



## **Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum Media Kit**

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### **FACT SHEET**

#### **About the Museum**

The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum is the only museum in the U.S. devoted solely to shells and the living mollusks that create them, and one of the best things to do on Sanibel Island. Opened in 1995, its mission is to connect people to the natural world through their love of shells. Extensive exhibits, programs and expertise inspire learning, support scientific research, and tell the story of mollusks and their importance.

A world-renowned malacologist, highly trained marine biologists, and passionate staff offer visitors a wealth of knowledge about the scientific, cultural and historical importance of shells. The Museum is the leading authority on Florida's shells, with exhibits that include the rare junonias, fig snails, pen shells and more. It displays some of the largest shells in the world, including the goliath conch, lightning whelk, Atlantic trumpet triton and horse conch. The nonprofit museum's scientists also conduct research with local mollusk species.

The Museum is dedicated to sharing this knowledge by educating visitors about mollusks and the shells they create, offering opportunities for guests to exercise their imagination and craft a treasured shell creation to take home. For a perfect Sanibel experience, fun beach walks are held daily. On these one-hour walks, a shell expert teaches about the shells, mollusks and other marine life that arrive on Sanibel's beaches.

#### **Beyond Shells: The Mysterious World of Mollusks**

In March 2020, The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum will unveil a major expansion, "Beyond Shells: The Mysterious World of Mollusks," adding living animal aquariums to its world-renowned collection in the shelling capital of the world. The new permanent feature transforms the visitor's experience by connecting them to the little-known live animals that create the ocean's stunning shells and educating them about the important role these animals play in our ecosystem.

The bright new space gives visitors the chance to rediscover the Museum. Eleven aquariums showcase cold and warm water species like octopuses, cuttles, squid and nautilus. Visitors duck into a pop-up bubble for a 360-degree look at mollusks and fish, and immerse their hands in two engaging 15-foot touch-tank experiences.

### **About Mollusks and the Shells They Create**

Mollusks — the marvelous creatures that create shells— are amazing. There are more mollusks in the ocean than all fish and marine mammals combined. They are the second most diverse group of animals on the planet, behind insects. They're present in nearly all of the world's natural environments, from cold mountain springs to rainforests and the deepest ocean trenches. Mollusks are a critical food source — including for us. Many species are endangered and going extinct faster than researchers can describe and name them. And because they're such a widespread group, impacts to mollusks are capable of changing the planet irreversibly.

### **Impact on the Community**

The nonprofit Museum is an integral part of the Sanibel community. In November 2020, it will celebrate its 25th anniversary, welcoming more than 1 million visitors to date. Revenue generated from admission aids conservation education efforts across Lee and Collier counties, such as the mobile school program Mollusks on the Move. This program brings the ocean's smallest, yet mightiest, live animals to students who may not otherwise experience them. In 2019 alone, Mollusks on the Move covered more than 5,800 miles to reach more than 9,000 students.

The Museum's expansion will provide opportunities for community partners, too. The neighboring Clinic for the Rehabilitation of Wildlife (C.R.O.W.) will provide veterinary services to the Museum when needed, allowing C.R.O.W. interns to learn hands-on about invertebrates. In return, the Museum's new storm-resistant walls and rebar-reinforced floors will provide refuge for C.R.O.W.'s animals during hurricanes.

### **Leadership in Ocean Conservation**

The Museum is a leader in ocean conservation, with staff members contributing crucial scientific research on mollusks. The Museum publishes *The Nautilus*, a peer-reviewed journal covering diverse aspects of mollusks, including their biology and ecology. Established in 1886, *The Nautilus* is one of the oldest journals in the malacology field. The Museum's Science Director and Curator, Dr. Jose H. Leal, serves as Editor-in-Chief.

There is little known about the local favorite Sanibel shell, junonias. The Museum is the only organization studying live junonias to record their complete diet and lifespan, which helps scientists determine ways to protect them. Through its collections, database, library and staff expertise, the Museum is an important resource for professional and amateur scientists around the world.

### **There's an App for That**

Never again wonder what type of shell you found! The Museum's app, available from the App Store or Google Play, identifies Southwest Florida shells in seconds using your phone camera. Learn about the shell and see photos of the living animal that created it. Or browse the Shell Guide right on your phone.

