Dennis**

## Now Available!

### **Sea-Beans from the Tropics: A Collector's Guide to Sea-Beans and Other Tropical Drift on Atlantic Shores**

by *Edward L. Perry IV & John V. Dennis*  
Foreword by Cathie Katz

Orig. Ed. 2003    232 pp.    ISBN 1-57524-181-1    \$29.50

**A**tlantic Coast beaches offer a variety of souvenirs and curiosities to those beachgoers that care to look. Shells have long been treasured finds, and their descriptions are well documented in a variety of books and guides. But what about the other things found on the beach? These are the things that drift in the ocean and are carried in with the winds: sea-beans, spirula, mermaid's purses, and other tropical treasures.

This book references them in a convenient form for the beachcomber, while keeping the oceanographer and botanist in mind. Interesting descriptions of each sea-bean species, or other drift treasure, and 175 color photographs make this book a valuable collector's guide. Perry and Dennis provide the results of a 30-year study on sea-bean flotation tests. No other book combines personal experience, use of color photography identifications, and the scientific field of botany into a complete, friendly user's guide for identifying sea-beans and other drift from the sea.

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All of our progress is an unfolding... You first have an instinct, then an opinion, then a knowledge, as the plant has root, bud, and fruit. Trust the instinct to the end, though you can render no reason.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Eighth Annual International Sea-Bean Symposium**  
**Cocoa Beach Public Library—550 North Brevard Avenue, Cocoa Beach, Florida 32931**  
**Open Free To The Public, October 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup>, 2003**

Schedule of Events\*

Through the weekend: Sea-bean collections and displays, experts, sea-bean polishing, the famous Bean-O-Matic, jewelry, T-shirts, slide-shows, speakers, books, authors, international guests, and contests (including the ever popular “ODD-BEAN” contest, and the Saturday morning “BEAN-A-THON” beachcombing bonanza!)

We are pleased to announce Dr. David Cox from Vero Beach, Florida will be our keynote speaker Saturday evening (7:45pm). David will present a wonderful lecture on Mermaid’s Purses, which so many of us find intriguing. I have seen this presentation before, and it’s superb and very interesting.

Natural history writers and books will be available through the weekend. Krieger Publishing Company will be pleased to present *Sea-Beans from the Tropics: A Collector’s Guide to Sea-Beans and Other Tropical Drift on Atlantic Shores*, by Perry/Dennis (2003). Ed Perry will be on-hand to sign copies. The ever popular *The Little Book of Sea-Beans* will also be available, and co-author Paul Mikkelsen will be present to sign copies. Some of Jack Rudloe’s (out of print) works will also be available; he was our keynote speaker in 2001. Izumi Hanno, our Drifter from Japan, will be displaying at this year’s event—don’t miss this. This lady is one GREAT artist of drift seeds. Her artwork, and some of Cathie’s, will make up this year’s T-shirt logo—very nice!

Thursday, October 9<sup>th</sup> (3-5pm)

Everyone is invited to the main conference room at the Cocoa Beach Public Library for an informal get-together and introduction, discussion of symposium plans, and to set up displays for the weekend. We need lots of help setting up tables, chairs, and displays, so please feel free to donate time and suggestions. At 6pm those interested can meet at Roberto’s Little Havana Restaurant (1/2 mile south of the library at 26 N. Orlando Ave.—this place has GREAT Cuban food, and has become a Symposium tradition).

Friday, October 10<sup>th</sup> (9-5pm)

Displays and collections open to the public all day, free, from 9am to 5pm. Enter your seeds for the ODD-BEAN contest. 11 to 11:45am: *Beginners’ Beachwalking* (slide show) by Sebastian Inlet State Park Ranger Ed Perry. 3 to 3:45pm: *What’s Floating Our Oceans Now?!* (slide show/lecture) by Oceanographer Dr. Curt Ebbesmeyer. 5pm: The library closes; meet for dinner at Roberto’s Little Havana Restaurant (1/2 mile south of the library at 26 N. Orlando Ave., on southbound A.1.A.).

Saturday, October 11<sup>th</sup> (8-9pm)

Displays and collections open to the public all day, free, from 9am to 9pm. Enter your seeds for the ODD-BEAN contest. 8 to 10 am: Bean-A-Thon 2003 —You are on your own; don’t come to the library first if you participate. Collect sea-beans and or toys/trash on any beach between Canaveral National Seashore and Sebastian Inlet. You MUST have your beans/toys at the library by 10:30am. Contest is judged/tallied per individual effort in the 2hr. time frame, please. 9am: Library opens. 10:30 to Noon: Judges will tally Bean-A-Thon entries outside in front of the library (awards at 7pm that night). 4:00pm: Special presentation by Paul Mikkelsen; if you knew Cathie you won’t want to miss this! 5:30pm: ODD-BEAN contest judging (for entries submitted all through the weekend). In a baggie with your name, address/phone number place your largest hamburger, biggest heart, and stripiest nickar from an existing sea-bean collection. Dinner Break: 5:30pm to 7pm. 7pm: Prompt! Bean-A-Thon and contest awards and certificates presented. Raffle winners chosen. 7:45 to 8:45pm: Keynote speaker Dr. David Cox—“The Magic of Mermaids’ Purses”

Sunday, October 12<sup>th</sup> (9-11am)

Take down displays; small business meeting to discuss and schedule dates/help for next year’s symposium.

\*October is still HURRICANE SEASON in Florida, so our schedule is at the mercy of the powers beyond our control. Hurricanes are wonderful for beaning, but can be dangerous for beachwalkers. Our beachcombing activities may be cancelled because of severe weather, in which case we’ll follow evacuation procedures to the mainland. Hurricane information will be available at your hotel and at the library.

*The Drifting Seed*, September 2003

## Travel and Hotel Information for Symposium 2003 in Cocoa Beach, Florida

Cocoa Beach is about an hour drive from Orlando International Airport.  
For Sea-Aire Motel information/directions, call 1-800-319-9637 (toll free).

The Sea-Aire Motel has offered again to host The Drifters for the 2003 Sea-Bean Symposium with a generous discount (\$10/night) for the weekend—please mention you are a Symposium attendee. Room rates vary between \$75-\$95/night. For those planning to stay longer, weekly rates are also available at a discount. The Sea-Aire Motel is directly on the ocean and less than ½ mile from the Cocoa Beach Public Library.

Sea-Aire Motel 1-800-319-9637

181 North Atlantic Avenue, Cocoa Beach, Florida 32931

<http://www.L-N.com/SeaAire/>



8th Annual Sea-Bean Symposium  
and Beachcombers' Festival



8th Annual  
Sea-Bean Symposium  
and Beachcombers' Festival

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\*all shirts are a \$20 donation each\*

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Make checks payable to: The Drifting Seed.

This year's design is by new Drifter and artist extraordinaire Izumi Hanno. Her artwork will be featured on the back, and the pocket logo will feature art by Cathie Katz and Izumi with "Little Larry" and "Mr. Sea Bean" dancing on a mermaid's purse!