# **Atlantic Bay Scallop**

Argopecten irradians amplicostatus





As filter-feeders, bay scallops play an important role in keeping the waters clear and clean. When caught, they can be cooked and eaten, provided they were collected in areas considered "noncontaminated" by the Texas Department of Health.

oastal Wetlands

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#### **APPEARANCE**

Valve length: 2.5 to 2.8 inches (60 to 70 mm)

#### **Distinguishing Characteristics**

- Nearly identical fan-shaped shells with 17 to 20 ribs on each shell
- Shell color varies

#### LIFE HISTORY

Range: Galveston, Texas down to the Laguna

Madre along the Texas Gulf Coast

Diet: Absorbs and ingests floating detritus

(dead and decomposing plant and

animal matter)

Predators: Starfish, wading birds, seagulls, pinfish,

lightning whelks, cow-nosed rays, crabs

and humans

Sexual maturity: At one year

Spawning season: Between August and October

Eggs: 100,000 to 1 million eggs

Young: Within 29 days the juvenile stage is

reached. Within 35 days the scallop

resembles a small adult.

Life span: Less than two years

#### **HABITAT**

Atlantic bay scallops prefer bays where salinity is high and seagrass meadows are common, especially habitat covered with eel grass (*Zostera marina*) and/or shoal grass (*Halodule wrightii*). They are most commonly found in calm waters 0.3 to 0.6 meters at low tide.

#### **BEHAVIOR**

As juveniles, scallops will attach themselves to a surface suspended off the bottom with special adhesive threads called byssal threads. As adults, scallops move from one place to another by quickly "clapping" their valves together and ejecting water, creating a type of "jet propulsion." Sometimes scallops migrate in mass.

#### **NOW YOU KNOW!**

- Scallops are hermaphrodites (can be both male and female). A single scallop will generally release sperm (as a male) before it releases eggs (as a female). This reduces the chance of it fertilizing itself.
- Natural occurrences such as red tide (a harmful algal bloom) can kill millions of adult and larval bay scallops.
- Scallops grow at a faster rate during the warmer months when food is readily available.
- Scallops have a series of blue eyes around the *mantle* (the tissue that secretes the shell). Although they are weak, the eyes help scallops identify predators.

## ATLANTIC BAY SCALLOPS AND PEOPLE

The destruction of seagrass areas as a result of dredging and development has resulted in the decreased abundance of the bay scallop. This tasty seafood is collected by hand, with dip nets, by raking and dredging. Scallops can only be harvested from areas approved by the Texas Department of Health—Seafood Safety. Because they are filter-feeders, Atlantic bay scallops are studied to test the effects of petroleum spills in coastal habitats.