

Seychelles: revisiting a beautiful local variation: *Conus gubernator leehmani* da Motta & Röckel, 1979

David Touitou

The name *leehmani* is given to a form (or variation) of the species *Conus gubernator* Hwass, 1792, presenting the following characteristics: the background colour is white, or sometimes yellow or pale violet; the pattern is irregular, sparse or even absent, and made of dark blotches or axial lines; spiral banding can appear; the shoulder is wider than in *C. gubernator*, giving the shell a typical stocky profile.

In the Seychelles, *C. gubernator leehmani* can be found, as well as intermediates between this form and classic *C. gubernator*. Since the present variation is found from Reunion Island to India, the Seychelles are well within its range of distribution.

It can be found in depths of only a few metres, deeply buried in fine sand under fragments of dead coral; and it can also be found in deeper waters – so far -17 m is the maximum depth in which I have come across specimens, although in Reunion Island they have been collected at -60 m. It remains a locally uncommon to moderately rare species, despite the fact that sometimes *C. gubernator leehmani* is found in colonies.

Samples of DNA have been extracted from a few specimens and it would be most interesting to compare its sequencing with that from specimens of *C. gubernator* coming from mainland East Africa or Madagascar. Should you live in the area or eventually go there, you may wish to get in touch with Chris Meyer (MeyerC@si.edu), from the National Museum of Natural History, Washington, who will be able to supply the appropriate equipment to collect samples.

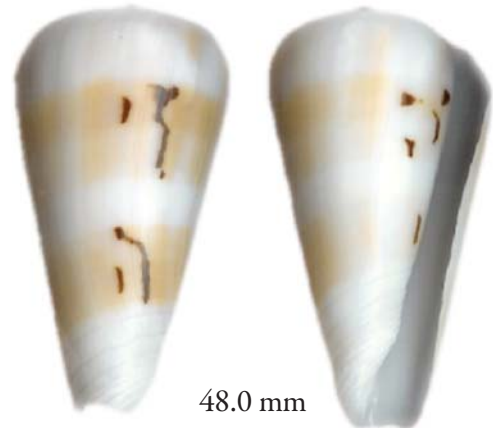
Here are a few specimens showing the variability of this form in the Seychelles.



40.0 mm



45.0 mm



48.0 mm



54.0 mm



58.9 mm



74.1 mm



59.7 mm



50.7 mm



60.9 mm



49.2 mm



62.0 mm



49.5 mm