

Commarginal Bittersweet - a New Clam Species to the B.C. Fauna

By Bill Merilees*

The recent publication *Bivalve Seashells of Western North America* has provided a great impetus and tool to accurately identify the clams that frequent our local beaches and offshore waters. This monograph brings together in one volume all the clam species known to our Pacific Coast from Alaska to Baja California. Though the photographic illustrations are in black and white, their size and crispness of detail is superb. With this reference in hand, the task of identifying our clams is greatly simplified. It also allows material tentatively identified in times past to be re-evaluated and brought up-to-date.

Such was the case of a sample dredged from the entrance to Hardy Bay (Port Hardy) just off Masterman Islands, June 7, 1996. From 22.5 fathoms a large bag of fine shell was brought to the surface to be sorted. It was an "interesting haul" containing a number of not often seen species. The Indian Money Tusk, *Dentalium pretiosum*; the Attenuata Fileclam, *Limatula attenuata*; and the caecum, *Micranellum crebricinctum*, were present, along with a great many Western Bittersweet clams, *Glycymeris septentrionalis*, a common subtidal clam. While reexamining this group of clams, two individuals appeared to be different. With the aid of the new reference mentioned above, they have been identified as *Glycymeris keenae* [Willett, 1944], the *Commarginal Bittersweet*, "Thus far known only from Forrester Island, south eastern Alaska".



The presence of the Commarginal Bittersweet at Hardy Bay extends the range of this species southward from 54.8 degrees North to 50.45 degrees North, a distance of approximately 485 km, and provides the first record for this species from British Columbia and a new species for Canada.

The opportunity to sample at the Masterman Islands was courtesy of Frank Stoney from his fishing vessel the *Marbella*.

References

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Previous article by Bill Merilees in *The Dredgings; Littlenecks For Food, Thought and Enjoyment*. Vol. 46(6):4, 2008.

The Victoria Naturalist Vol. 64.5:4 (2008)

The Dredgings Volume 48, No. 3, 2008, p. 8 www.PNWSC.org