

The Drifting Seed

September, 2007



Vol. 13, No. 2

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 12th Annual International Sea Bean Symposium will be held at the Cocoa Beach Public Library, October 19th-20th, 2007.

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Why are most *Terminalia catappa* fruits in Europe found on Dutch coasts?

by Gerhard C. Cadée, (cadee@nioz.nl)

Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research, Texel, NL

On the 4th of July 2007, a new *Terminalia catappa* was found in drift on the Island of Texel, The Netherlands. It was found during a field excursion led by Arthur Oosterbaan (EcoMare, Texel), and I am very grateful to him for giving this tropical almond to me. This is the third specimen from the Dutch coast and the fourth from European coasts. Nelson (1990, 2000) records only one other European specimen from outside the Netherlands. This was collected about 1978 by Wakefield near St Mary's in the Isles of Scilly. Nelson (2000) states that the second Dutch specimen on which I reported in 1995 "shows little sign of erosion." I here picture all three records from the Dutch coast and the reader may conclude for himself. In my opinion all three look eroded, but I must agree that those I found on tropical coasts right under the *Terminalia* trees, which therefore had not been transported at all by sea currents, sometimes also looked rather eroded. It is my impression that seed erosion occurs on the beach where the seeds are in contact with sand; when adrift on the ocean little erosion does occur. So probably the second Dutch *Terminalia catappa* found in 1992 (Fig. 1 left specimen) by my wife Hans, on which I reported in 1995, had just arrived on the beach.

I also illustrate another *Terminalia* fruit which was found by Dr. P. Smit on the beach of den Helder (1st of January 2000) on the mainland opposite the Island of Texel (Fig. 1 extreme right). This does not show any sign of erosion. Brochard & Cadée (2005) mentioned and pictured this specimen as *Terminalia* sp. (other suggestions are welcome!). It certainly is not a peregrine long-distance tropical drift-fruit *sensu* Nelson (1990, 2000).

It still puzzles me why most *Terminalia catappa* in Europe were found on the Dutch coast. According to Perry & Dennis (2005) it is the least sought after of the tropical drift seeds and fruits. Are Dutch beachcombers more alert? It is also interesting to note that all were reported from Texel and the nearby Den Helder. Certainly, the interest in tropical drift seeds and fruits on our coast has increased in the last decades, particularly around Texel. However, most 'tropical drift seeds' on the Dutch coast are imported by man. For what reason could *Terminalia catappa* be imported? Real long-distance tropical drift seeds and fruits are rare on the Dutch coast, with an average of less than one per year reported over the past 60 years. The first tropical drift seeds on the Dutch coast were found in 1955 by Wim Vader and in 1956 by Cathie Katz (Brochard & Cadée, 2005).

Fig. 1. Dutch *Terminalia* specimens. From left to right: *Terminalia catappa* found in 1992 on Texel, the new specimen found in 2007 on Texel, *T. catappa* found in 1988 in Den Helder, and extreme right: *Terminalia* sp. (?) from den Helder 2000 (scale in cm).



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The Padre Island National Seashore “Crunch-Squish Walk” Adventure

by Elaine Norton, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

In mid-May 2007, I journeyed 1200 miles from home in Southeastern Florida with my fellow Drifter, Carol Agnew (now from Blowing Rock, NC), with hopes to venture upon hundreds of hamburger beans, and tens of Mary's beans and brown nickernuts at Padre Island National Seashore in Corpus Christi, Texas. We both had heard grand tales from fellow beaners at Sea-Bean Symposiums in Cocoa Beach over the years, of such bountiful “booty” which was there for the pickin’ between the months of March and July of each year. The trip was planned since last October and we were excited to finally go.

After traveling all day and renting a 4-wheel drive vehicle at the airport, we headed toward our hotel to ready ourselves for the adventure. Stopping at a “Stripes” convenience store (like a 7-11) on the way, we started talking with a gal who lived there. She asked us where we were from, and then asked “Why would you come to our beaches at this time of year if you are from Florida? The shore is full of horrible and smelly sargassum!!” Our eyes lit up, and we explained, “That is why we are here!!” We had visions of buckets of beans and were preparing to make shipments home via the local UPS store, being certain that we wouldn't have enough room in our luggage.

After checking into the hotel before sunset without even changing our clothes, we drove down to the nearest public beach access and all we could see was sargassum. A continuous, thick wrack-line from the water line to the high-tide water mark.....miles and miles of sargassum. Running down towards the weed, we were ready to fill our pockets and baggies for a “pre-beaning” pre-dusk evening. To our surprise, we walked along the top of the wrack line almost 15 minutes without finding a single bean. Shortly thereafter, we found a seaheart encrusted with decaying weed, but nothing else. Thinking maybe we needed to go closer to the water, we realized the weed was almost 2- to 3-feet thick; kind of dry on top and very wet underneath and ended up trudging along in what we called the “crunch-squish walk” as we would hear a crunch then squishy sound with each step that sank into the weed. There was so much sargassum coming in, there wasn't enough room on the sand for anymore to pile up and the water went below the older weed as the tide came in, soaking the bottoms. Another seaheart & then a starnut palm after 15 more minutes, and nothing else. We were a bit mystified, but shrugged it off reasoning that it was getting late and dark, our eyes must be blurry from traveling all day, and possibly since this was the public beach someone had already picked up all the “good beans.” We would have better luck in the Padre Island National Seashore park tomorrow.

