

Guantánamo Bay, Cuba

Because of its many types of natural habitats Guantánamo Bay in eastern Cuba is one of the most interesting collecting grounds in the Greater Antilles. From the shallow mud and sand flats and shaded mangrove waters of the bay to the rock-bound shores and coral reefs of the outer coast, every kind of molluscan habitat is found, and from this region over one hundred marine species may be collected in a single day's search.

Guantánamo Bay is situated to the east of the Sierra Maestra on the south side of Oriente Province. A cross-country railroad connects western Cuba with Guantánamo City which is some eight miles north of the Bay. Short side-lines run to Caimanera and Boqueron on the shores of the Bay itself. Water commerce from the United States is through the United States Naval Base and Boqueron.

Outside the Bay along the eastern coast line and within the bounds of the naval station there is a series of four beaches—Cable, Cuesco, Blue and Windmill. On each beach, a few minutes search along the high water line will often bring rich reward. Occasional specimens of beautiful and rare cones, such as *Conus granulatus*, *C. daucus* and *C. ranunculus* have been collected after a tropical squall. Though these beach specimens lack the perfection of live shells, they give us a fairly accurate census of the shell population just off shore. Cable Beach is an easily accessible and ideal collecting spot for live material. Several rocky headlands project out into the sea and here as elsewhere along the coast is found a representative collection of the littoral genera, *Chiton*, *Tectarius*, *Nerita* and *Thais*. The smooth black boulders along certain sections of the beach are continually being washed with ocean water, and in this exposed spot surprisingly, *Planaxis* and *Tegula* thrive by the thousands. Beyond the beach itself where the water is four or five feet deep, there is often a partially submerged reef where large coral blocks offer ample protection from the surf.

The finest collecting of all is in places such as this. Swimming trunks, canvas shoes, a diving mask or water-glass, and a collecting bag are the only equipment needed. During the daylight hours many of the mollusks take refuge under boulders. Turn over a loose rock, and as the first wisps of disturbed sand settle away, a host of brittlestars, sea urchins and shells is revealed. A quick appraisal of the exposed bottom and underside of the rock must be made, for often a choice specimen, unnoticed, will quickly move off to a new hiding place. The delicate *Lima* clam with its score of pink waving tentacles will pulsate to new quarters in a few seconds, and the dainty, translucent golden margined shells will hastily disappear into the sand. Cones (*C. citrinus* and *C. regius*) withdraw into their shells and may be left among the last to be picked up. The egg capsules of *Conus citrinus* are found in a string of white, corn kernel-shaped cases adhering to the underside of the rock. It will take a few minutes of careful observation for the small camouflaged specimens to become evident.

There are several tidepools along the shore near Cable Beach. Some are shallow and shaded by the high cliffs; others are either covered with brown or green seaweed, while a few have rock bottoms encrusted with coralline algae. A number of pools are deep and flushed by each ocean breaker. Night collecting with a flashlight is profitable in places like these—wandering *Cypraccassis*, *Cypraea* and the yellow-fleshed *Coralliophora* sometimes being found.

Within the Bay there are several grassy flats which offer a different type of collecting. A great deal of collector's joy may be had by wading, waist deep, over the eel-grass



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