

ON THE PHENOTYPIC VARIATIONS IN THE CERITHIIDS OF WALT AIR COAST

CERITHIIDS are world-wide in distribution and are abundant in the intertidal and subtidal waters of the tropics and subtropics. These are herbivores, feeding on algae and detritus and often occur in large populations of high density. Variation of shell colour, size and sculpture is common among cerithiids. Many cerithiids have been split into species so that much synonymy now prevails. In the family Cerithiidae, the genus *Cerithium* is extensively studied and reviewed by Houbriek¹. 41 species from the Western Atlantic have been reduced by him into 6 species. *Clypeomorus* and *Rhinoelavis* are other genera of which little information is available.

During investigations on the biology of cerithiids of Waltair coast, two genera, each with a single species, but with three phenotypes were frequently encountered. They are *Clypeomorus clypeomorus* Jousseau and *Rhinoelavis sinensis* Gmelin. Hitherto these have been considered as involving 4 different species of *Cerithium*². It is now made clear that in effect we are dealing with just two species.

CLYPEOMORUS CLYPEOMORUS Jousseau, 1888 (Fig. 1)

Cerithium morus Lamarck, 1843.

Cerithium clypeomorus Fischer, 1891.

Cerithium splendens Sowerby, 1855.

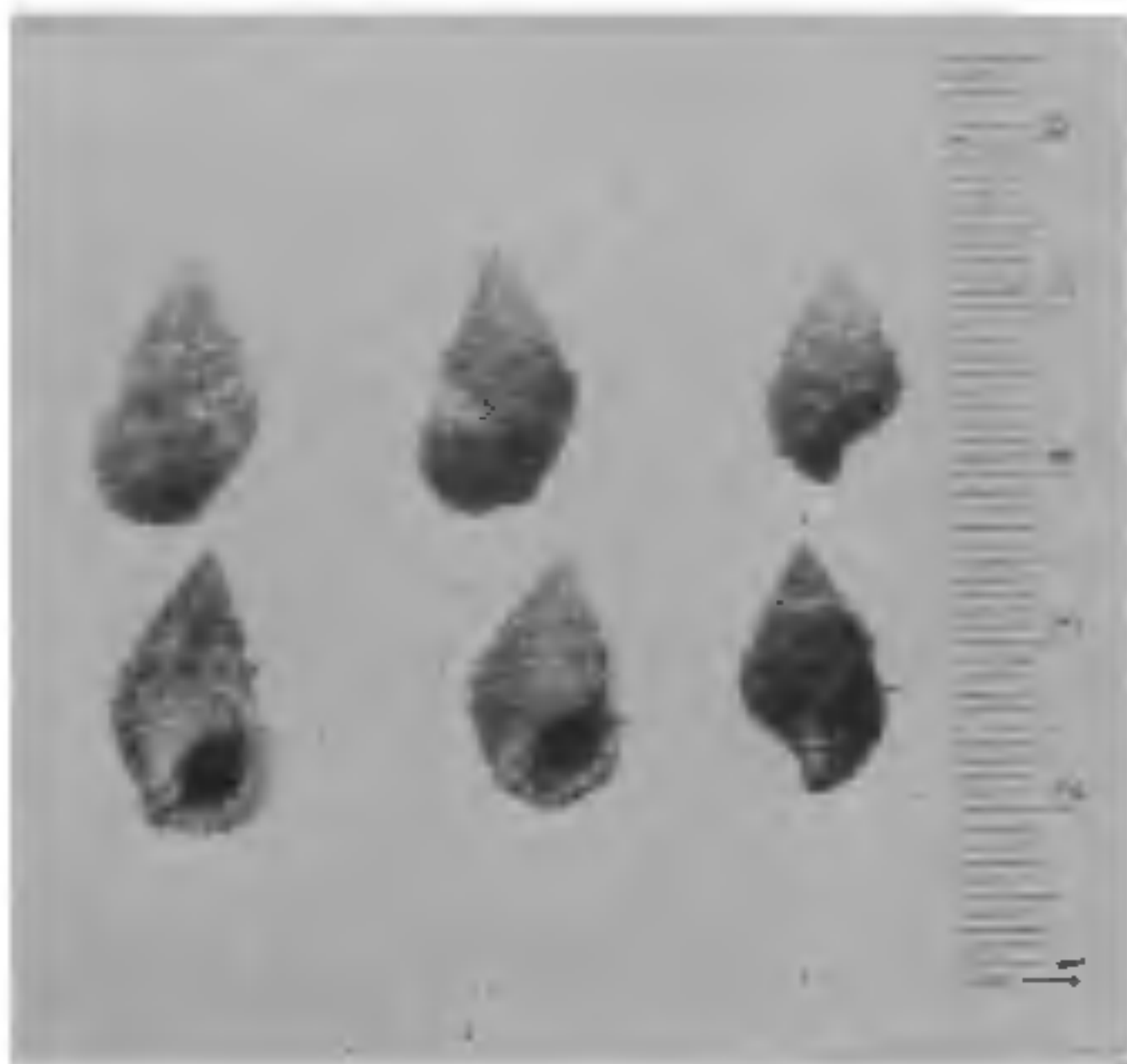


FIG. 1. *Clypeomorus clypeomorus*.

Description :

Shell 18 mm in height, stout, conical in shape. Whorls 6-7. Spire pointed and the protoconch usually worn out. Surface rough with spiral ridges of small tubercles spread transversely. Anterior canal deeply excavated and posterior canal ill-developed. Callus formation considerable both on the outer and inner lips. Shape of the aperture varies from oval to that

of the letter D. Body whorl contains 6 spiral rows of tubercles, other whorls of the shell contain 3 spiral rows and the tubercles of the distal 2 rows in each whorl of the spire are prominent than the proximal row. Colour varies from dark grey to black. Operculum brown, about 6 mm wide, oval, horny and with an eccentric nucleus.

RHINOELAVIS SINENSIS Gmelin, 1791 (Fig. 2)

Cerithium obeliscus, Bruguiere, 1792.

Vertagus sinensis, Larry, 1937.

Rhinoelavis obeliscus, Swainson, 1940.



FIG. 2. *Rhinoelavis sinensis*.

Description :

Shell attains large size, 35-38 mm high, stout and presents a rather turreted appearance. Surface of the shell is strongly sculptured with regular spiral rows of tubercles. The number of whorls 9-10. Body whorl with 10 spiral rows of tubercles of which only the proximal row has strongly raised more or less pointed tubercles. The remaining whorls of the shell have only 3 rows of tubercles, the proximal row being prominent. The anterior canal is deeply excavated and is produced into a conspicuous curved spout. Shell colour yellowish brown, mottled with dark brown patches.

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