

# From the Sea, From the Beautiful Sea

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In October 2018 Ocean Life came to Aiken SC! Is this another sign of climate change? Well, actually.... no. Figuratively, yes. The members of the Stephen James Central Savannah River Area Coin Club (The SJCSRACC for short) was treated to a mesmerizing educational program from member (and first-time presenter) Mr. Jerry Lipsky.

## Little Known Fact

Jerry Lipsky and Jim Mullaney (the SJCSRACC Secretary) attended the US Navy Nuclear Power School together many years ago.

They became reacquainted with each other a few years ago through common friends and the SJCSRA Coin Club. Small world, isn't it?

Jerry has lived most of his life near or on the ocean – from growing up on the coast of southern Florida to serving our Country for many years as an Officer in the United States Navy, to residing in Aiken, SC (only two hours from the coast). This background has driven Jerry's interest in coins containing marine symbols. An interest which he shared with the Club when he gave a presentation on *Ocean Life on Coinage*.

Mr. Lipsky's presentation was well organized and covered the gamut of his subject – from the significance and history of marine life on coinage, to many examples from the Ancient world, followed by more contemporary coins. His subject was very well researched, and he provided several

resources for the Club members to use for their own research.

With respect to significance, Jerry made a few key points – that both ancient and modern cultures tend to live in proximity to bodies of water (and that rivers were the "roads" of ancient times); that many religions, most notably Christianity, uses marine symbols; and that the popularity of collecting coinage with marine life has grown – both from a Collector standpoint and from the number of available products being minted.

Mr. Lipsky's research found examples of sea creatures on Greek coins as far back as 600 BCE and Chinese coins from almost 3000 years ago. He also listed a vast array of cultures that used these representations (see sidebar).

He followed this by showing many examples of ancient coins with marine life on them. He even showed examples of coins made in the shape of fish! According to Jerry, "The fish symbolizes "abundance" and "perseverance". It is a very ancient and powerful Chinese symbol which expresses the wish for prosperity year after year."



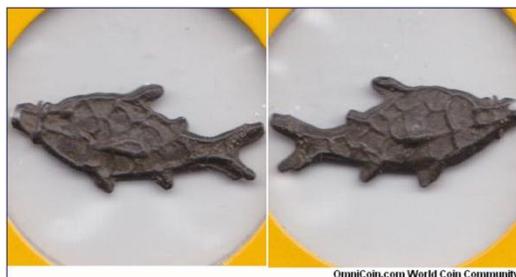
AKRAGAS in SICILY 420BC Eagle Crab Fish

## Ancient Cultures with Aquatic Symbols on their Coins:

- Byzantine
- China
- Greece
- India
- Malaysia
- Roman
- Sri-Lanka
- Thailand
- Vietnam



Antique fish coin, Zhou dynasty circa 770 BCE  
Courtesy of [omnicoin.com](http://omnicoin.com)



Malay Tin Money c. 18th century

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Moving from the ancient world to contemporary times, Mr. Lipsky listed almost 60 countries which have produced coins with images of sea life on them. He indicated that some of these modern mintages are issued for circulation, while others are issued specifically focused on the collector market and do not circulate monetarily. Circulation examples he showed included two Irish coins, a 1942 Silver Florin and a 1971 10 Pence which used the same salmon design approximately 30 years apart.



1942 Irish Silver Florin

Courtesy of  
omnicoin.com



1971 Irish 10 Pence

Many of the modern coins take advantage of technical advances in minting to create unique and interesting specimens. For example in 2012 Niue issued a two dollar coin featuring the great white shark. What makes this coin unique? It has been “bitten” by a shark!



2012 Niue Two Dollar coin “bitten” by a shark



A Silver Stater from Aegina (Millions were struck)  
Courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group (CNG)

In reviewing his presentation one notices that many countries, in addition to Niue, focused on shark motifs, many of which are in color, such as: Chile / Easter Island (Hammerhead sharks); Palau (Gray Reef Shark); Australia (Tiger, Hammerhead, Great White sharks); Canada (Canadian Great White shark); Niue (Mako Shark coin, minted by the New Zealand mint for Niue).

As in Ancient times, turtles and octopus are also common themes on contemporary coins. In fact, starting in 2010 Niue began issuing a silver round collector set featuring the Hawksbill Turtle.



Niue Hawksbill bullion coin  
Courtesy of <https://atkinsonsbullion.com>

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A Silver Litra from Syracuse circa 460BCE  
Courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group (CNG)



Turning to America, Jerry asked the audience if they knew of any United States coins which featured fish or marine life. Not surprisingly (since the SJCSRACC is filled with very knowledgeable collectors) several answers rang out, such as the salmon on the 2007 Washington State Quarter and the 2008 Alaska State Quarter. Less known were the dolphins shown on the 1915-S Panama-Pacific one-dollar coin; Poseidon riding a whale on the 1935 Hudson (NY) 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorative half-dollar; and the basket of fish on the reverse of the 2014 Native American dollar.

1915 Panama Pacific \$1



Courtesy of PGCS Coinfacts

1935 50C Hudson



Courtesy of PGCS Coinfacts

All in all this was a very interesting program, and it highlighted how common marine life is on coins. Not something that is typically considered. The audience thanked Mr. Lipsky for all the hard work he obviously put into his presentation, as well as for his willingness to give the educational program at the Club's meeting!

## References:

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