



# **World's First Shell Collecting Guide from 1821: John Mawe's The Voyager's Companion or Shell Collector's Pilot**

*Jeffrey D. Stilwell*

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Shells have a mystique that transcends time. Shelled molluscs have existed since the beginning of the Palaeozoic era, an amazing half billion years ago. For thousands of years humans have been fascinated by the beauty and significance of shells. From the dawn of human history, people have combed beaches for nature's jewels of the sea and land – either answering an irresistible urge to discover perfect, beautiful specimens, or in the more noble cause of science.

This book reproduces in facsimile, John Mawe's first shell collecting guide of 1804, together with his complete edition of 1821, The Voyager's Companion, or Shell Collector's Pilot. The modern reader can now follow this intrepid author along the coasts of North Africa and South America, sharing the pleasures of handling beautiful and rare shells gathered from shores lapped by the waters of the South Seas, learning how and where to collect shells and how best to preserve them. Readers will discover that even unprepossessing shells are worth picking up, that the inhabitants of faraway places were often puzzled why anyone should want to collect such seemingly common objects.

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