

aqua-notes

An Equal Opportunity Institution

SOLUTIONS

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 4

150 Sawgrass Road
Bunnell, FL 32110
386-437-7464

November, 2014

Mark your calendars...

- Nov 4-20—Florida Master Naturalist Class (Coastal Module). Marine-land. For more information or to register, see www.masternaturalist.com
- More on back page!

Bermuda and hurricanes

Some of you know that I was born and grew up in Bermuda. I've had several people ask how my parents fared this past month (October) with the islands getting hit with both a nasty tropical storm (Fay) and a category 3 hurricane (Gonzalo) within 5 days of each other—they did fine!. Fortunately, Bermudian homes are constructed to withstand hurricanes—most are concrete or limestone buildings with limestone slab roofs. The walls are tied in to underground concrete cisterns, so overall, the structures are very solid. Almost all homes have built-in hurricane shutters that actually work :) Many of the main power and phone lines are underground. The main inconvenience for Bermudians after a storm is a loss of power (which means they cannot pump water), but they all know to fill bathtubs and pots as the storm approaches.



Inside this issue:

Seafood	1-2
Marine mammal strandings	3

M. P. McGuire

Maia McGuire, PhD
Marine Extension Agent

Seafood

There are many health benefits to eating seafood, yet people are sometimes confused about what types of seafood are safe to eat. A 6-ounce serving of seafood provides about one-third to one-half of the average daily recommended amount of protein. The protein in seafood is also easy to digest—seafood has less connective tissue than red meats and poultry. Seafood tends to be low in saturated fats and many selections are rich in long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids, also known as the omega-3s. Despite all of the benefits, the average person in the United States ate only 15.8 pounds of seafood in 2010. During the same time period, consumption of red meat was about 100 lbs, poultry was almost 75 lbs and dairy was over 600 lbs. In fact, Americans eat almost as much watermelon each year as they do fish and shellfish.

(continued on pg. 2)

Seafood (continued from pg. 1)

Dietary Guidelines recommend that Americans, “increase the amount and variety of seafood consumed by choosing seafood in place of some meat and poultry.” Eating about 8 ounces of seafood a week reduces the risk of heart disease, whether people already have heart disease or not. It is recommended that “women who are pregnant or breastfeeding consume at least 8 and up to 12 ounces of a variety of seafood per week” to boost their babies’ eye and brain development. Many people have heard that nearly all fish and shellfish contain mercury. The low levels of mercury found in most seafood species are not a concern for the majority of healthy people. However, there are a few species of fish that contain higher levels that may harm an unborn baby or young child’s nervous system. Therefore, the EPA and FDA advise women who may become pregnant, pregnant women, nursing mothers, and young children to do the following:

1. Avoid eating shark, swordfish, king mackerel, and tilefish (also known as golden bass or golden snapper) since they contain high levels of mercury.
2. Limit albacore (“white”) tuna to 6 oz per week; albacore has more mercury than canned light tuna.
3. Eat up to 12 ounces a week of various fish and shellfish that are lower in mercury, such as shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock and catfish.

Check Florida Department of Health advisories about the safety of eating fish caught in local waters, if you or someone you know goes fishing.

Seafood is required by law to have a country of origin label and state whether it was farm raised or wild caught. Keep in mind it is not required to say whether it was caught/raised specifically in Florida or another state so this is where a consumer will need to follow up with more specific questions. If a product contains the “Fresh from Florida” logo, this means that it was harvested or raised in Florida. While there are specific seasons for many types of Florida seafood that might limit the availability of a product in the fresh form, most Florida seafood can be purchased year round frozen. Just because a product is frozen doesn’t mean it is lower quality. In fact, some seafood products are frozen on the boat to lock in freshness and may actually preserve nutrients and quality better than what you would get in a fresh product. By law, if a product has been previously frozen it must be labeled as such. Products labeled “fresh frozen” indicate the seafood was frozen while it was fresh, in many instances within hours of harvest. Commercial freezers, which operate on a much colder temperature than most home freezers are able to maintain the integrity of products for several months to years. Commercially frozen seafood can be stored in the freezer for up to 6 months. Because stores can buy frozen seafood in bulk, frozen seafood often offers the best value to the consumer.

Seafood, like all raw meat products, needs to be handled properly. Since seafood needs to stay cold and is highly perishable, when shopping, you should purchase seafood last. The employees working the seafood counter should be wearing disposable gloves when handling food and change gloves when doing nonfood tasks and after handling raw fish. Fish should be displayed on a thick layer of fresh ice, preferably in a case or under some type of cover. Keep packages of seafood in plastic bags and place them in your cart so that raw juices from cannot drip onto other foods. Keep seafood chilled until you are ready to prepare it. Fish filets and shrimp should not be refrigerated for more than 1-2 days before being eaten. When preparing seafood, do not prepare other foods on a cutting board or counter that has held raw seafood.

UF/IFAS Extension Sea Grant and Family and Consumer Sciences Extension agents have developed an app (available for both android and Apple devices) to help consumers find answers to many seafood-related questions. You can download the free “Seafood at your Fingertips” app at <https://www.flseagrant.org/seafoodatyourfingertips/>.



