

# The Pier Aquarium presents the Celebrity Critter of the Week!



<http://media.photobucket.com/image/Scallop,%2BGulf,%2BFlorida/SnookMook/ScallopClose.jpg>

## Florida Bay Scallop

**Scientific Name:** *Argopecten irradians*

**Description:** a member of the shellfish family known as bivalves (for its two halves or shells), it grows to about 2 inches. It feeds continuously through its open valves by filtering small particles of algae and organic matter in the water.

**Habitat:** Sea grass beds and shallow waters of estuaries; can be found throughout Florida's west coast and as far north as West

## Top 10 Facts:

1. The Florida Bay Scallop is a bivalve mollusk that grows and lives in seagrass beds in relatively shallow water, four-10 ft deep along the state's west and northwest coasts.
2. Today, healthy populations can only be found in selected locations along Florida's west coast – St. Joseph Bay and the area between the Suwannee and Weeki Wachee rivers.
3. Although clams may live 40 years, the life span of a bay scallop is a fleeting 12-18 months.
4. Scallops are a favored food of stone crabs, which have no trouble crushing the scallop's armored shell with their powerful claws. Researchers frequently find the outside of stone crab burrows littered with broken scallop shells.
5. Bay scallops develop male and female sex organs and produce both sperm and eggs. Of the 12-million or so eggs a single scallop releases, only one may survive to adulthood.
6. They spawn in the fall and after about a two-week larval period, develop a small shell and settle onto seagrass blades. They continue to grow until late spring to early summer and then fall from the grass blades and become free swimmers.
7. Unlike oysters and clams, scallops are active swimmers. They click their shells together, forcing expelled water to propel them quite rapidly.
8. Tiny blue eyes along the outer rim of the shell detect movement and serve as an early warning system for scallops.
9. The delicious scallop meat so prized by seafood lovers is actually the scallop's adductor muscle, which it uses to close its shell.
10. In Florida, commercial harvest of bay scallops is banned. Recreational scallopers between the ages of 16 and 65 must have a current Florida saltwater fishing license to collect scallops.

<http://www.tampabaywatch.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=content.home&pageID=25>

[http://www.flseagrant.org/program\\_areas/fisheries/scalloping/index.htm](http://www.flseagrant.org/program_areas/fisheries/scalloping/index.htm)

[www.pieraquarium.org](http://www.pieraquarium.org)