As people relax on our Islands, they eventually pick up a bright bit of shell. In many cases, it becomes a memento of the islands, a small object that can be easily transported or tucked away in a way that our birds, plants, and sunsets cannot.

Since shells are such handy souvenirs, they have come under terrible pressure as the islands have been increasingly "discovered". Shells are an integral part of Sanibel, and conserving live ones for breeding will insure that they always will remain so.

In many cases, fresh dead shells, minus the animals' soft parts, are as good or better specimens than shells taken live, and certainly provide a distinct advantage to the sheller, in that one does not have to deal with the often difficult job of killing the animal and cleaning it of its soft parts. One can also take pride in the fact that taking an empty shell instead of its living cousin means the protection and conservation of a part of the animal world that has no defense against man's thoughtless depredations.

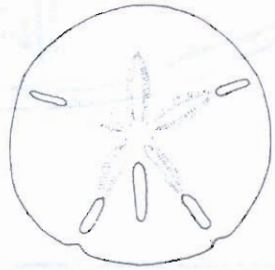
Strong northwest winds and extreme temperatures in summer and winter often catch many live shells up in a sweeping action that deposits many shells on Sanibel beaches. These shells are at the mercy of the wind, tide, and temperature of the moment; but as those extremes abate, most of the shells are capable of returning to their normal activities. Some species, such as olives, horse conchs, and others, that live close to shore, can be temporarily beached at these times and even during normal low tides. Even though these live shells are beached and possibly in distress, they are still protected by the City Shelling Restriction, and returning them to the water will likely save most to produce future generations.

The bay side of the island is a nursery for aquatic creatures, including shells. Most of the area is a national preserve, a part of the J.N. "Ding" Darling Wildlife Refuge. No shelling is permitted there, and the mangroves in general are also protected by law. Breeding populations of shells, fish, etc., are vulnerable to all the vagaries of nature as well as man's interference; so it is important that they not be disturbed.

Some species of shells are slow moving and sluggish, and some will "play possum" when picked up. If you are in doubt about its viability and there are soft parts present in the shell, consider it to be alive. If a bivalve is closed tightly, it is alive.

There are uncounted new shells deposited each day on our shores, but they have decreased dramatically as their breeding stock has been plundered, and they may disappear entirely unless the taking of live shells is drastically reduced. Letting them live now will ensure that your grandchildren will know the same happiness that we enjoy today when walking our beaches at sunset.

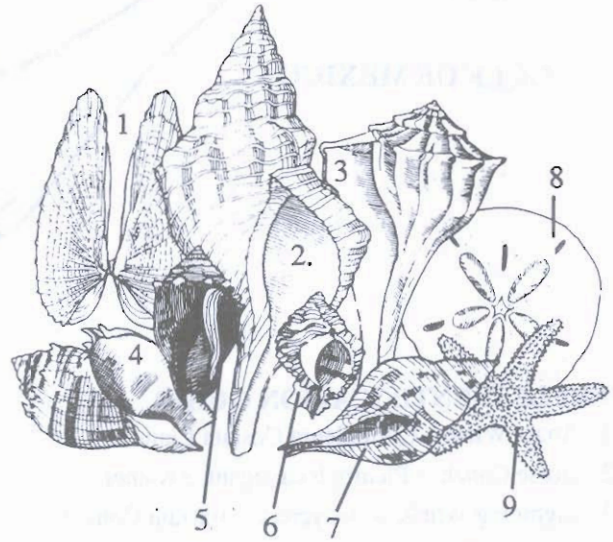
Enjoy your shelling, and the beauty surrounding you -- and please allow the same enjoyment to others who will follow.



LIVE SHELLING IS PROHIBITED ON SANIBEL

Shelling on Sanibel Island

Important information to make your shelling better now and in years to come.



SEE INSIDE FOR IDENTIFICATION OF ABOVE SHELLS.

