

ASK the AQUARIUM



Q. Scotch bonnets are North Carolina's state shell. Why are they so hard to find?

A. Probably because they live at depths between 200 and 500 feet. Divers and commercial fishermen sometimes find them in more shallow offshore waters – between 50 and 150 feet deep – but these predatory snails are considered deep-water animals. Their lovely shells are quite fragile and seldom make it on shore in one piece.

About 60 different kinds of bonnets exist throughout the world. The one common to our waters is *Phalium granulatum*, ranging from North Carolina west to Texas and south through the West Indies to Brazil.

As mentioned earlier, Scotch bonnets are predators. These slow moving gastropods glide along the ocean floor feeding on sand dollars, sea biscuits, sea urchins and other echinoderms. To feed, they dissolve the hard outer layer of their prey with a secretion containing sulfuric acid. Then they quickly cut an opening through the softened skeleton to expose and eat the flesh. Scotch bonnets are preyed on by crabs that can crush shells, such as stone and blue crabs.

Scotch bonnets breed in spring, with the female depositing egg capsules in clumps or rounded, woven towers up to four or five inches high. Bonnets reach maturity in one to six years.

Designated as North Carolina's state shell in 1965, the Scotch bonnet got its name in part to honor North Carolina's early settlers. Also, its pattern of squares and spiral bands resemble Scottish plaids, and its oval shape resembles woolen caps worn by Scottish peasants.

Beachcombers continually search for unblemished bonnet specimens, but for most beach strollers the shells remain elusive. According to experienced shell seekers, the first few days after a spring storm are best for finding bonnets and, in general, islands and beaches from Ocracoke to Morehead City south are the best hunting grounds. Be sure and look behind dunes, where high tides and storm winds deposit shells, especially on barrier islands such as Cape Lookout, Shackleford and Portsmouth.

Pine Knoll Shores Women's Club

The Pine Knoll Shores Women's Club Board of Directors meeting will be held at 9:00 a.m. March 17 at Town Hall. Any member of the PKS Women's Club is welcome to attend any Board meeting. Kay Howe, our club president, will speak about a bare boat cruise that she and her husband and another couple made in October for 29 days on the Aegean Sea visiting 15 Greek Islands. This will be at our regular meeting at 9:30 a.m. March 24. at Town Hall. Membership is available to any woman living in Pine Knoll Shores and we enjoy having visitors. Cooks Night Out will be March 10 at the New York Deli in Atlantic Beach at 6:00 p.m.. Call Pat Filan for a reservation.

Book Clubs

The Book Clubs and Supper Club meet monthly and are looking for new members.

Between the Bookends will be discussing "Raiders" by William McCloskey at the home of Moni Bottlinger March 13.

The Beach Book Club will be discussing: "The Blind Assassin: A Novel" by Margaret Atwood at the home of Sue Christman.

Military Officers Group Active Here

The many retired military officers in and around Pine Knoll Shores should be aware of the Coastal Carolina Chapter of the Military Officers Assn. of America (MOAA). The organization is the nation's leading association for military officers, with nearly 375,000 members. Membership is open to all active duty military officers and warrant officers, Reserves and National Guard, plus former or retired officers and warrant officers, and surviving spouses.

MOAA is dedicated to preserving the earned entitlements and benefits of members of the uniformed services and their families, and promoting a strong national defense. The Coastal Carolina Chapter meets at 6 p.m. on the third Thursday of January, March, May, September, November and December each year at the Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point. For information call 444-1777 or 636-2913.

Fly Fishing

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fishing. There is Lago Carlotta high in the Andes, where land locked Atlantic Salmon are the target—and a difficult two hour four wheel drive up a true Andean mountain and a several mile hike once there. Another day is a float trip down the beautiful Rio's Casares and Cisnes. Another adventure is a hard four wheel drive into the incredibly beautiful Magdalena Valley with its lakes and creeks containing huge brown trout and involves an overnight cabin stay far away from anyone. Our fishing guides, Sabastian, Jaime and Claudio insure we use the correct fly, the correct presentation and fish the right places. At the estancia, Carlitos caters to our requests

from hot tubs to pisco sours and Marcelo, the owner of the outfitting company, insures all "goes well." Then suddenly it is over. At 2 p.m. we are delivered to the two-engine plane waiting for us at La Tapera's grass strip some 25 kilometers from the estancia. We pray that the one-hour flight to Balmaceda, Chile, over the snow-covered peaks of the high Andes will be safe and smooth. Last year on such a flight we beat out heads on the cockpit ceiling no matter how tight we made our safety belts. This year was a great flight, clear skies and quite smooth. We departed Balmaceda at 4 p.m. and start headed due north to PKS, a trip that would take all night and all the next day.



(L-R) Peter Lennon, Michael Lennon, Richard Seale and Gerry Smith cool off at a 3 pm lunch in a lake high in the Chilean Andes.



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