The next morning we packed our gear, sunblock, snacks & water for the day, our “Mucuna Entada” bags, lots of large ziplocs, little shovels, and drove 13 miles south to the park entrance. The officer at the gate said that the sand was very soft and that people were getting stuck, warning us not to go further than the initial 5 miles of the 60-mile usually drivable shore (with a 4-wheel drive vehicle). We were a bit disappointed, but kept our hopes up as we went to the Visitor Center and spoke with the Park Officer on duty. We told him of our “non-bean” experience the afternoon before up the island, and he said there are usually seabean on his park’s beaches all year long. But to be sure, he advised us to look near the high-tide water mark where the weed was dryer or even up into the base of the dunes where the snake holes were. He mentioned that if we didn’t have too much luck down the “main drag” going south, to try going north past the beach-camping area that is only accessible by foot. Then Officer Phillip showed us his copy of *Sea-Beans from the Tropics* and we bragged that “we had our own copies, thank you, and were acquaintances of Ed Perry, who was *HIM (his equivalent)* at Sebastian Inlet State Park in Florida.” He smiled, wished us luck and sent us on our way.

We started driving south down the beach, not really seeing any “stuck” vehicles, but everyone was driving along the lower shore line, over the seaweed where the sand was wetter and more hard packed. A lot of trucks and 4-wheel drive vehicles were parked right on the weed....fishing and picnicking on that Sunday. There was a lot of debris, some old (actual flotsam) and a lot of new (discarded beer bottles, etc.) and we were a bit nervous as we didn’t want to run over any bottles and puncture a wheel. Again like at the public beach, there was miles and miles of sargassum as far as the eye could see. There was a thin coat of sand on top of the weed from the wind blowing, too (see photo).



Stopping about every mile, I would walk about ½ mile one way and Carol would walk the other way. Covering the high-tide wrack line and then some of the “crunch-squish” weed, we met back at the vehicle and continued on that way, going south until around the 15-mile marker when the sand got too soft to risk driving onward. To our surprise, we only found the occasional bean. Since our sticks weren’t working, we took out our gloves and tried lifting and shaking the wrack but it was way too heavy, in various stages of early decay, had lots of little bugs in it and a horrendous odor. The winds were prevailing during our entire trip from the east at about 15 mph, which

kept the pungent smell around us at all times. Still, no volumes of beans. We saw several sea coconuts, southern swamp-lily seeds, water hickory seeds, black walnuts and tropical almonds. However, that was not the “booty” we journeyed for.

We came back to the park the next day and took Officer Phillip’s advice and parked at the end of the beach-campground and walked north around 5 miles and back in the hot sun and wind, which took us about 5-1/2 hours. The beaning was a bit better going north, as the high-tide dryer wrack-line was not driven over by vehicles (and much easier to walk on than the “crunch-squish” weed towards the water) and we did actually find a nice assortment of species, but again, not the volume of seabean we were looking for.

Due to my frustration so far, that day I risked walking (carefully) through the base of the dunes in the soft white sand near the snake holes, hoping not to disturb a diamondback or western coachwhip along my way. Carol remained more cautious and stayed down by the wrack-line below. To my surprise, I actually found a couple of brown nickernuts, a Mary’s bean and an

Oxyrhynchus trinervius! (The black kind....only the second one ever found by me in my lifetime. The other I picked up was after one of the 2005 hurricanes in Fort Lauderdale, which was a brownish-purple color.) The snakes didn't come out of their holes, and I now felt better about the 1200 mile journey from Fort Lauderdale.

On our third and last full day of our Texas adventure, we decided to travel up the coast and cover Mustang Island. There were a few access roads to the beach in the south end of the island through Mustang Island State Park, but we encountered the same "conditions" as on the first day of our trip in Padre Island Seashore park. We found a lot of the "less desirable" drift seeds and a few seabean along the way. About halfway up the island past the park, we could actually drive the rest of the way on the beach to the north end by the channel, as the sand was well-maintained and hard-packed for driving like at Daytona Beach in Florida. They left the lower half of the shore "natural" as we guessed there was way too much sargassum for them to keep up with that time of year. We stopped every mile or so, did the dryer high-tide wrack line and a little bit of "crunch-squish" walking.

The whole experience was a lot of very hard work and very exhausting, not being the adventure and the vision we had from tales of other beaners. I suppose that in June or July (as quoted from "*World Guide to Tropical Drift Seeds*" by Gunn & Dennis), "the time to make a search is after drying and rotting (of the weed) has reduced the bulk so that it is much easier to find the embedded objects." Our best of luck to whoever goes at that time.

In the end, we found a very diverse count of species, and here is a summary of our findings over our 3 beachcombing days in Texas:

1 <i>Oxyrhynchus trinervius</i>	8 Kapok tree thorns
3 Mary's beans	4 Crabwoods
4 Brown nickernuts	1 Buttonwood seed
2 Gray nickernuts	1 Fern-palm
1 Lantern tree seed	2 Sea peas
1 Boxfruit seed	2 Spirula shells
1 Black sea biscuit bean	3 Pecans
1 <i>Calatola costaricensis</i>	1 Mahogany seed
3 Antidote vine seeds (1 of which was almost 8cm in diameter)	4 Acorns (oak)
53 <i>Mucuna</i> (26 urens, 25 sloanei, 1 holtonii, 1 thick-banded)	1 Moonflower seed
18 <i>Dioclea</i>	1 Red mangrove
35 Seahearts	Sea coconuts (many left behind)
55 Starnut palms	Black walnuts (many left behind)
8 Jamaican naval spurges	White walnuts-butternuts (many left behind)
5 Prickly palms	Water hickory seeds (many left behind)
2 Loralwoods	Southern swamp-lily seeds (many left behind)
2 Blisterpods	Tropical almonds (many left behind)
	Cohune palms (many left behind)
	14 unidentified seed species

