

COLLECTING

Scallops may be spotted on or near the bottom of seagrass beds, usually lying on their shells. Often, they are easiest to find in deeper cuts through grass beds, or along borders where the sand/mud meets the edge of the grasses. Scallops have dozens of 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 to avoid being pinched.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- Swim mask
- Swim fins
- Snorkel
- Small mesh bag
- Diver 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>.

Photo Credits:
Tyler Jones (UF/IFAS Communications)
<http://ics.ifas.ufl.edu>

For more information about scallops, scallop research and recreational harvesting of the Florida bay scallop, visit

www.flseagrant.org

or contact
Fred Vose, Sea Grant Marine Extension
University of Florida-IFAS
203 Forest Park Drive
Perry, FL 32348-6340
fvose@ufl.edu
<http://taylor.ifas.ufl.edu>



For information about accommodations and scallop excursions in the area:



Taylor County Chamber of Commerce
www.taylorcountychamber.com
(850) 584-5366

Taylor County Board of Commissioners
<http://www.taylorcountygov.com>
(850) 838-3500

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

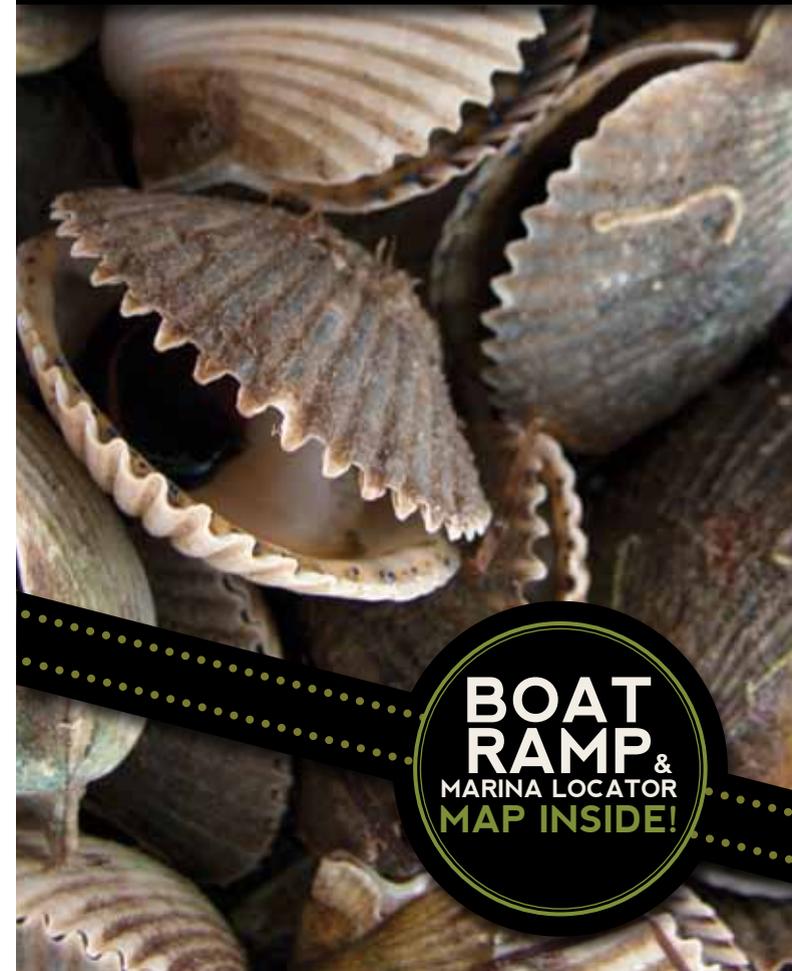


Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission
<http://myfwc.com>



RECREATIONAL HARVESTING OF THE FLORIDA BAY SCALLOP

STEINHATCHEE AND KEATON BEACH AREAS, TAYLOR COUNTY



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

BIG BEND IS HOME TO CORE POPULATION

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 and '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. Recent studies by researchers, including scientists from University of Florida, University of South Florida,

The Florida Bay Scallop is a bivalve mollusk that grows and lives in seagrass beds in relatively shallow water, usually 4 to 10 feet deep. At one time scallops were reported from Palm Beach to Pensacola.

Today, healthy populations can only be found in selected locations along Florida's west coast—principally St. Joseph Bay, the Steinhatchee and Keaton Beach areas of the Big Bend, and the areas near the Crystal and Homosassa rivers.

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 one to two weeks 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. To avoid fertilizing their own eggs, it is thought that individuals spawn as females before spawning as males. A single scallop can produce more than one million eggs per spawn.



Mote Marine Laboratory and FWC, have shown that adult populations may quickly rebound in some Southwest Florida locations when hatchery-reared "pediveligers," the last planktonic stage, are introduced into temporary enclosures on seagrass. 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 harvesters need a saltwater fishing license to harvest bay scallops, even when fishing from shore. There are some exceptions, listed in the FWC "Florida Saltwater Recreational Fishing Regulations," which is available in bait shops, FWC offices, or at the FWC website (<http://myfwc.com>). Exemptions include when fishing (scalloping) from a for-hire vessel (guide, charter, party boat) that has a valid vessel license.

Open season normally runs from July 1 through September 10 each year. 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. Though not required, scallops smaller than 1.5 inches in diameter will have almost no meat and should be thrown back.

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 more on the legal requirements for diver down flags in the equipment section.

