

WHEN THE GOD OF THE SEA IS CALLING...

Charonia tritonis - Triton's Trumpet

A loud trumpet sound is echoing through the ocean. It is Triton, Greek god of the sea and son of Poseidon, who is blowing his seashell horn that makes the ocean move to his will.

Triton's trumpet, also known as the Giant Trumpet, scientifically *Charonia tritonis*, got its common name from the Greek mythology which often depicts Triton blowing a seashell horn that looks like the snail Triton's Trumpet. The snail is a large predatory sea snail found predominantly in tropical and subtropical waters of the Indo-Pacific region. It has a distinctive spiral-shaped shell that can reach 50 to 60cm in length. It feeds on other mollusks, crustaceans, and sea stars using its long, muscular foot to move and its powerful mouth to grasp and crush prey. Triton's trumpet is an important part of the marine ecosystem, especially in coral reefs because they control sea stars and thus keep the coral reefs healthy.

With its spiral-shaped shell and elongated tip and beautiful pattern, Triton's Trumpet is one of the most iconic and recognizable shells. But beyond its beauty, the Triton's Trumpet has also played an important role in the cultural traditions of many societies throughout history. One of its

most notable uses is in the ceremonial regalia of the indigenous people of the Indian and Pacific Ocean islands as well as Hawaii. The shell is for example used as a sacred object in ceremonies and rituals. In other cultures, it has also been used as a musical instrument. The shell can be blown like a trumpet, producing a distinct, loud and deep sound. For the shell to work as a trumpet, a second hole is needed at the tip. This can either occur naturally or be modified by removing the tip. In the case of the object shown in this museum, the shell was modified, and a mouthpiece was added.

Frankly, it is unknown where exactly this specimen is from, so one can only speculate about what it was used for. It could perhaps have been used as an instrument in a ceremony by indigenous people on a Pacific Ocean island or simply be a decorative piece in a family's house, bringing them joy looking at such a beautiful piece.



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