Total drift seed species count was 51 (see photo). There was a lot of "garbage" and flotsam on the beach, the most prevalent being hundreds of orange earplugs which we assumed were from the oil-rig platforms offshore. We also found 8 different types of tags (we'll bring to the next Symposium for Curtis), and a few plastic toys. We saw a lot of very large tar blobs, again, probably from the oil-rigs offshore, and many pieces of buckets, bamboo, plastic, wood and other debris. There was a lot of white Indian pumice on top of the weed, too. We picked up a few pieces and also found some red, black and green pumice as well.

We were able to fit our findings in the luggage, and unfortunately didn't need the services of the UPS store.

After traveling 1200 miles back, and arriving at Fort Lauderdale airport at 5pm the next day, I hailed a taxi and had him drive me back home down A-1-A along the beach, to avoid rush-hour traffic on US 1. To my surprise as I looked out the window, there was a fresh line of weed on the beach, with a strong 20-25 mph wind coming out of the east. As soon as I got home, I checked the tide calendar and saw that high-tide was at 3pm, which meant that the City of Fort Lauderdale "Scraper Plow Monster" would miss out on any wrack which was washed ashore after its routine 7-8am mission to make our beaches pristine (a regular inconvenience for this Southeast Florida Drifter). I put my salty beanie clothes back on from my luggage and raced down to the beach. I was able to cover almost all of the 2 mile distance between Oakland Park Boulevard north to the Lauderdale-By-The-Sea Pier in front of the hi-rise condos and back between 5:30pm and 8:30pm (however, during the last 45 minutes it was getting somewhat dark), and to my glee and excitement, this is what I found during the 3 hour period, which had just washed in:



- 6 Mucunas (1 urens, 5 sloanei)
- 1 Dioclea
- 2 Mary's beans
- 2 Gray nickernuts
- 10 Starnut palms
- 3 Seahearts
- 2 Prickly palms
- 1 Red mangrove
- 1 Bloodwood

- 1 Black pearl
- 1 Hogplum
- 1 Blisterpod (many left behind)
- 1 Tropical almond (many left behind)
- 3 Sea coconuts (many left behind)
- 3 Pieces of white pumice (many left behind)
- 1 Coin vine (many left behind)
- 2 Cohune palms (many left behind)
- (See photo)

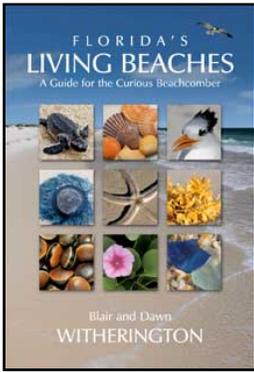


As I walked back to my condo from the beach with a smile on my face, I kept hearing inside my head "there's no place like home.....there's no place like home."

So many people who go afield for enjoyment leave it behind them at home.

David Grayson in *The Friendship Book*

News and Notes



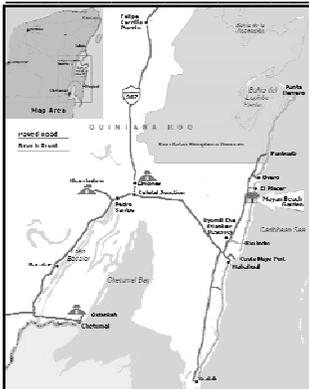
Florida's Living Beaches by Drifters **Blair and Dawn Witherington** is a must for Florida beachcombers, as well as a valuable resource to all others interested in shells, sea-beans, seashore plant life, animal life, and even trash that washes up on shorelines. Excellent photographs combined with clear and concise descriptions of each species or object, mixed with interpretive tid-bits make this a guide that won't sit idle on a shelf. The book retails for \$21.95 and is published by Pineapple Press. Blair and Dawn will be on hand with copies at the Twelfth Annual Sea-Bean Symposium and Beachcombers' Festival, or it can be ordered at PineapplePress.com, Amazon.com, or at most bookstores.

Another one of our dear Drifters, jewelry and seed expert **Ruth Smith**, has authored an online book all about botanical jewelry and the seeds used to create it, titled *Botanical Beads of the World*. Dr. John Damuth and Dr. Susan Mazer created the 141 page online guide and all photos are Ruth's. Please check out this great resource at www.botanicalbeads.com. Thanks Ruth for this wonderful piece of work! Ruth can be reached through e-mail at BotBead@aol.com.

This correspondence from **Dr. Wayne Armstrong** (mrwolffia@cox.net) in an e-mail to Ed Perry: I just wanted to tell you that I have already been contacted by a Dutch botanist (J.F. Veldkamp) from the National Herbarium of the Netherlands. Maybe you know of him. He agrees with my assessment of coconut pearls and apparently published an article on this subject several years ago. In fact, we are exchanging papers on this fascinating topic. Gee, *The Drifting Seed* newsletter really gets around. Congratulations and thank you for editing and publishing it.

