

## FISHERIES REGULATIONS:

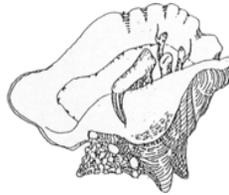
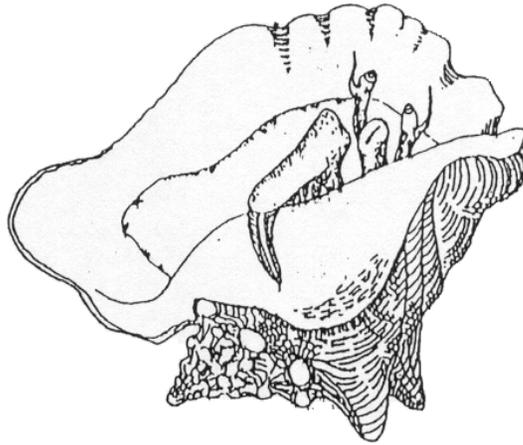
- No harvesting, possession or sale of conch without a well formed flaring lip.
- Non-commercial exports are limited to ten pounds per person as personal baggage.
- No commercial export of conch or conch by-product without a licence issued by the Minister responsible. All conch products exported are subject to inspection by a Fisheries Inspector.
- Foreign sports-fishermen with a valid sport-fishing permit are limited to ten- (10) conch per person on a visiting vessel.
- Conchs can not be harvested with the aid of SCUBA gear.

**INTERNATIONAL REGULATIONS:** The Queen Conch is protected under the Convention of International Trade Of Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES). The Bahamas is a signatory to this convention which demands that all international trade of this species is done under the provision of a CITES permit. The Management Authority for CITES within The Bahamas is the Department of Agriculture.

**DISCUSSION ON CONSERVATION:** Within the region, The Bahamas has the fifth highest landings of queen conch. There are several options for management of the queen conch.

- A Closed season during the during the summer months when conchs spawn.
- Establishing Marine Fisheries Reserves within selected areas.
- Establishing a minimum legal size for harvest, based on sexual maturity.

Currently, the fisheries regulations state that conchs may only be harvested when the shell possesses a well formed flaring lip. This measure allows the conch to spawn at least once before it enters the fishery. This is measure is easy for fisherman to follow.



Prepared  
By  
Department of Fisheries  
East Bay St.  
Nassau, New Providence  
Tel: (242) 393 - 1014/5  
Fax: (242) 393 - 0238

# CONCH FACTS

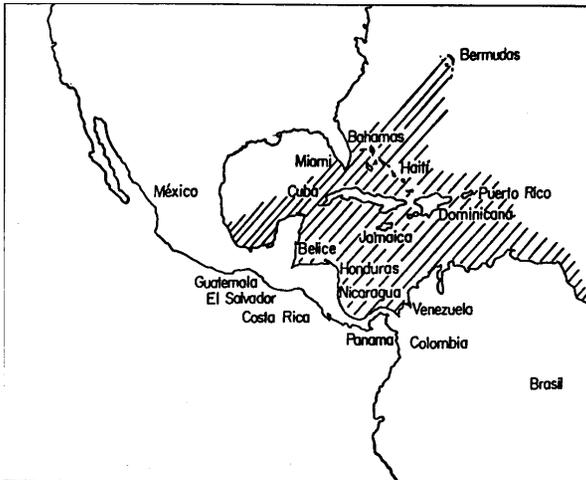
IMPORTANT  
THINGS YOU  
SHOULD  
KNOW ABOUT  
THE QUEEN  
CONCH



# THE QUEEN CONCH

**Scientific Name:** *Strombus gigas*

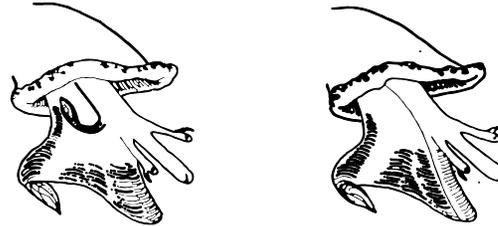
**GEOGRAPHICAL RANGE:** The queen conch or conch is a marine snail indigenous to the sub-tropical and tropical waters of the Western Atlantic Ocean. Typically they are found in seagrass meadows, on the sandy flats or around reefs in depths that range from a few feet to more than one hundred feet.



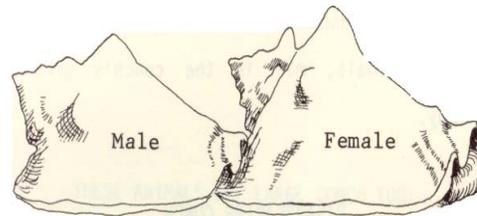
**DESCRIPTION:** Large moderately heavy cone shaped shell with short, blunt triangular spikes. The exterior of the shell is brown/orange in colour with a bright pink flaring lip in mature adults. The exterior is usually covered in algae. It has a grey mottled head with long black eye stalks and proboscis. The body of the conch is white, except for the mantle or sand skirt, which is red-dish/pink in colour. The hard dark brown claw is actually a toenail. This is used to drag the conch along the seabed.

**REPRODUCTION And GROWTH:** Conchs reach sexual maturity at 3 1/2 to 5 years, stop growing in

length and develop the characteristic flaring lip. This lip thickens with age. The sexes are separate and physically distinguishable. A mature male conch (left) has a verge and the female conch (right) has an egg groove.



Mating occurs during the warm months of the year.

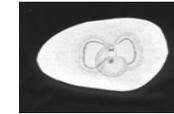


A gravid female lays several crescent shaped eggs masses on clean sandy flats. Each egg mass contains up to 400,000 eggs.

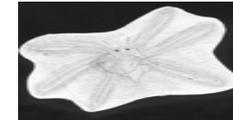


Within 3-5 days the larvae emerge from the egg mass as microscopic plankton known as a veliger. The veliger develops floating within the sea currents feeding on microscopic plants (phytoplankton). The

full development of a veliger takes twenty-one to twenty-eight days following which the animal transforms into a miniature conch that settles to the seafloor.



(1 day old shell length 0.3mm)



(21 - 28 days shell length 1.0mm)

These miniature conch settles in areas that may be many miles from where the egg mass was laid. Immediately they conceal themselves during the day from predators and feed on algae during the night. Turtles, porcupine fish, eagle rays, sting-rays, octopus, tulip snail, hermit and blue crabs are natural predators of juvenile conch.

After the first year, the maturing conch moves into deeper water feeding on organisms that grow on sea grass, detritus and algae. The conch extrudes a clear jelly cord or pistel, this contains

