

Albino *Pugilina cochlidium* from Pulau Subar Laut

Subject: *Pugilina cochlidium* (Mollusca: Gastropoda: Melongenidae).

Subject identified by: Tan Siong Kiat.

Location, date and time: Singapore Straits, Pulau Subar Laut (Big Sister Island); 28 September 2011; late afternoon.

Habitat: Sandy reef flat with coral rocks and rubble.

Observer: Toh Chay Hoon.

Observation: An albino specimen of *Pugilina cochlidium* measuring 74 mm in length was found during a field trip. The empty shell was clearly freshly dead with its periostracum largely intact and without discernible signs of weathering. The specimen was collected and deposited (as ZRC.MOL.5412) in the Zoological Reference Collection of the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research at the National University of Singapore.

Remarks: The shell colouration of this species normally varies from light orange-brown to very dark brown. However, because the shell was found empty, it remains unknown if the animal was truly albino (i.e. lacking pigmentation entirely) or it is only the shell that lacks normal pigmentation.

Naturally occurring albino examples of most mollusc species are rare, and albino shells are thus sought after by collectors. Consequently fake albino shells have appeared in the shell trade. These are created by heating normal pigmented shells in ovens, followed by leaving them under the tropical sun to complete the bleaching process (Poppe, 2002).

Reference: Poppe, G. T., 2002. Fake shells from the Philippines. *Visaya Net*. December 2002: 1-9.



Photograph by Tan Siong Kiat.

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