In spite of the exposure to this giant hoax, I just came across the following website that I thought you might find amusing: <http://www.manizone.co.uk/coconut-pearl-coconut-mustika-coconut-stones-p-233.html>

I just went in for a routine skin cancer surgery. I have had several basal cell carcinomas removed over the years, and I visit a dermatologist regularly. Apparently he didn't check me that thoroughly because I just had 1/3 of my nose removed due to an aggressive type of basal cell carcinoma. It was barely noticeable on my nose and my dermatologist simply treated it with liquid nitrogen. Although it could have been worse, I am now undergoing plastic surgery on my nose. At this time I resemble "Elephant Man." This brings up an important message to all my dear friends who spend a lot of time in the sun, especially beachcombers. Be sure to wear sunscreen and a good hat, and visit a good dermatologist regularly. I think some people, like myself, are genetically predisposed to certain skin cancers. This might be a good note for *The Drifting Seed*!



In August, many of us watched in fear as **Hurricane Dean** bore down on the tropical paradise of Mahahual, Mexico (near the Belize border on the Yucatan Peninsula). Christopher Boykin had shared a Power Point presentation at the 2005 Symposium of this beaners' and beachcombers' paradise, and Curt Ebbesmeyer wrote a story in issue 12.1 (pages 5-8) about a small group of *banderos* that had vacationed there at the Mayan Beach Garden Inn. Drifters **Kim and Marcia Bales** own and manage the inn. It has sustained severe damage from the hurricane; 4 of the 6 concrete-construction cabanas were washed away. If you would like to make a donation to help, please contact Ed Perry or Alice Lowe at this address or get with us at this year's Symposium.

UTMSI Drift Seed Collection Continues to Flourish

by Gerald Sullivan and John Williams
geraldsully@yahoo.com, williams@utmsi.utexas.edu

This Mustang Island, Texas drift seed collection was first reported in *The Drifting Seed* in September, 2003, then updated in the same newsletter in December, 2004. It now contains 119 species plus other drift. One discouraging aspect associated with this collection is that over 40 different seeds have defied identification. (**editor's note:** UTMSI=University of Texas Marine Science Institute; <http://www.utmsi.utexas.edu/>)

The following new arrivals have been identified and incorporated into the UTMSI showcase of drift seeds:

<i>Bactris</i> sp. palm	<i>Momordica charantia</i> , balsam apple
<i>Blighia sapida</i> , akee	<i>Pachira aquatica</i> , three-lobed <i>Pachira</i>
<i>Caesalpinia ciliata</i> , yellow nickernut	<i>Passiflora</i> sp., passion flower
<i>Calocarpum</i> spp., egg fruit *	<i>Pistacia</i> sp., pistachio
<i>Caryocar glabrum</i> , smooth porcupine	<i>Plantanus occidentalis</i> , American sycamore
<i>Chrysobalanus icaco</i> , coco-plum	<i>Pouteria campechiana</i> , egg fruit *
<i>Conocarpus erectus</i> , buttonwood	<i>Ricinus communis</i> , castor bean
<i>Coix-lacryma jobi</i> , Job's tear	<i>Sabal palmetto</i> , sabal palm
<i>Cupaniopsis anacardioides</i> , carrotwood	<i>Salicornia virginica</i> , pickleweed
<i>Erythrina crista-galli</i> , wiliwili haole	<i>Scaevola plumieri</i> , inkberry
<i>Erythrina</i> sp., roach egg	<i>Uniola pariculata</i> , sea oat
<i>Guazuma ulmifolia</i> , mutamba	<i>Vigna</i> sp., beach pea
<i>Melia azedarach</i> , chinaberry	<i>Xanthium strumarium</i> , cockleburr

*Synonymous

Most drifters are probably unfamiliar with *Blighia sapida*, commonly known as akee or ackee. In 1793, Captain William Bligh introduced the plant to Jamaica from Africa as a food source for slaves. Appropriately, the plant was named after this



Bounty captain and became Jamaica's national fruit. It is a beautiful large tree approximately 40 feet in height, which produces large numbers of a 3-5 lobed, pear-shaped, leathery, bright scarlet fruit about the size of a large apple. The ripe fruit splits into lobes exposing generally three fully developed, nearly round, smooth, hard, shiny black seeds, approximately one inch in diameter and containing the poisonous principle hypoglycin.



Traditionally, the fleshy arils of the fruit have been prepared with codfish, and considered the national dish of Jamaica. The only caution is that if akee is prepared improperly, it is poisonous and deaths have occurred.

I've never been brave enough to indulge in this delicacy.

New Addition to Showcase Area – A “Please Touch” beach display has been added which invites visitors to examine items that have been found on local beaches. This is developing into a tremendous teaching tool for the thousands of Texas school students and others who visit annually. The purpose of the display is to encourage visitors to physically explore the items which are realistically embedded in sand, and expand their knowledge of beach debris. Question and answer cards highlight objects and offer facts on topics ranging from life history of the seahorse to

the dietary habits of the sea turtle. Also intermixed among the flotsam are numerous drift seeds which must be periodically replenished since they make super cherished souvenirs.

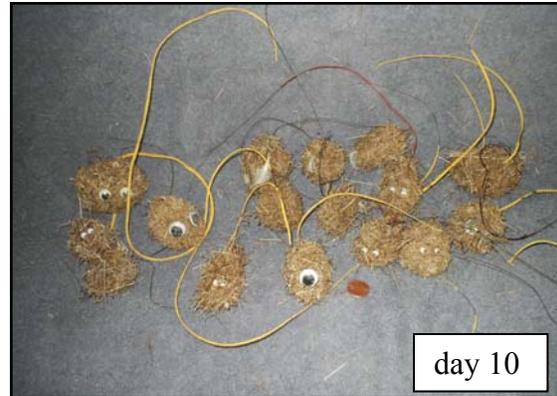
Other Highlights –

- (1) A third but much smaller bleached yellow nickernut arrived.
- (2) The first truly yellow colored yellow nickernut washed ashore. (*The Drifting Seed* 2006, Vol. 12, No. 2)
- (3) Although not displayed a total of 111 scrunches (true seabeads) were garnered in 2006. (*The Drifting Seed* 2005, Vol. 11, No. 3)
- (4) The three-lobed *Mora* issue was finally resolved. (*The Drifting Seed* Vol. 13, No. 1, 4-5)
- (5) Tribbles will be displayed in the showcase. Tribbles??

