

## Island Beach Park

The 34-acre beach park is owned and maintained by the Pelican Landing Community. Nearly 32 acres are a dedicated Conservation Easement. Pelican Landing is committed to preserve the natural, scenic and ecological resources and prevent any use of the property that will significantly impair or interfere with the value of these resources. For your pleasure, information about Florida's natural resources is located in the Information Center at the Rest Room Pavilion. Feel free to ask questions of the Beach Staff.

The most visible natural elements are the sand, shells, birds, sea turtle nests and vegetation. Visitors to the island can contribute to its continued beauty and to the enjoyment of the beach by:

- 1) not taking live shells or sea oat seeds.
- 2) not feeding the birds. They become more dependent on people and become a disturbance and nuisance.
- 3) not disturbing the resting, nesting or foraging wading birds and shorebirds. Human disturbance is a threat to their survival.
- 4) not disturbing the sea turtle nest sites. Removing monofilament line, plastic bags, straws, Styrofoam and other non-degradable materials that cause their deaths.
- 5) disposing of food properly. Garbage attracts fish crows and raccoons, which are predators of bird and sea turtle nests.
- 6) using designated paths and footbridges over the dune area to protect the dunes and the fragile vegetation.

## Shells

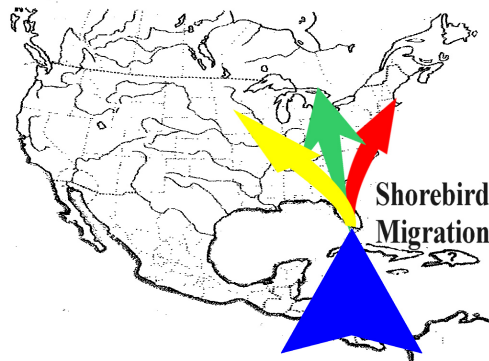


Shelling is a popular pastime at the beach. We marvel at the diversity in size, shape, color and

beauty of the over 100 species present. To the morning beach walkers there is an excitement in the anticipation of the night's tidal deposits. Sand dollars, lightning whelks, star fish, sea urchins, coquinas, calico scallops, worm shells, Florida's fighting conchs and shark's eye are most common.

## Birds

The beach and shoreline is a resting and foraging area for shorebirds such as sandpipers and for wading birds such as the snowy egret. Osprey, pelicans and terns dive into the surrounding waters of both the Gulf and bay for food while the cormorants and anhinga dive from the water's surface. Gulls forage on the beach looking for edible morsels.



In the fall-winter-spring seasons, most of the shore bird species on our beach are migrants. Weighing only a few ounces, shorebirds complete annual migrations of thousands of miles. Some species winter in Florida. Their survival is dependent on our beach for resting and foraging. At times large numbers of many species of shorebirds will feed together in a feeding frenzy.



Herons, egrets, wood storks, ibises and roseate spoonbills forage in the shallow tidal waters of the island's coves, wetlands and occasionally on the beach shoreline. These species are searching for fish, frogs, crustaceans, mollusks, lizards, insects,



snakes and worms. Wading birds feed mostly at dawn, dusk and with the tidal rhythms. As many as twelve species listed on Federal or Florida protected species lists have been observed.

## Sea Turtles



Adult loggerhead sea turtles can grow to 3 feet in length and weigh 200 to 350 pounds. Females come ashore during the night from May through August to lay their eggs in a sandy nest. Approximately 100 eggs are deposited in a nest cavity that is 18 to 24 inches deep. In about two months, two inch hatchlings emerge and head for the water. During the 1999 nesting season, Big Hickory Island had 16 nests with 13 in our beach park area and nearly 1400 hatchlings made it to the Gulf's waters. Only a small percentage will survive to maturity when the females will return in 30-40 years to nest on the same beach where they hatched.

## Vegetation

The vegetation reflects the semi-tropical location of the island. On the Gulf side, sea oats, sea grapes and other plants are typical of the location while on the bay side; red mangroves form the interface between water and land. These plants are particularly important in maintaining the integrity of the island. The root system of the mangroves has a large diversity of fishes, birds, and other marine wildlife dependent upon a close association. Yucca and prickly pear cactus are found on the island's interior. Seaweed or algae that is deposited on the beach traps sand and then disintegrates to keep the sand from packing into an almost impenetrable surface. Without this process, the many crabs and other beach fauna would not be able to live in the sand, and the plant detritus forms a part of the food chain for the beach flora and fauna.

## Estero Bay

Estero Bay is an estuary, i.e. a shallow bay where freshwater meets and mixes with salty Gulf waters. More than 95% of Florida's recreationally and commercially important fishes, crustaceans and shellfish spend part of their lives in estuaries. Manatees forage on the sea grasses that grow in the warm shallow waters. Unfortunately, collisions with powerboats cause a significant number of manatee deaths. Dolphins playing in the wake of the boat or surfacing to take a breath are exciting to see.

We hope you have learned something about our beach park and we sincerely hope you enjoy the time you spend at our Beach Park!

Thank you ~

Pelican Landing Community Association (PLCA)

© 2008

Here are a few items that will help you plan your day and ensure that you and your fellow guests have an enjoyable time:

1. Come early, especially during our peak season, as lounge chairs/umbrellas may be limited. Extras are on the large pavilion's deck. Additional table/chairs are available inside the large pavilion. Space may be limited during high tides. Tide charts are posted daily in the shuttle van and at the marina.
2. Visit our library and gazebos, as they have pictorial displays of our seashells, birds, and other animals described in this brochure.
3. Restrooms are located in the pavilions and are accessible via your card or beach pass.
4. Be alert while on our shuttle boat—exciting aquatic life is often seen frolicking in the bay.
5. Rangers are very knowledgeable about our environment and beach amenities; ask about scheduled educational tours around our island.
6. Signage has been placed along our beach—some regarding environmental restrictions, some to direct you to shuttles and pavilions.
7. Salt water harms the lounges and umbrellas, so please don't take them into the surf. Lounges may be moved, but umbrellas may not.
8. Smoking is allowed only in designated areas.
9. Be sure to bring your own snacks and beverages, as we do not provide such. For your safety, no glass of any kind is allowed on the beach. Please put any litter in the trash and recycle bins along the walkways.
10. Safety is of the utmost importance. If lightning is detected within a 10-mile range, the beach will be evacuated immediately.
11. Pavilions are available for special occasions—contact PLCA administration staff for details.

We are very proud of the fact that the island has been designated a conservation area. We encourage you to visit our island and hope that in visiting, you will learn a little about the natural wonders of Big Hickory Island.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask our beach rangers or call the beach headquarters at (239) 495-3550.

# Big Hickory Island

## Beach Park at Pelican Landing

*Take only pictures and  
Leave nothing but footprints*



The Pelican Landing Island Beach Park is located on Big Hickory Island, which is part of the barrier island chain along Florida's west coast. The Gulf of Mexico borders on the west and on the east is Estero Bay, Florida's first aquatic preserve. These coastal barrier islands appear to have been in their present location for the past 3500 years, although aerial photographs show our Island as a sandbar as recently as 30 years ago. The islands are always changing, as the shoreline is re-sculptured by storms, tides, currents and wave action.