



Ocean
treasures on
the shore;
nature gives us
to adore.

Atlantic Calico Scallops

WRITTEN BY SAM SCHUNK-PLATENIK

- **Shell Name:** Atlantic calico scallop (*Argopecten gibbus*)
- **Size:** Up to 3 inches in width
- **Exterior Coloration:** A patchwork of pink, red or purple patterns (top); yellow to white (lower)
- **Interior Coloration:** White with brown patches near the hinge and top edge
- **Where to Find:** Along Florida's eastern and western coasts

One of the most recognizable shells found along the shore, scallops are the quintessential seashell. Possessing a unique fan shape, these treasures of the deep are so instantly identifiable, it's no wonder that a well-known petroleum company has used a large scallop, or pecten, shell as its logo since the early 1900s.

According to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the colorful Atlantic Calico Scallop (*Argopecten gibbus*) is present in the coastal waters of the eastern United States from Maryland to Florida, throughout the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, all the way down to Brazil. This marvelous, medium-sized mollusk resembles the more well-known Atlantic Bay Scallop in many ways. Anatomically, the two species are almost identical. Both are bivalves, meaning that they each have hinged shells, and the two halves are cupped. Near the top hinge, their shells extend into "ears," a distinctive feature for all scallops.

An important clue in distinguishing the two species is the coloration of the shell. The common name, 'calico,' alludes to

the scallop's vividly colored shell which, to some individuals, resembled the bright fabric featuring small floral patterns known by that term. While bay scallops may have similar markings, they tend to be more drab, lacking the calico's vibrancy. The top shell of the calico ranges in shade from yellow or pink, and is marked with a patchwork of pink, red or purple blotches that may form stripes on the surface. Its lower shell showcases hues that tend toward a more muted whitish or yellow shade with spots of red or purple. Look inside, and you'll find a white interior with brown patches near the hinge and top edge.

Additionally, calico scallops, which reach maximum shell heights of 1.6 to 2.4 inches, are usually smaller than bay scallops. Although bay scallops are typically associated with shallow seagrass communities, calicos prefer deeper offshore waters and can be found on sandy or shelled bottoms at depths of 300 to 1,200 feet.

Happy shelling!

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