Reappearance of Earthbound Tribbles –

According to our Mustang Island guru, Tony Amos, the vegetative beach balls have returned after a three-year absence. Apparently conditions must be exactly right for this “happening”. Recently a fierce wind swept in from the north, across the island’s grasslands, driving the dried brittle and fragmented switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*) over the dunes and onto surf/beach area in copious amounts. Through the tumbling action of the sea, beach balls are formed. Nelson (*The Drifting Seed* 2005, Vol. 11 No. 1) addresses this phenomenon from a historic point of view, but also gives an insight on “how to make your own balls.” Fascinating.

My first thought, following my one and only encounter with this alien-like object, was of the heyday of Captain James T. Kirk, Star Trek and a specific episode which involved the rapidly reproducing, lovable, spacebound critters, known as Tribbles. Please examine the photos. I claim the smallest and local drifter Jennifer Shannon the larger two. Not to be outdone, John Williams claimed to have recently trudged through hundreds, if not thousands of these Tribbles on nearby San Jose Island. Confirmation photo? “Duh, I forgot to take a picture.” Who is one to believe these days?



Please note that by “Day 10” image collectors/processors began appearing on a number of the varmints. It also became apparent that these critters were not house-broken since they deposited a thin layer of silica wherever they traveled. Last but not least, it soon became obvious that those with a tail like appendage of yellow whip-coral were alpha males. Don’t ask!

At one time beachcombing was more than just a hobby or a pleasant form of exercise. Many years ago when those of us who lived near the sea needed chairs for our homes, pots and pans for our kitchen, or even clothes for ourselves and our families, we first scoured the beach, hoping that we might find them there. If we came back empty-handed, we reluctantly took down the mail order catalogs and sent away for the articles. But buying was never as much fun as finding!
John C. Gifford in *Living by the Land*, 1945

Beachcombing in Port Elizabeth—South Africa (II)

by Liliane Hosten-Willems, echosten@yebo.co.za

Bales of rubber regularly wash up on our Port Elizabeth beaches. They are a sad reminder of World War II. The south-eastern coast of Africa was the site of bitter naval encounters during WW II. From July 1942 to September 1944, 102 allied vessels were sunk between Cape Agulhas and Mozambique by German mines and submarines. Even a few Japanese U-boats came close to our coast. Vessels from the Royal Navy were transporting troops to the different war fronts as well as food, industrial and war cargo and raw material from the Far East including rubber from Malaysia to England. The Germans were also transporting raw material mostly by submarines. The Germans were well organized and along the South African coast with 2 packs of 4-6 submarines each, known as the Eisbär and Seehund, they were wreaking havoc. The submarines were fast and powerful, and were supplied by a depot ship (blockade runner) standing off Prince Edward Island (46° 35' S, 38° 00' E). In March 1944, it was decided to sink the depot ship and on the 5th of March 1944, 1 cruiser, 2 destroyers, 1 frigate and 1 aircraft carrier from the Royal Navy left South Africa to find the blockade runner and sink it. This done, the R.N. vessels had to flee the site as fast as possible, they were followed by u-boats, and had to “run” to safety as far as Mauritius.

For more than 50 years, rubber bales have been washing up on our beaches. They are black and sticky now, very heavy, eventually they get covered by vegetation or dry up between the rocks. The ships they are coming from are resting on the floor of the Indian Ocean and they release their cargo bit by bit as they rust away. Rubber bales are regularly found along the Schoenmakerskop coast (34°

02' 59" S, 25° 34' 44" E) and in March 2006 one was found on the Goukamma Reserve beach between Knysna and Sedgefield. (34° 04' 04" S, 22° 55' 27" E). The bales are roughly 1m x 0.5m x 0.5m and are formed out of compressed and wrinkled layers of rubber.

Objects that have been submerged for a long time on the ocean floor and reappear after a long time are called lagan. Those rubber bales are lagan!

(A friend of mine who was on one of those ships looking for the depot ship told me this story)



Figure 1

Figure 1:
Rubber bale found on the Goukamma beach between Knysna and Sedgefield, South Africa.

Drift Seeds

by Allan R. Keith

Anyone who has ever walked along an ocean beach knows that all kinds of things get washed up there. Beachcombing for shells and marine algae are two well-known avocations which take advantage of this fact. Here's another: look for the seeds of tropical plants that arrive here on ocean currents from the south. There are more possibilities than you might think. Nine species of such seeds have been found on Nantucket, eight of which are on display at the Maria Mitchell Association Natural Science Museum. If one stops to consider, it should come as no surprise that, even though the Gulf Stream is well offshore at our latitude, eddies of warm tropical water frequently spin off and come in to our beaches. With these eddies have come a variety of tropical fish, seaweeds and tropical plant seeds.

