

My Preferred Shelling Resources List

By Pat Gerber

1. **FLORIDA'S FABULOUS SEASHELLS**; Winston Williams, 1988. Colorful, mostly accurate, amusing, informative, thorough.
2. **PETERSON FIELD GUIDES**: Shells of the Atlantic; Percy A. Morris
3. **SEASHELLS OF THE WORLD**; A Golden Guide; R. Tucker Abbott (Little Golden Books)
4. **THE SHELL BOOK**; Sandra Romashko; 5th Edition
5. **AUDUBON FIELD GUIDE TO NORTH AMERICAN SEASHELLS**. GREAT Picture Guide.... BUT use caution in this book; I have detected errors.

ALWAYS CHECK A SECOND RESOURCE

FOR PROFESSIONAL COLLECTORS

1. **COMPENDIUM OF SEASHELLS**; R. Tucker Abbott & Peter Dance; 1986, 5th Printing
2. **AMERICAN SEASHELLS**; R. Tucker Abbott, Ph. D. 1965, 7th printing

OTHER RESOURCES

- ✓ Sanibel Shell Museum; docents or director, Jose Leal, Ph. D.
- ✓ Local Shell Shops' Proprietors, often helpful ... or local Shell SHOWS
- ✓ SANIBEL ISLAND SHELL SHOW ... First weekend in March
- ✓ Chambers of Commerce or Newspaper Inserts & Guides
- ✓ VIDEO RESOURCE: Mollusks in Action: Joyce Matthys; 30 minute tape or DVD; Purchase at Shell Museum, Sanibel; or call (239) 395-2233
- ✓ Barefoot Beach Educational Staff
- ✓ Professional Park Rangers
- ✓ Other well-informed beach goers

Do get updated editions, when possible, as these will recognize current shelling laws, updated names (SeaStar) etc.

OTHER RESOURCES

Abbott, R. Tucker. *American Seashells*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1974 (second edition).

Abbott, R. Tucker. *Kingdom of the Seashell*. New York: Bonanza Books, 1982.

Abbott, R. Tucker. *Seashells of the World: A Guide to the Better-Known Species*. New York: Golden Press, 1985.

Arthur, Alex. *Shells: An Eyewitness Guide*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989.

Dance, S. Peter. *The World's Shells: A Guide for Collectors*. New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1976.

Gibbons, Euell. *Stalking the Blue Eyed Scallop*. New York: David McKay, 1964.

Hodgson, Martha Keeling. *The Spell of the Shell*. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1975.

Rehder, Harrold A. *The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Seashells*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981.

Root, Waterly. *Food, An Authoritative and Visual History and Dictionary of the Foods of the World*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980.

Safer, Jane Frearer and Frances McLaughlin Gill. *Spirals from the Sea: An Anthropological Look at Shells*. New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1982.

Stix, Hugh, Margaret Stix and R. Tucker Abbott. *The Shell: Five Million Years of Inspired Design*. New York: Abradale Press. 1988

Travers, Louise Allerdice. *The Romance of Shells in Nature and Art*. New York: M. Barrows, 1962.

Ward, Peter Douglas. *In Search of Nautilus: Three Centuries of Scientific Adventures in the Deep Pacific to Capture a Prehistoric-Living-Fossil*. New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1988

Excerpts From an Article Published in the Fort Myers News Press on December 16th, 2004

PICKING UP SHELLS

- Never take live shells. There is no limit on the taking of dead (empty) seashells.
- Go shelling on the first low tide after a cold front blows through.
- Always go at low tide, even if no fronts have come. Early morning low tides are better. Otherwise, beaches become picked over.
- Take a net – an oversized aquarium net or a bait net – to scoop shells from just below the water line. Dump it up on shore just above the water line and start searching.
- Bring a plastic shopping bag to hold shells. Bailey's General Store on Sanibel dispenses its groceries in bags that feature 50 images of shells with their names.
- Wear rubber sandals or water shoes.
- Drag your feet when you walk through the water. Some seashells are partially buried in the sand and you could stumble upon them. And in summertime, if you nudge a shallow water-dwelling stingray, it will harmlessly swim away. But, if you step down on top of one, it can leave you with a nasty wound.
- Stretch out before you get started. You might feel odd about doing it, but an hour of stopping and walking can be rough.
- Buy a shelling guide before you to or get one at the library. Or visit Sanibel's Bailey-Matthews Shell Museum (395-2233) for identification knowledge.
- Visit or call one of the region's nature centers to find shelling programs. The Rookery Bay Environmental Learning Center in Naples, for example, just had a seashell program as part of its ongoing Natural Connections Series. See the News Press' Gulf Coasting section on Fridays for more details.

HANDLING SHELLS

- Boil shells in clear water for 15 minutes to remove smelly residue.
- Rinse shells thoroughly
- Wash them in a mixture of white vinegar and water. Or soak them in a 50/50 solution of bleach and water.
- Dry them completely,
- Coat them with mineral oil or baby oil if you want them to have a shiny look for displaying.

SHELLING LOCATIONS

- Any place with beach access along Southwest Florida's coast is a good place to start shelling. Remember to bring quarters and dollar bills for parking.
- Sanibel is the best for shelling because of its boomerang shape and other factors. Try the point near the lighthouse, or try Blind Pass.
- Cayo Costa is another excellent place because the Island's shores are often empty of people. It's accessible by boat only.
- Lover's Key State Park – between Fort Myers Beach and Bonita Beach – should not be overlooked. Avid shellers have reported some good finds there.

ON THE WEB

- Anything you needed to know about shelling on Sanibel:
www.sanibel-florida.com/shellingsanibel.html
- More tips for gathering shells: www.Sanibel-florida.com/tipsshelling.htm
- More tips for cleaning and caring for shells: www.seashells.org

SEA SHELL PRESERVATION

Because seashells are important to the islands' chain of life, and because Sanibel is a refuge island where all life is considered precious, the State of Florida has outlawed the collecting of live shells on the island. "Live shell" is defined as any specimen containing an inhabitant, whether or not the mollusk seems alive. The law also protects sand dollars, sea stars and sea urchins. All shelling is prohibited in J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Shellers are urged to limit even their empty-shell collection. Hauling away seashells by the bucketful diminishes supplies and the value of a single shell. For, as Anne Morrow Lindbergh in Gifts From The Sea wrote while visiting these islands back in the '30s, "One cannot collect all the beautiful shells on the beach. One can collect only a few, and they are more special because they are few."