

The 26 miles of natural beaches along the Creole Nature Trail All-American Road are largely undeveloped and easily accessible, providing an excellent opportunity for a wide range of water activities from swimming and tubing to surf fishing, shelling, birding and sunbathing.

With numerous rivers draining into the Gulf, including the Mississippi, the waters of the Gulf of Mexico in Louisiana are rich in nutrients, hence the stained color. These waters are also the nursery for thousands of fish, shrimp, crabs and oysters that are born in our wetlands each year. The beaches of the Creole Nature Trail are all naturally filled with deposits from the southeast tidal flows that bring abundant shells tumbling onto our beaches—providing a treasure trove for shell seekers of all ages!



When to Shell.

Shelling is generally best at low tide, or up to 48 hours after rough weather has sent waves crashing onto the shore.

Where to Shell.

All the beaches along the Creole Nature Trail provide great shelling opportunities but Rutherford Beach in eastern Cameron parish, and the smaller beaches (marked 1-5 on the map) to the west of Holly Beach, are usually the best as they are the least inhabited.

Be sure to look for shells both where the waves are hitting the shore, as well as where they hit the shore at high tide. Often called the “trash line,” the Gulf leaves its treasures behind as the high tide slowly recedes.

What are Shells?

The shells you find on the beach were once the home of animals called mollusks. A large group of animals, mollusks have no backbone and generally secrete the material to form a shell for support and shelter from predators.

Pack a picnic lunch and spend the day shelling and swimming.



For more information about the outdoor experiences to be had along the Creole Nature Trail All-American Road—such as birding, fishing, crabbing and wildlife viewing—visit www.CreoleNatureTrail.org.



For complete information on Southwest Louisiana, stop by the Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana Convention & Visitors Bureau's tourist information center located at 1205 N. Lakeshore Drive (just east of the Interstate 10 bridge) in Lake Charles or visit www.VisitLakeCharles.org.



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Shelling



Near Lake Charles, LA



www.CreoleNatureTrail.org



How many different shells can you find?

Below are some of the shells commonly found along the beaches of the Creole Nature Trail. The shells marked with ★ are those that would be considered especially good discoveries! How many different types of shells can you find?

| | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Channeled Duck Clam | <input type="checkbox"/> Common Baby's Ear |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pear Whelk ★ | <input type="checkbox"/> Lightning Whelk ★ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Common Rangia | <input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Oyster |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marsh Periwinkle | <input type="checkbox"/> Blood Ark |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Florida Fighting Conch | <input type="checkbox"/> Disk Dosinia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dwarf Surf Clam | <input type="checkbox"/> Shark's Eye (also known as the Moon Shell) ★ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Atlantic Coquina | <input type="checkbox"/> Hooked Mussel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Great Heart Cockle | <input type="checkbox"/> Angel Wing ★ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stout Tagelus | <input type="checkbox"/> Texas Venus |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Atlantic Slipper Shell | <input type="checkbox"/> Sea Bean |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Incongruous Ark | <input type="checkbox"/> Heart Sea Bean |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lettered Olive | <input type="checkbox"/> Mitchell's Wentletrap ★ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Southern Quahog | <input type="checkbox"/> Skate Egg Case (known locally as Witches Purse) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pen Shell | <input type="checkbox"/> Hay's Rock Shell |

Life on the Beach

Many other animals share the Gulf waters and shores with shells. Here are a few of them you may see today!

(CAUTION: Do not touch jellyfish or man-of-war. Minor to severe burns can occur.)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |
| BLACK SKIMMER | BROWN PELICAN | CABBAGE HEAD JELLYFISH | COMMON TERN |
|  |  |  |  |
| LAUGHING GULL | PORTUGUESE MAN-OF-WAR | SANDERLING | WHITE PELICAN |