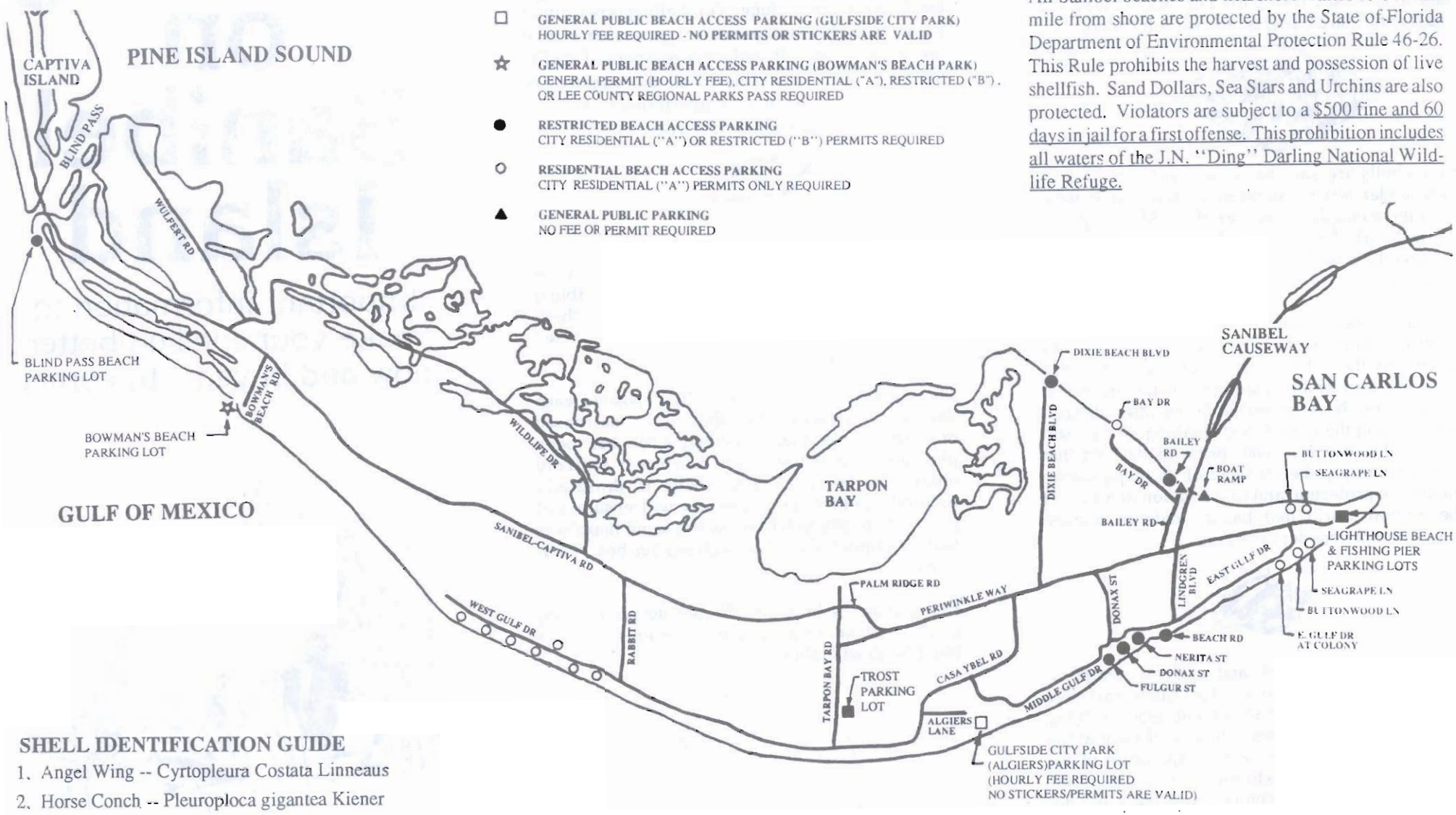
SANIBEL WILDLIFE COMMITTEE

LEGEND

- ■ **GENERAL PUBLIC BEACH ACCESS PARKING**
  GENERAL PERMIT (HOURLY FEE),
  CITY RESIDENTIAL ("A") OR RESTRICTED ("B") PERMITS REQUIRED
- □ **GENERAL PUBLIC BEACH ACCESS PARKING (GULFSIDE CITY PARK)**
  HOURLY FEE REQUIRED - **NO PERMITS OR STICKERS ARE VALID**
- ☆ **GENERAL PUBLIC BEACH ACCESS PARKING (BOWMAN'S BEACH PARK)**
  GENERAL PERMIT (HOURLY FEE), CITY RESIDENTIAL ("A"), RESTRICTED ("B"), OR LEE COUNTY REGIONAL PARKS PASS REQUIRED
- ● **RESTRICTED BEACH ACCESS PARKING**
  CITY RESIDENTIAL ("A") OR RESTRICTED ("B") PERMITS REQUIRED
- ○ **RESIDENTIAL BEACH ACCESS PARKING**
  CITY RESIDENTIAL ("A") PERMITS ONLY REQUIRED
- ▲ **GENERAL PUBLIC PARKING**
  NO FEE OR PERMIT REQUIRED

SANIBEL SHELLING LAWS

All Sanibel beaches and nearshore waters to one half mile from shore are protected by the State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection Rule 46-26. This Rule prohibits the harvest and possession of live shellfish. Sand Dollars, Sea Stars and Urchins are also protected. Violators are subject to a $500 fine and 60 days in jail for a first offense. This prohibition includes all waters of the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge.



SHELL IDENTIFICATION GUIDE

1. Angel Wing -- Cyrtopleura Costata Linneaus
2. Horse Conch -- Pleuroploca gigantea Kiener
3. Lightning Whelk -- Busycon contrarium Conrad
4. Kings Crown -- Melongena Corona Gmelin
5. Fighting Conch -- Strombus Alatus Gmelin
6. Apple Murex - Murex pomum Gmelin
7. True Tulip -- Fasciolaria tulipa Linneaus
8. Key-hole Sand Dollar -- Mellita quinquiesperforata
9. Thorny Sea Star -- Echinaster Sentus

LIVE SHELLING IS PROHIBITED ON SANIBEL

Public Restrooms are available at:
Turner Beach (Blind Pass)
Bowman's Beach
Trost (Tarpon Bay)
Gulfside City Park (Algiers)
Lighthouse