

Fossils at Padre Island

Attempts have previously been made to form field trips to the Big Shell area of Padre Island. However, coordinating all of the variables seems impossible because of the need for 4 wheel drive transportation, weather, high tides, etc. Conditions can change very quickly so advance notice is very short.

Some individuals who have been able to acquire transportation to make the trip individually have voiced disappointment in the lack of fossils or other finds to make the trip interesting and worthwhile. Others have been very happy with their finds. The high tides and shifting sand cover and uncover material continuously so it is always changing. The purpose of this article is to provide information to those who may have the available transportation to make the trip. It is very convenient to Corpus Christi and one of the rare locations available on public land. It requires a 4 wheel drive vehicle. The tide levels are a big factor on when a person can make the trip safely if at all.

The National Park Service has this to say about that area:

Little Shell Beach and Big Shell Beach

Little Shell and Big Shell are located where northerly and southerly long shore currents meet. The northerly current deposits little shells on the beach and the southerly current deposits shells a little bigger on the beach immediately south of Little Shell. Shells found at both locations are usually of very common types. Both beaches tend to have very loose sand making driving normally difficult.

Read more at: <https://www.nps.gov/pais/learn/historyculture/places.htm>

GPS Coordinates – N 27°07.004' W 97°22.499' Little Shell runs from about the 12 to 18 mile marker and Big Shell runs from the 18 mile to the 30 mile.

These are pictures of fossil gastropods (Natica) and sea urchins that were collected at Big Shell.





Natica

Natica had a smooth round shell with a large body whorl, although its spire (set of whorls) was quite small. Informally known as the moon shell, Natica's operculum, which was attached to its foot, was there to close the shell and made it a tight fit. Natica fossils have been found all over the world in marine waters as well as brackish waters and a variety of sea and ocean depths. Natica lives in sand and silt where it preys on bivalve and gastropod mollusks. This is accomplished by drilling a hole in the shell of the prey and then removing the fleshy tissue within using the proboscis. Holes made by Natica are about 1 mm in diameter and countersunk. Although rarely spotlighted as such, Natica is yet another living fossil and boasts a history of more than 390 million years.

Class: Gastropoda
Order: Neotaenioglossa
Habitat: Marine
Distribution: Global
Time Scale: Middle Devonian-Recent