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## PEARLS ON PARADE AT PHILADELPHIA SHELL SHOW AND FESTIVAL OCTOBER 9 and 10

## Believe it or not, pearls came before diamonds as fashion accessories

PHILADELPHIA—Thousands of exotic treasures of the sea will be on display and for sale Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 9 and 10, when the Philadelphia Shell Show and Festival washes ashore at the Academy of Natural Sciences, home of the nation's oldest mollusk collection.

This year the theme is pearls. Diamonds may be a girl's best friend, but pearls came before diamonds as fashion accessories in history. While the earliest recorded piece of pearl jewelry dates back almost 3,000 years to the Persian Empire, the diamond wasn't officially affirmed as a precious stone until the 20th century.

The largest show of its kind in the Northeast, the Philadelphia Shell Show draws crowds of hobbyists, artists and dealers, as well as families who beach-comb when they go "down the shore" in New Jersey. The show and festival of activities for the whole family is free with museum admission and is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The show, now in its 28th year, features:

- Competitive displays by dozens of collectors and amateur scientists.
- An international shell market with pearl jewelry, exotic shells, shell crafts, books, and more.
- Displays of Academy pearls and the oyster and other shells in which they were made.
- Skilled craftspeople and illustrators showcasing their unique artworks including a wide selection of Sailor's Valentines, octagonal wooden cases displaying intricate designs composed entirely of tiny seashells.
- Behind-the-scenes tours of the Academy's malacology collection, the oldest mollusk collection in the U.S. and the third largest in the world with some 12 million specimens. Scientists will be on hand to answer questions and point out the pearl-making mollusks.
- Fun activities for the family including squid dissections, craft-making and free shells for the kids.

The show is sponsored by the Academy of Natural Sciences and the Philadelphia Shell Club.

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The Academy of Natural Sciences, founded in 1812, is the oldest natural science research institution and museum In the Americas and a world leader in biodiversity and environmental research. The mission of the Academy is the encouragement and cultivation of the sciences.

HOURS: Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Saturday-Sunday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. ADMISSION: \$12 adults; \$10 children 3-12, seniors, college students, military personnel; military personnel; from May 28-Sept. 6 military and up to 5 family members are free; free for members and children under 3. \$2 fee for "Butterflies!"

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