So far the only tropical seeds found here are those of the West Indian locust, *Hymenaea courbaril* and the coconut, *Cocos nucifera*. Two coconuts were found at Squibnocket last summer. Both had the outer husks removed but there was no sign of other human attention. Two years ago I found a coconut with the full husk still on but failed to collect it and was severely chastised by my friend and colleague Steve Sponberg for that lapse. Won't make that mistake again. The tropical seeds found on Nantucket include this coconut plus tropical walnut, *Jugulans jamaicensis*, sea coconut, *Manicaria saccifera*, calabash, *Crescentia cujete*, gray nickernut, *Caesalpina bonduc*, true sea bean, *Mucuna sloanei*, sea heart, *Entada gigas*, tropical almond, *Terminalia catappa*, and sea purse, *Dioclea reflexa* (R. S. Kennedy, pers. comm.). Most intriguing was the discovery of a sea purse seed in a woodpecker's nest on Nantucket – birdwatchers take note – thereby constituting the altitude record for a drift seed at this latitude.

For those wanting to identify any drift seeds they find on the beach, there is good news. There are two reference books that discuss and illustrate drift seeds: *World Guide to Tropical Drift Seeds and Fruits* by C. R. Gunn and J. V. Dennis (1976, New York Times Book Co.) which is available at the Polly Hill Arboretum, and the more recent *Sea-Beans from the Tropics* by E. Perry and J. V. Dennis (2003, Kreiger Publishing Co.). And those interested in recent news of drift seeds should visit <http://www.seabean.com/newsletters/vol12-2.pdf> which provides maps and a recent issue of *The Drifting Seed* newsletter prepared by Dr. E. Charles Nelson of Cambridgeshire, England.

There is another wrinkle to this story. This past summer Portugese men-of-war were found on the beach at Sable Island which lies about 100 miles off Nova Scotia and well to our north. Coconuts were also found there about the same time. This is as far north as drift seeds have ever been found in eastern North America (E. C. Nelson, pers. comm.). It will be remembered that we also had an influx of Portugese men-of-war in the late spring of this year. Shortly thereafter the two coconuts were discovered here. It seems almost certain that the same process which brought the coconuts and the men-of-war here also took them to Sable Island and that other drift seeds may have arrived here that were not discovered. The next time men-of-war show up would be an especially propitious time to go look for drift seeds, though such seeds could show up at other times as well.

Should any seeds be found, please bring them to the Polly Hill Arboretum for identification. Or if there is anyone out there who already has such seeds, please also bring them to the Arboretum to establish their identity.

(editor's note: Polly Hill Arboretum is located at: 809 State Road, West Tisbury, Massachusetts 02575; their mailing address is: P.O. Box 561, West Tisbury, MA 02575; and their website is: <http://pollyhillarboretum.org>)



Starnuts and Lake-Beans

by John Beerensson, beerensson@bellsouth.net
Merritt Island, Florida

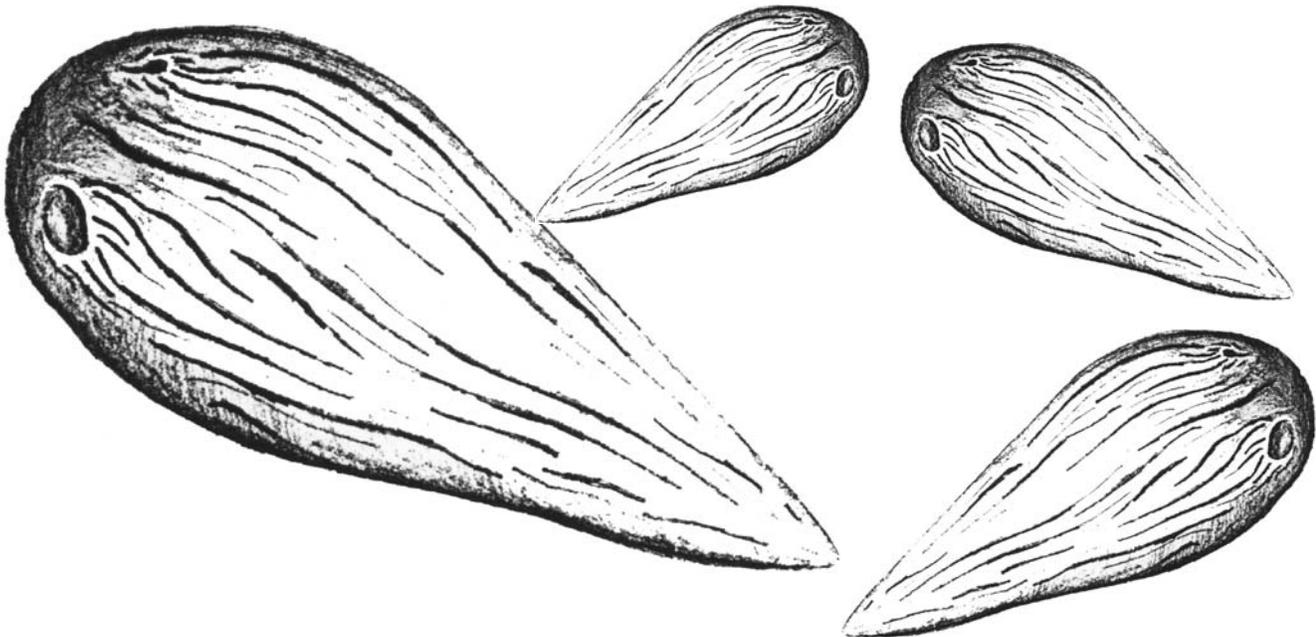
Once again, size does matter. Another question to all devoted beaners . . . **how long is yours??** My longest starnut palm (*Astrocaryum* sp.) is 68 mm. With a nice pointed end, it is the longest I've ever seen. There are some long ones out there, but I bet mine beats them by a millimeter or two.