### **A Very Social Place**

Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum is active on social media. Follow on Twitter (@shellmuseum), Instagram (@shellmuseum), and Facebook (/shellmuseum).

### **Funding and Accreditation**

The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum is a registered 501(c)(3) educational nonprofit, accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.

## **FAQs**

Coming in March, one of the top Sanibel attractions opens a stunning new experience. The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum is bringing 10,000 gallons of aquarium exhibits to the island, featuring more than 50 species of mollusks, the incredible animals responsible for creating the shells we love.

### **What's new at the Museum?**

In March 2020, the Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum will unveil a major new experience, "Beyond Shells: The Mysterious World of Mollusks," adding living animal aquariums to its world-renowned collection in the shelling capital of the world. The fun, permanent feature transforms the visitor's experience by connecting them to the little-known live animals that create the ocean's stunning shells and educating them about the important role these animals play in our ecosystem.

### **What are mollusks?**

Mollusks are the most diverse group of animals in the ocean. Like many ocean species, they are threatened by rising sea temperatures, habitat loss and overharvesting. There are more mollusks in the ocean than any other animal, yet they're going extinct faster than newly identified species can be named. Sanibel has protected mollusks for decades, first enacting laws limiting their collection in 1994.

### **Why Sanibel?**

As the shelling capital of the world, the Sanibel community is more invested in the health of mollusks than any other in the world. Sanibel's mission to protect mollusks can go global. As climate change is threatening mollusk species worldwide, the role of protection, scientific inquiry and expertise in the life histories of live mollusks will become ever more critical. Together, the community can preserve and share these animals with the world. Sanibel, and the Museum, are positioned to be an indispensable resource to educate the public about the importance of shells, mollusks and their delicate, yet critical role in a healthy ocean ecosystem.

### **How will the aquarium make a positive difference?**

Once visitors learn about these small yet crucial animals, they may get involved in the natural world and its future. The Museum's educational programs will connect people, mollusks and ocean stewardship.

### **Is the Museum good for kids?**

The Museum is fun, educational, exciting and captivating for kids of all ages, and staff is excited to welcome even more families through the new experience. Daily shell-crafting workshops, provided by Museum staff and included with admission, are a highlight of a visit.

### **Will the expansion benefit Sanibel's economy?**

The addition of the aquarium will strengthen the experience of the Museum, which benefits the community by employing more than 20 people and spending about \$1.5 million in the local economy.

### **How long should I plan for my visit?**

The average visit to the Museum is two hours. It's a perfect stop to learn about shells and the marine life that created them, then search for them on Sanibel's famous beaches. Visitors are invited to pick up the Museum's shell guide, which includes information on more than 400 species and is considered the authoritative guide on local and statewide shells.

### **What's the best time to visit the museum?**

Make the Museum a destination on day trips and gain a new perspective before heading off on a captivating shelling adventure on Sanibel's beaches. The Museum is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., although staff recommends visiting before 11 a.m., shortly after opening for a more exclusive experience.

### **How much does it cost to visit the museum? Are there any discounts?**

Admission is \$23.95 for adults (18 and older), \$21.95 for seniors, \$14.95 youth (12 to 17) and students with their ID, \$8.95 for children (5 to 11) and free to children under 5 and active military. Visitors who bike to the Museum receive \$1 off admission.

Admission includes "Beyond Shells: The Mysterious World of Mollusks," the Museum's fascinating new permanent experience focusing on the living animals that create shells. For more information, visit [www.shellmuseum.org](http://www.shellmuseum.org) or call 239-395-2233. Daily beach walks are always available and can be reserved by calling the museum.

### **Is parking available?**

A parking lot is located on site, and there's no charge to park at the Museum. The Museum promotes sustainable lifestyles by offering a discount to visitors that bike to the Museum.

## **NEWS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum adds aquarium experience featuring the live animals that create the ocean's stunning shells**

**SANIBEL, Fla. (February 6, 2020)** – The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum will unveil a major expansion next month, adding living animal aquariums to its world-renowned shell collection here in the shelling capital of the world.

The new experience sharpens the focus on mollusks, the live animals that create the stunning shells prized by beachgoers and collectors alike, telling the remarkable story behind the museum's displays of rare and record-breaking shells from around the world.