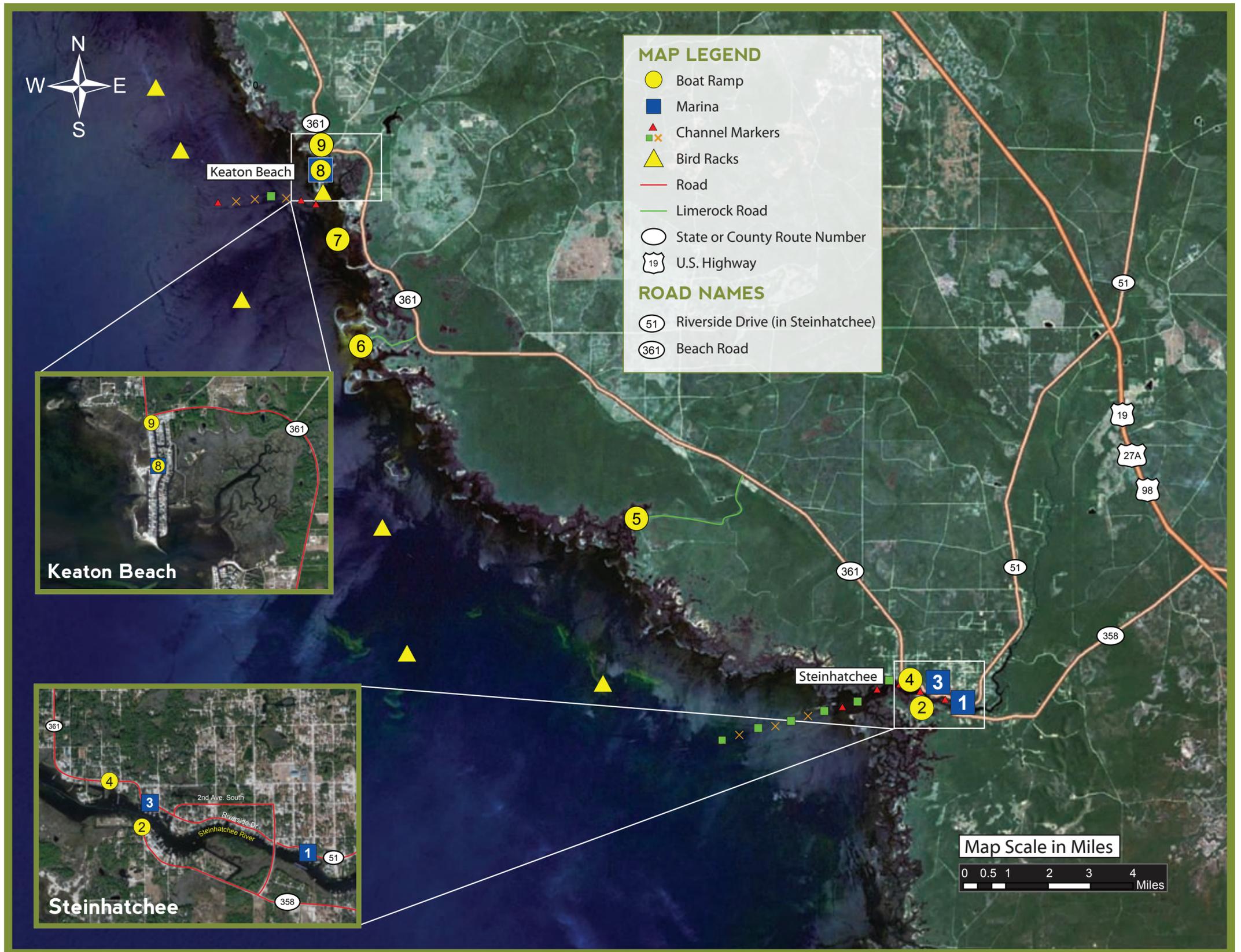
CARE AND HANDLING

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 dry conditions, so be sure to keep them cool and moist. They 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 scallop muscle, in many other parts of the world the entire animal is eaten, much like we eat clams and oysters. If this is done, scallops should be fully cooked because many open harvest areas for scallops are not classified for harvest of other shellfish species.



BOAT RAMP AND MARINA LOCATOR MAP FOR THE STEINHATCHEE AND KEATON BEACH AREAS

This guide to recreational scalloping includes educational information about scallops and scalloping. The boat ramp and marina locator map shows local water access points in southern Taylor County near Steinhatchee and Keaton Beach. This map is not intended for navigational use. Channel markers may not be where shown. For navigational purposes use NOAA nautical chart 11407, available for sale at marine and coastal businesses throughout Florida or online at www.nauticalcharts.noaa.gov.



BOAT RAMPS

- ② Jena Ramp - West end of CR 358, Jena
- ④ Steinhatchee Boat Ramp (former site of Ideal Marina) - 100 1st Avenue SE, Steinhatchee
- ⑤ Dallus Creek Landing - West end of Dallus Creek Road, off CR 361 (**shallow draft boats only**)
- ⑥ Hagen's Cove Recreation Area - West end of Hagen's Cove Road, off CR 361 (**shallow draft boats only**)
- ⑦ Dark Island Boat Ramp - 22058 Dark Island Road, Dark Island (**shallow draft boats only**)
- ⑧ Keaton Beach Marina Boat Ramp - 20650 Keaton Beach Drive, Keaton Beach
- ⑨ Keaton Beach Boat Ramp - 20131 Beach Road (CR 361), Keaton Beach

MARINAS

- ① River Haven Marina - 1110 Riverside Drive, Steinhatchee
- ③ Sea Hag Marina - 322 Riverside Drive, Steinhatchee
- ⑧ Keaton Beach Marina - 20650 Keaton Beach Drive, Keaton Beach

*Scallops may be found in any location where seagrasses are present. Good places to begin searching are depths near the Bird Racks, but watch out for obstructions close to the positions located on the map.