I'm not talking the biggest here. There are a few chubby specimens out there that look bigger than mine. No, I'm talking length. So get your rulers out and tell me the length of all your starnuts that equal or exceed 68 mm.

If mine is in fact the longest, then maybe it might be a new species. How about naming it after me . . . *Astrocaryum beerenssoni*? Ok, ok, I was greeted with a resounding and unanimous "NO!!" on my idea of naming a new species of the giant hamburger bean after me. But, hey! . . . give me a break on my long starnut. Perhaps I should try for the sympathy vote.

Let's talk about lake-beans. I was born and raised in Chicago. (Any sympathy yet?) Being a beachcomber at heart, I was always out walking the shores of Lake Michigan. Among the discarded tires, medical waste and bullet-filled discarded gangsters, there were lake-beans. Lake-beans were chunky looking. Kind of like a blister pod (*Sacoglottis amazonica*), but brown. They had a certain air to them. When I came home with one of these finds, my mother would do a perfect impression of Edvard Munch's famous painting *The Scream*. Later, when I went off to college, she not only tossed out my collection of lake-beans, but she also tossed out my collection of baseball cards.

It was tough losing my lake-beans, but my baseball cards?! My dad was in the candy business, and went to conventions quite often. He'd come home with boxes of baseball cards; including the 1952 TOPPS cards - the best of them all. Included in my collection of over 5000 cards were 5 Mickey Mantle TOPPS rookie cards. I recently learned that one of these cards sold at auction for over \$230,000. Yes, that is correct. Yes, I really did have 5 of them. Aarrgghh!!!!



The Biggest Sea Purse

by John Beerensson, beerensson@bellsouth.net
Merritt Island, Florida

It's almost that time of the year again . . . Sea-Bean Symposium!! Soooooo . . . once again, size does matter. This time I'm talking about the sea purse. I'm not talking about a Godzilla 60 mm species that might be found on some remote island in the far Pacific. I'm talking about what can be found on Atlantic (both sides of the pond) and Gulf beaches.

Some sea-bean guides give 30 mm as the range limit on length for *Dioclea reflexa*, our most common sea purse on Atlantic and Gulf beaches. Yes, *biggest* is defined as length. Gunn and Dennis in their *World Guide* and Nelson in his *Sea Beans and Nickar Nuts* give 35 mm as the maximum length. Based on the late John Dennis' records, Perry and Dennis in their *Sea-Beans from the Tropics* give 60 mm as the limit on length; but they are talking about all *Dioclea* species.

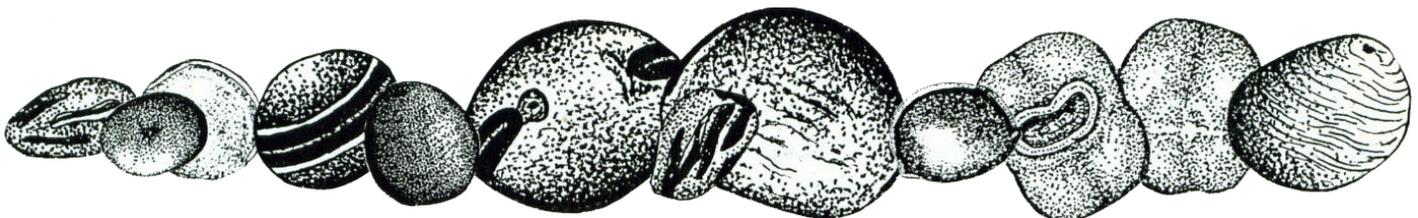
Ed Perry, Barbara Rolph, Michele Kelly, Nan Rhodes, Margie Mitchell, Bill Blazek, Christopher Boykin, Alice Surrency, Alice Lowe, Mary Bowman, Paul Mikkelsen, Deb Trachtman, Mike Stewart, Pat Fraizer, Blair and Dawn Witherington, and all of you other Florida beaners; Mike and Sam Burnett, Jerry Sullivan, and all of you other Texas beaners, Bob Gunn in North Carolina, Curt Ebbesmeyer in Washington, Wayne Armstrong in California, Cathy Yow in Illinois, Stephanie and Steven Bernstein in Arizona, Gerhard Cadée and Wim Kruiswijk in the Netherlands, Charles Nelson in the UK, and all you other beaners wherever you live . . . **just how big do these things get??**

To challenge you, I have a sea purse that is 40 mm in length. Ok, Ok. I'll admit that it is not a *D. reflexa*, but it was found on the beach very close to where we have our annual sea-bean symposiums. Mine is like the one pictured in Christopher Boykin's handy one-page guide titled *Desirable Sea-Beans of Florida and the Probability of Finding Them*. Christopher identifies my type of sea purse as . . . ta dah . . . "unidentified species." But we do know that it is rare and tends to be bigger than *D. reflexa*.

Back to my challenge. Let Ed Perry or me know before the next Symposium if you have an Atlantic or Gulf Coast found sea purse that is bigger than 40 mm.

By the way, Jeremy Smith in Australia, Sue Bradly and Izumi Hanno in Japan, Murray Gregory in New Zealand, and all you other beaners who live near those remote pacific beaches, send pictures of your Godzilla sea purses. Rumor has it that Fay Wray back in the 1930's found one on an island in the South China Sea that was over four feet in length. I can't verify this story because, supposedly, some giant ape ate it.

