

SOUNDSIDE LEARNING

THIS WEEK ON CORE SOUND

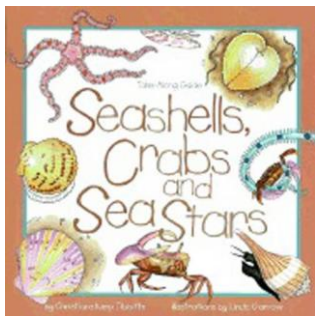


January 16, 2023

JOIN US!

- **January 22:** "Sunday Afternoons with Heber," 2 PM
- **February 24:** *Taste of Core Sound* (more information coming soon!)

Sound Reading Material For You & Your Child



Seashells, Crabs and Sea Stars:

Take-Along Guide

By Christiane Kump Tibbitts

An introduction to the world of seashells, crabs, and sea stars including identification information, educational activities, and fun facts. Invites young naturalists to spot wildlife. Safety tips are provided, and interesting activities are suggested.

Pages: 48
Grades: 2-5

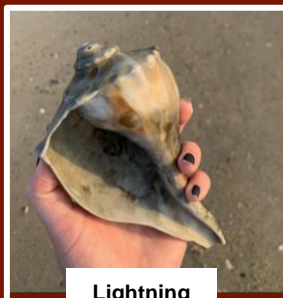
The Carolina Conch

"Conch" (pronounced *konk*) has become a general term used to describe any large, spiral-shelled gastropod. The whelk, nicknamed the "Carolina Conch," is a close cousin and the predominant edible mollusk in our waters. The three most common types of whelks are the lightning whelk, knobbed whelk and channeled whelk.

Whelks are large marine snails with coiled shells. They are both scavengers and carnivores and crawl along (or just under) the bay bottom in search of clams and other shellfish. While hunting prey, they travel along the bottom using their strong foot and employ their nose, or proboscis, to find buried animals by sensing the stream of water flowing out of the covered animals' feeding tubes. Once prey is located, whelks dig down into the bay bottom to capture it.

Whelks grow by using their covering to produce calcium carbonate that extends their shells around a central axis called the columella. As they grow, this process creates turns, or whorls. A whorl is a spiral of the shell. The final whorl, and typically the biggest, is the body whorl that ends, providing the hole into which the snail can withdraw. Most whelks (like most snails) are right-handed or dextral. If the shell is held upright, with the spire up and the aperture facing you, the aperture is on the right side. The opposite and less common condition is sinistral in which the aperture is on the left of the central axis.

Whelks also have a separate hard plate called an operculum, which acts like a trap door when the snail withdraws into its shell. Sometimes called a "shoe," the operculum is attached to the top of the living animal's foot. Whelks are subtidal animals for they live only below the low tide mark. Their operculum does not tightly seal the opening of the shell so the snail cannot survive exposure to the air like some intertidal animals.



Lightning Whelk



Knobbed Whelk



Channeled Whelk

Photos from www.twiddy.com.

Cooking With Conchs

Conchs are a dish that comes in many forms, such as fresh conch salad, conch fritters, and stewed conchs. In our area we use whelks in our dishes, but they are no less flavorful or delicious.

When selecting cleaned conch or whelk meat, look for meat that is white with some pink and orange tinges. Avoid any that is gray in appearance or has a fishy smell. Like any fresh, quality seafood, it should not smell fishy!

Raw, conch meat tends to be rubbery and quite chewy. To keep it tender, some cooks like to use a meat tenderizer to pound the conch meat until it resembles a chicken cutlet. You may also use a rolling pin for this purpose. Another technique is to boil it in salted water for an hour; it will soften up as time passes. If you are planning to use conch in a stew or soup, you likely will not need to tenderize it as the low and slow cooking time will do the work for you.

Here is Nannie Raye Poole's local recipe for stewed conchs from *Island Born and Bred*.

Conch Stew

15 medium conchs
1 bunch scallions
3 slices fat pork, fried out
2 cans bisuits
Salt to taste
Pepper to taste

Crack conch shell with hammer. Remove conch; clean down to white meat, making sure all black has been removed. Beat conch meat with hammer until about ¼ inch thick; cut into bite-size pieces.

Fry out fat pork in cooking pot. Add conchs and enough water to cover. Let cook on medium high for about 3 hours. Add diced scallions and boil until conchs start to tender. Add can biscuits for dodgers. Cool until dodgers are done – about 30 minutes.

Dodgers: Roll or flatten each biscuit; pinch off marble-size pieces. Place around top of pot.

Note: Keep careful watch – pot will boil over easily. Keep enough water to cover conchs and keep from burning. Near the end of cooking, stew-down to almost a poppin' gravy.

Tip from Debra Nelson Willis: After freezing conchs, they clean much easier. An alternate and delicious starter for your pot of conchs is butter. Potatoes are a tasty addition, as well.



*Photos courtesy of
Debra Nelson Willis.*

