

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- Swim mask
- Swim fins
- Snorkel
- Small mesh bag
- Divers-down flag (required by law)



- Displayed on vessel, must be at least 20 inches by 24 inches with a stiffener to keep the flag unfurled. Should only be displayed while snorkelers are in the water; display above the vessel's highest point.
 - Tethered to diver, must be at least 12 inches by 12 inches; mandatory when using a mask and snorkel from the beach unless it is a marked swimming area.
 - You must make reasonable efforts to stay within 300 feet of a divers-down flag on open waters and within 100 feet of a flag within rivers, inlets, or navigation channels.
- Boat
 - Usually required to get to the best scalloping areas. In shallow water, it is possible to wade for scallops in the seagrass, or to collect them from a shallow-draft boat using a dip net or landing net, but these methods are not very productive. Most scallopers go by boat into water 4 to 10 feet deep where they anchor, put up their dive flag, and snorkel over the beds, collecting the scallops by hand.



RECIPES

FRIED SCALLOPS

Prepare an egg wash by beating 1 egg in 1/2 cup milk. Season wash to personal preference with salt and pepper. Dip scallop meats in egg wash, then coat with any prepared seafood breading or seasoned bread crumbs. Fry quickly (1-2 minutes or until golden brown) in hot, not smoking, grease (375°F). Drain on paper towels.

SIMPLY DELICIOUS SCALLOPS

Sauté 3 pounds Florida scallops in 2 tablespoons melted butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Stir until opaque, about 1 minute. Overcooking makes the texture rubbery. Remove scallops from skillet and set aside.

Wipe out skillet, then melt 1/2 cup butter over medium-low heat; add 2 cloves garlic, salt and pepper to taste. Stir for 3 minutes and add scallops.

Serve immediately over prepared pasta of your choice, such as angel hair. Garnish with fresh dill and season with freshly ground pepper.

Recipe courtesy of Fresh from Florida Seafood. For more seafood recipes, visit <http://www.fl-seafood.com>.

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David Moynahan (Cover), Google Earth, Bryan Fluech,
UF/IFAS Communications

For more information about scallops, scallop research and recreational harvesting of the Florida Bay Scallop, please visit

www.flseagrant.org

or contact:

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UF/IFAS Extension
UF/IFAS Nature Coast Biological Station
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For information about accommodations and scallop excursions in the area:



<http://www.visitwakulla.com>
850.984.3966
Wakulla Welcome Center
1493 Coastal Highway
Panacea, FL 32346

For information about saltwater fishing, license requirements, open seasons and limits, contact:



Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission
<http://myfwc.com>

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RECREATIONAL HARVESTING OF THE
FLORIDA BAY SCALLOP

WAKULLA COUNTY

**BOAT
RAMP &
MARINA LOCATOR
MAP INSIDE!**

The Florida Bay Scallop is a bivalve mollusk that lives in seagrass beds in relatively shallow water, usually 4 to 10 feet deep. At one time scallops were reported from as far east as West Palm Beach and as far west as Pensacola. Today, populations can only be found in selected locations along Florida's west coast—principally St. Joseph Bay, the Steinhatchee area of the Big Bend, and the areas near the Crystal and Homosassa rivers with expansive seagrass beds. Healthy seagrass meadows are essential for maintaining scallop populations, so remember to **practice responsible boating and avoid damaging the seagrass beds.**

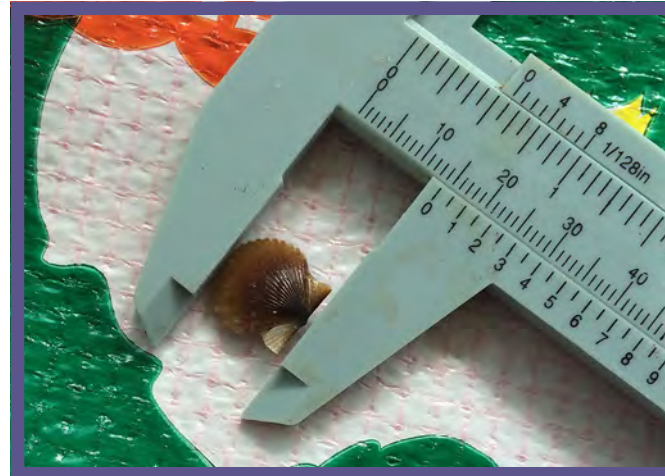
Scallops live about one year before either dying off naturally or being eaten by humans, crabs, octopuses, or a variety of shell-crushing fish. They spawn primarily in the fall. After about a two-week period as plankton, larvae develop a small shell and settle onto seagrass blades. They continue to grow while attached to the grass blades by a mass of silk-like filaments called a byssus. They later fall from the grass blades and become free swimmers. Unlike oysters and clams, scallops are active swimmers. They click their shells together, forcing expelled water to propel them rapidly. Scallops are simultaneous hermaphrodites, able to spawn as either males or females, and are very fertile. A single scallop can produce more than one million eggs per spawn.

SCALLOPING FLORIDA'S NATURE COAST

To monitor bay scallop populations in the state and maintain a plentiful breeding population, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) annually reviews the status of the scallop stock in the Gulf of Mexico. Results of surveys have continually shown that the scallop population within the Big Bend counties are key to the sustainability of the recreational harvest.

The scallops along the west coast of Florida are considered groups of interconnected subpopulations, called a "metapopulation." Some scientific studies have compared the genetics from different subpopulations, showing that the Steinhatchee area may be supplying larvae to other subpopulations. Over time, the core population expands and contracts on the edges, leading to variable catches from year to year. Unlike other areas where scallop populations have crashed due to overfishing, degraded water quality and loss of critical seagrass habitat, the Big Bend supports a healthy, sustained crop almost every year. Efforts to restore scallop populations are ongoing in several areas of Florida, including the southwest region, where scallops flourished and supported a productive commercial fishery in the 1950s-60s.

