



# Protecting Our Environment

WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING ❖ HOW YOU CAN HELP

## Live Seashell Ban Sets High Standards

(NAPSA)—Every year, shell collectors make a splash on south-west Florida's Lee Island Coast.

While tourism continues to grow, officials and conservationists say that what makes the area so attractive needs to be protected for future generations to enjoy. That's why Lee County recently enacted legislation that prohibits beachcombers from keeping any shells containing live creatures. This is believed to be the first rule of its kind in Florida, demonstrating the county's reputation as a leader in environmental protection.

The new rules are simple: if the shell is not "empty," it must be thrown back or left behind. Otherwise, collectors may take as many uninhabited shells as they wish.

With more than 100 coastal islands and 50 miles of shoreline, Lee County features beaches yielding hundreds of species of seashells, ranging from exotic cowries to the common clam.

In addition to such known destinations as Sanibel and Captiva islands, the coast includes the islands of North Captiva, Cayo Costa, Estero/Fort Myers Beach, Boca Grande on Gasparilla and Cabbage Key, among others. There, avid shell collectors can be seen from sunrise to sunset searching the sands in the hopes of spotting coquinas, olives and sand dollars, as well as tulips, whelks and high-priced varieties such as the brown-speckled junonia.

The move to ban live shelling has been underway along the Lee Island Coast for many years. In 1987, Sanibel Island led area efforts to limit collections to two



**With a ban on keeping live seashells in parts of Florida, tourism officials say there are plenty of uninhabited shells to go around.**

per day. In 1993, Lee County also received permission from state officials to adopt the same limit. By 1995, Sanibel enacted a total ban on collecting live shells, with Fort Myers Beach following suit five years later.

Despite the ban, shelling enthusiasts can expect to find as many—if not more—shells than before, since the majority that wash ashore are uninhabited. According to local shelling guides, it's possible to find as many as 60 different kinds of seashells on any given day.

Although peak shelling season is May through September, weather fronts have been known to push large numbers of shells ashore in the winter months. Many avid collectors say shelling knows no season.

For more information about shelling, guided tours and other attractions and activities along Lee Island Coast, you can call the Visitor and Convention Bureau at 888-231-6933 or visit the Web site at [www.LeeIslandCoast.com](http://www.LeeIslandCoast.com).