"Sanibel's remarkable beaches are actually the second-best places to find stunning shells," said Dorrie Hipschman, the museum's executive director. "Visitors should stop by the museum, too, because once they see these exhibits, they'll never again look at the beach the same way."

The expansion consists of 11 aquariums ranging in size from 100 to 900 gallons, and home to gastropods, octopuses, nudibranchs, giant clams, and nautilus. Two 15-foot-long touch tanks let young visitors get their hands wet as they explore the fascinating world of mollusks, furthering the museum's educational efforts that already reach thousands of schoolchildren each year.

Fun, interactive interpretive experiences will reveal fascinating hidden worlds behind these species. For instance, a giant Pacific octopus, typically 15 feet across, is a mollusk, too, related to scallops, oysters, snails and slugs – it's just seen its shell disappear over millions of years of evolution.

The museum also emphasizes the environmental dangers today facing the shell-builders, which are threatened by rising sea temperatures, habitat loss and overharvesting. Although there are more mollusks in the ocean than any other animal, many are endangered, going extinct faster than new species can be named. And as key parts of the ocean's food web, as mollusks decline, so will other marine species, such as whales and dolphins. The museum's new experience calls on visitors to learn how they can help.

"Conservation is hampered by a lack of awareness," Hipschman said. "It's hard to save animals when people don't know they exist. We're taking visitors who love shells and inspiring them to care deeply about the animals that make them, and that leads to the next step of wanting to protect them."

Museum marine scientists conduct research about local shelled animals, documenting new species and researching and recording their lifespans, habitats, and diet requirements. This science is critical because most major aquariums in the world have few invertebrates and don't contribute substantially to the knowledge of these important species.

The expansion comes as the Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum celebrates its 25th anniversary, having welcomed more than 1 million visitors to date. The nonprofit museum is an integral part of Sanibel Island, a curving Gulf of Mexico barrier island that's home to more than 400 species of shells. Sanibel is known worldwide for its efforts to protect that natural resource, and today local, county and state laws prohibit the taking of live animals in their shells.

"Sanibel is simply a unique place, and there's no other community in the world like this," said Hipschman. "Its residents truly care about these animals and are invested in their health, and our expansion honors that commitment."

Admission is \$23.95 for adults (18 and older), \$21.95 for seniors, \$14.95 youth (12 to 17) and students with their ID, \$8.95 for children (5 to 11) and free to children under 5 and active military. Visitors who bike to the museum receive \$1 off admission.

The museum is active on social media. Follow on Twitter (@shellmuseum), Instagram (@shellmuseum), and Facebook (/shellmuseum).

For more information, visit [www.shellmuseum.org](http://www.shellmuseum.org) or call 239-395-2233. Daily beach walks are always available and can be reserved by calling the museum.

### **About the Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum**

The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum is the only museum in the United States devoted solely to shells and the living mollusks that create them. Opened in 1995, its mission is to connect people to the natural world through their love of shells. Extensive collections, programs, and expertise inspire learning, support scientific research, and tell the story of mollusks. A world-renowned malacologist, highly trained marine biologists, environmental educators, and passionate volunteers offer visitors from around the world a wealth of knowledge about the scientific, cultural, historical, and culinary

importance of shells. The museum is the leading authority on Sanibel and Captiva shells, with exhibits that include the rare junonias, fig snails, pen shells and more. It also displays some of the largest shells in the world, including the goliath conch, lightning whelk, Atlantic trumpet triton and horse conch. The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum is a registered 501(c)(3) educational nonprofit, accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.

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## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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For advertising inquiries, please contact:

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## **LISTING DESCRIPTION**

The Bailey-Matthews National Shell Museum is the only museum in the U.S. devoted entirely to shells and mollusks, and one of the best things to do on Sanibel Island. It features more than 30 engaging exhibits of stunning shells, showcasing some of the largest and rarest shell specimens in the world, including the goliath conch, lightning whelk and Atlantic trumpet triton, as well as common Southwest Florida shells, fossil shells and more. New in March 2020, “Beyond Shells: The Mysterious World of Mollusks” adds the live animals that create shells to its must-see experiences. New aquariums include live octopuses, giant clams, nautilus, nudibranchs and gastropods, and two 15-foot-long touch tanks let young visitors get their hands wet. For a perfect Sanibel experience, fun daily beach walks can be reserved, and the nonprofit museum’s scientists also conduct research with local mollusk species.