FACTSHEET

QUEEN CONCH

SPECIES
Largest of 6 conch in the Caribbean region

SIZE
Up to 30 cm (12 in), 3 kg (~6.5 lb)

HABITAT
Seagrass, sand, coral rubble
Depth: 1-30 m (3-100 ft)

TAXONOMY
Phylum: Mollusca
Species: *Strombus gigas*

LIFE SPAN
Avg. 20-30 years, up to 40 years

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION
Tropical regions of the Atlantic, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico

DESCRIPTION
Soft-bodied marine invertebrates that secrete pink/orange spiked hard calcareous shells. Distinct flared lip indicates sexually maturity. Possess a single foot with a claw-like tip (operculum), a tube-shaped mouth, and 2 eye stalks.

BEHAVIOR
Slow moving, aggregates in shallow waters making them vulnerable to exploitation. Adults may move 50-100 meters per day. Typically move from shallow to deeper water as they grow.

REPRODUCTION
Form spawning aggregations (dense groupings) generally from mid-March to November. Females lay strings of up to 450,000 eggs. Reach adulthood and full length in 3-5 years, after which they grow wider and develop thicker lip.

DIET
Herbivores: seagrass, algae, seaweed, and particulate organic matter.

PREDATORS
Crabs, spiny lobster, sharks, rays, sea turtles, and several species of fish.

MAIN THREATS
- Overfishing is the greatest threat (listed under CITES - Appendix II)
- Loss of habitat (including poor water quality from pollution)
- Fishing: illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU)
- Lack of management resources

SPECIES IMPORTANCE

ECOLOGICAL VALUE
Conch play a vital role in shaping small invertebrate communities. Loss of conch significantly alters critical seagrass habitat, negatively affecting ecologically and economically important fisheries (e.g., lobster).

SOCIOECONOMIC VALUE
- ***Fisheries***: one of the Caribbean's most valuable
- ***Exports***: US $60 million in annual trade
- ***Livelihoods***: consumption, employment, and local sales
- ***Tradition***: high cultural and historical significance

SOLUTIONS
- ✓ **Ecosystem-based management:** catch and lip thickness limits
- ✓ **Establish no-take marine reserves** (that include critical spawning sites, nearshore nursery grounds, & seagrass beds)
- ✓ **Increase stakeholder involvement**
- ✓ **Improve management capacity:** monitoring, enforcement, & data collection
- ✓ **Explore alternative livelihoods for fishers**

> *The queen conch is one of the most valuable fisheries species throughout the Caribbean."*
>
> ***Dr. Megan Davis***

KEY WEBSITES

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS (FAO) | *Caribbean Queen Conch*
www.fao.org/docrep/006/y5261e/y5261e07

COMMUNITY CONCH
www.communityconch.org

ARKIVE | *Queen Conch*
www.arkive.org/queen-conch/strombus-gigas/image-G113356.html

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION (NOAA) FISHERIES | *Queen Conch*
www.marinesciencetoday.com/2014/02/26/what-do-parrotfish-and-conservationists-have-in-common/

VIDEO

FAU HARBOR BRANCH OCEANOGRAPHIC INSTITUTE | *The Story of Conch*
www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5yGztU0ZaY

CONCH SALAD TV | *Ain't Got No More Lip*
www.youtube.com/watch?v=-MZWHshQMl0

MICRODOCS | *Life Cycle of the Conch*
www.youtube.com/watch?v=0F1LcufYwMw

WATERWAYS EPISODE 209 | *Queen Conch and Gulf Pipefish*
www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPGrPdeFq_w

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Seagrass, Overfishing, Lobster, Blue Economy, Sustainable Seafood

Available: **WaittInstitute.org/factsheets**