Marine mammal strandings



© Garth Mix
www.garthmix.com

Readers may have heard about the Cuvier's beaked whale that stranded near Marineland in early September. For many people, their first reaction may have been, "What kind of whale?" While they can be found in most oceans and seas worldwide (except for polar regions), Cuvier's beaked whales are rarely seen. Most of what we know about them comes from stranded animals.

Cuvier's beaked whales can grow to about 23 feet long. They can weigh as much as 6,800 pounds. Scientists are not sure how long they can live—estimates range from 25 to 60 years. Sometimes called "goosebeak" whales, their jawline is slightly upturned, giving the whale a smiling appearance. The lower jaw sticks out beyond the upper jaw. Males have two small cone-shaped teeth sticking out of the lower jaw—these are often used for fighting. Cuvier's beaked whales use a pair of grooves in their throats to help them suck in their prey. They eat mostly squid and octopus, sometimes fish and crustaceans. They can dive down to 6,200 feet and can hold their breath for up to 95 minutes. Human threats include entanglement in fishing gear, ship strikes and possible trauma from acoustic sources (noise). The whale that stranded locally had plastic bags and braided line in one of its stomachs, so human pollution may have contributed to its death.

In late August, a minke whale was spotted in the Elizabeth River in New Jersey. The whale ultimately died and was found to have been hit by a ship. However, while the ship strike was the official cause of death, biologists quickly realized that the whale was extremely thin and unhealthy. A necropsy revealed a piece of sharply-pointed plastic in the whale's stomach. The plastic had pierced the stomach in several locations. The whale had no food in its digestive tract, and experts estimate that it had not eaten for one to two months prior to its death. If it had not been hit by the ship, the whale would likely have died soon anyway.

Since July 2013, there have been unusually high numbers of bottlenose dolphin strandings on east coast beaches from New York to Florida. Most are dead when found, and many have had lesions on their skin, mouth, joints or lungs. According to NOAA Fisheries, almost 1500 bottlenose dolphins stranded between July 2013 and August 31, 2014. Of these, about 260 have been tested and 250 are suspected or confirmed to have died from a virus called morbillivirus. Of 64 animals tested, 20 contained a bacterium called *Brucella*, which can cause lesions in joints, brain or reproductive organs. A bottlenose dolphin beached itself in Jacksonville on the same day that the whale stranded in southern St. Johns County.

If you find a stranded marine animal, especially a whale, dolphin, manatee or sea turtle dead or alive on the beach, please report it immediately by calling 888-404-3922 (FWCC). Live marine mammals or sea turtles should NOT be pushed back into the ocean. The fact that they have stranded probably indicates that they are in poor health. If pushed back into the water, these animals will likely further exhaust themselves and drown and/or wash ashore in another location. Occasionally a stranded marine animal can be rehabilitated at a licensed facility and released, however in many cases the animal is suffering and ends up needing to be euthanized. There are permitted responders throughout Florida, including the staff at the Georgia Aquarium's Conservation Field Station who will respond to stranding reports and are trained to assess the situation.

Beachgoers should not try and handle stranded animals. Live animals may be thrashing about and could unintentionally harm humans who are too close. Remember that a whale or dolphin's blowhole is actually their nose, so water that is poured over their heads will likely end up in their lungs. If possible, people can help keep stranded animals cool by providing shade or by placing damp towels over the animal's back. However, people need to make their own safety the top priority. Groups of people should be kept back from a stranded live animal, as crowds around it may further stress the animal.

We're now on Facebook—check out facebook.com/NEFLSeaGrant and “like” it to keep informed about coastal topics in the region. Don't have a Facebook account? That's OK—you can view the page without one :)

NE Florida Sea Grant Extension Program
150 Sawgrass Road
Bunnell, FL 32110

Phone: 386-437-7464

Fax: 386-586-2102

E-mail: mpmcbg@ufl.edu

<http://stjohns.ifas.ufl.edu/sea/seagrant.htm>

More “Mark your calendars”

- Nov 15—10am—4pm. Right Whale Festival in Jacksonville Beach. For more information, see <http://www.rightwhalefestival.com/>
- Right whale introductory talks (for right whale volunteers or anyone wanting to know how to spot a right whale during the winter season):
 - Thursday, Dec 4, 1-2:30 pm. Flagler County Public Library, Palm Coast
 - Saturday Dec 6, 10-11:30 am. Ormond Beach Public Library
 - Saturday Dec 6, 3-4:30 pm. St. Johns County Public Library, Anastasia Island.
- Jan 3—2-4:30 pm. Right whale survey training class (required for all right whale volunteer monitors). Whitney Lab Center for Marine Studies, Marineland. For more information about any of the right whale talks or classes, contact Joy Hampp at marinelandrightwhale@gmail.com.
- Jan 16-Feb 20—Florida Master Naturalist Class (Uplands Module). Volusia County. For more information or to register, see www.masternaturalist.com

Please check the calendar at <http://calendar.ifas.ufl.edu> for other environmental education programs around the state.

Aqua Notes is provided as one of the many services relating to educational programs offered by the University of Florida/IFAS cooperative extension service. This publication is available on the Web at <http://stjohns.ifas.ufl.edu>. The use of websites or product names in this publication is not a guarantee, warranty or endorsement of the sites/products named and does not signify that they are approved to the exclusion of others. For more information about this document, contact Maia McGuire at the Flagler County Extension Service at 386-437-7464.

The Foundation for The Gator Nation

An Equal Opportunity Institution