One of the categories in this year's **Odd-Bean Contest** at the 12th Annual Sea-Bean Symposium and Beachcombers' Festival is the "plumpest purse." Enter in a baggie with your name, address, and phone number the plumpest (sea) purse from your existing sea-bean collection. See the schedule on page 14 for other categories you can enter to win!



Twelfth Annual International Sea-Bean Symposium

Cocoa Beach Public Library—550 North Brevard Avenue, Cocoa Beach, Florida 32931

Open Free To The Public, October 19th & 20th, 2007

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, raffle and contests (including the ever popular “ODD-BEAN” contest, and the Saturday morning “BEAN-A-THON” beachcombing bonanza!)

We are pleased to announce that marine biologist and sea turtle researcher Dr. Blair Witherington, from Melbourne Beach, Florida will be this year's keynote speaker. Blair and his wife Dawn are the authors of the newly published *Florida's Living Beaches* (Pineapple Press, 2007) which is a guide to anything and everything you may encounter on Florida's beaches, featuring not only sea-beans, but also shells, fish, plants, birds, and even the “green flash!” Blair will highlight Florida's beaches with a Power Point presentation on Saturday night entitled *Florida's Beaches are Alive!* Blair and Dawn will also be available all weekend long with copies of their books; this is a must have folks, so stop by and get your copy autographed!

Natural history writers and books will be available through the weekend. Krieger Publishing Company will be pleased to once again 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. Krieger will also have the reprint edition of the *World Guide to Tropical Drift Seeds and Fruits*. The ever-popular *The Little Book of Sea-Beans* will also be available, and co-author Paul Mikkelsen will be present to sign copies. Jim Angy, Marge Bell and Matt MacQueen of Still Nature Productions will be offering their digital books including some new titles. This year we will again also make available for sale Cathie Katz' beautifully written and illustrated *The Nature of Florida's.....series*.

Thursday, October 18th (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 19th (9am-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.
2 to 2:45pm: *What's Floating Our Oceans This Year?!* by Dr. Curtis Ebbesmeyer
3 to 3:30pm: *An Interview with Cathie Katz* by Paul Mikkelsen; *Who are the Drifters?, and memories of our founder.*
5pm: The library closes; meet for dinner at Anacapri (This great restaurant is just east of the library in walking distance).

Saturday, October 20th (8am-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 10am: Bean-A-Thon 2007—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 2-hour 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).
Noon: *The Wrecking Season*: film produced by Drifters Nick and Jane Darke presented by Curtis Ebbesmeyer
4:00pm: *Polishing Your Sea-Beans* co-presentation by experts Bill Blazek and Alice Lowe—automated and hand polishing techniques.
5:30pm: ODD-BEAN contest judging (for entries submitted all through the weekend). In a baggie with your name, address/phone number, place your heartiest heart, plumpest (sea) purse, and smallest hamburger bean from an existing sea-bean collection. These entries DO NOT have to be found in the Saturday morning Bean-A-Thon. Please enter!!!!
Dinner Break: 5:30pm to 7pm. **GROUP PICTURE OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY at 5:30pm! Be in it!**
7pm: Prompt! Bean-A-Thon and contest awards and certificates presented. Raffle winners chosen.
7:45 to 8:45pm: **Keynote speaker** Dr. Blair Witherington, *Florida's Beaches are Alive!* 9pm: Library closes for Symposium.

Sunday, October 21st (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 and Symposium 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.

Travel and Hotel Information for Symposium 2007 in Cocoa Beach

Cocoa Beach is about an hour drive from Orlando International Airport.

La Quinta: <http://laquinta.com/lq/properties/propertyProfile.do?ident=LQ622&propId=622>

Luna Sea: <http://www.lunaseacocoabeach.com/reservations.php>

Pelican Landing: <http://www.angelfire.com/on2/pelicanlandingresort/main.html>

South Beach Inn: <http://www.southbeachinn.com/accommodations.htm>

Anthony's On The Beach - 3499 S. Atlantic Ave., Cocoa Beach. 783-9892

Beach Island Resort - 1125 S. Atlantic Ave., Cocoa Beach. 784-5720

Beach Place - 1445 S. Atlantic Ave., Cocoa Beach. 783-4045

Crawford's Cocoa Cabanas - 1901 S. Atlantic Ave., Cocoa Beach. 799-0307

Sand Dollar - 1465 S. Atlantic Ave., Cocoa Beach. 783-8628

And finally, here's a link to a list of lots of local lodging. <http://cocoabeach.com/lodging.html>



Sea-Bean T-Shirt for 2007

100 % cotton shirt

all shirts are a \$20 donation each

T-shirts are available in two colors this year: natural (sand) with blue ink, and navy blue with white ink.

► available at the **12th Annual Sea-Bean Symposium and Beachcombers' Festival**, Cocoa Beach, Florida ◀

(or to order through the mail write to Ed Perry, c/o *The Drifting Seed* newsletter,

P.O. Box 510366 Melbourne Beach, Florida 32951, USA—only while supplies last.

Add \$3.00 per item to cover mailing costs, \$6.00/overseas, state your size: S, M, L, XL, XXL)

Make checks payable to: The Drifting Seed

This year's T-shirt features the artwork of our own Nan Rhodes with her popular sea-bean characters surfing the ocean gyre, along with rubber duckies, flip-flops, and messages in bottles!