Early restocking efforts examined what was more effective, cage or free-planting cultured scallops. Scallops are known to be "synchronized spawners" — when one spawns, they all do. A number of adult, spawning scallops were placed in cages on bay bottoms where healthy populations previously existed. It was found that hatchery-reared scallops held in close proximity appeared to have an increased chance of successfully reproducing over natural scallops that are sparsely distributed. Future genetic studies and experimental releases in SW Florida are expected to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of using aquaculture to increase scallop populations.



LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

In Florida, commercial harvest of bay scallops is banned. In general, recreational scallopers between the ages of 16 and 65 must have a current Florida saltwater fishing license to collect scallops. There are some exceptions, listed in the FWC "Florida Saltwater Recreational Fishing Regulations," which is available in bait shops, FWC offices, or on the FWC website (<http://myfwc.com>). All non-residents 16 and over are required to buy a license unless they are fishing (scalloping) from a for-hire vessel (guide, charter, party boat) that has a valid vessel license.

The season usually runs from late June to late September (always consult the FWC website for dates of current season). Harvesting is allowed from the west bank of the Mexico Beach Canal (in Bay County) to the Pasco-Hernando county line (near Aripeka). **The bag limit is 2 gallons of whole scallops (in the shell), or 1 pint of scallop meat per person per day.** In addition, **no more than 10 gallons of whole scallops or 1/2 gallon of scallop meat may be possessed aboard any vessel at any time.** You may harvest scallops only by hand or with a landing or dip net. **Scallopers must remain in the legal scalloping area while in possession of scallops on the water, including the point where they return to land.**

See legal requirements about divers-down flags in equipment section. Always check current fishing regulations to ensure accuracy of open season and bag limit information.

COLLECTING

Scallops may be spotted on or near the bottom of seagrass beds, usually lying on their ventral shells. Often, they are easiest to find in borderline areas where the sand/mud bottom meets the edge of the grasses. Scallops have many neon-blue eyes and may try to swim away when they see you, but they do not swim fast or far. Keep collected scallops in a mesh bag, rather than in a pocket or in your swimsuit. They can pinch!

Though not required, collecting scallops that are at least 1.5 to two inches in size is seen as a best scalloping practice because the scallops are large enough to produce enough meat to make cleaning worthwhile. This also gives small summer scallops more time to grow and spawn in the fall.

CARE AND HANDLING

When brought to the boat, scallops should be immediately placed on ice in a cooler for the trip to shore unless you decide to clean the scallops while on the water. Scallops are quite sensitive to temperature and will quickly die if they are not kept cold. Even if kept cold, scallops will usually die shortly after being placed on ice, especially if fresh water gets into their shells. Placing them on ice, however, makes them easier to open, because the muscle holding the shells together relaxes. A scallop, clam or oyster knife, or even a teaspoon, can be used to open the shells and cut the white muscle free, discarding the shells and unwanted soft parts. Although most Floridians only eat the white scallop muscle, in many other parts of the world the entire animal is eaten. If you do plan to eat the entire scallop, it should be cooked thoroughly because many open harvest areas for scallops are not classified for harvest of other shellfish species.



BOAT RAMP AND MARINA LOCATOR MAP FOR THE WAKULLA COUNTY AREA

FLORIDA'S NATURE COAST

This guide to recreational scalloping includes educational information about scallops and scalloping. The boat ramp and marina locator map show local water access points in the Wakulla County/Apalachee Bay area.

This map is not intended for navigational use. Channel markers may not be where shown. For navigation purposes use only official nautical charts of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The Wakulla County/Apalachee Bay area is featured in NOAA nautical charts 11405 and 11405. Nautical charts are normally available for sale at marine and coastal businesses throughout Florida.



BOAT RAMPS

- 1 Mash Island Park – 899 Mashes Sands Rd., Panacea, FL 32346
- 2 Shell Point – 1549 Shell Point Rd., Crawfordville, FL 32327
- 3 Shell Point Beach – 117 Beaty Taff Dr., Crawfordville, FL 32327 **(primitive launch)**
- 4 St. Marks River Park - 3 River Breeze Street, St. Marks, FL 32355*
- 5 St. Marks Lighthouse – End of Rt. 59 (Nat'l Wildlife Refuge), St. Marks, FL 32355

MARINAS / BAIT AND TACKLE SHOPS

- A Shell Island Fish Camp - 440 Shell Island Rd., St. Marks, FL 32355
- B Shields Marina - 95 Riverside Dr., St. Marks, FL 32355
- C Crum's Mini Mall - 1321 Coastal Hwy, Panacea, FL 32346
- D Angie's Marine Supply - 3026 Coastal Hwy, Crawfordville, FL 32327

Note: Scallops may be found in any location where seagrasses are present. When navigating to scalloping grounds, be aware of shoals, oyster bars, and shallow seagrass areas and plan your trip around the tide.

*Launch passes can only be obtained from St. Marks City Hall or by mail, call 850-925-6224 or visit <http://cityofstmarks.com/StMarksRiverParkandBoatRamp.htm> for more information

For more information about launch fees and passes needed for the other ramps listed above, visit http://www.mywakulla.com/departments/parks/boat_ramps/index.php or call 850-926-7227

CLEANING YOUR SHELLS

Be courteous of other scallopers and move your boat away from the scalloping areas first, then anchor. It's no fun scalloping where others are cleaning their catch.

When finished cleaning, dump the shells and guts in any deep water away from shore so no one steps on them. Be sure the deep water is NOT a channel, spring, or boat ramp/marina. Shells could fill these areas, incurring costs to remove the shells and causing negative impacts on swimmers, wildlife, and navigation.