

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed to help you enjoy and learn about the Sarasota Bay area by locating main channels, seagrasses, artificial reefs, aquatic preserves, canoeing and wildlife viewing areas, boat ramps, marinas, restaurants, and fishing piers. Also included is information on bay habitats and wildlife, popular sport fish, boating safety and a resource directory. However, this guide is not intended for navigational purposes.

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The Blueways
Recreational Opportunities
Guide for Sarasota Bay was
produced by the Sarasota Bay
National Estuary Program and
Florida Sea Grant. The Guide is
a companion document to the
Gulf Coast Heritage Trail book,
based guide which promotes a
scenic auto tour and highlights the
region's environment, historical,
and cultural destinations. Another Gulf
Coast Heritage Trail Blueways companion
publication of particular interest is a resource book
titled, "A Historical and Environmental Perspective of
the Boating Geography of Sarasota Bay." If you are
interested in receiving additional publications or would like
to submit comments and inquiries, please contact our office:

**Sarasota Bay National
Estuary Program**
5333 North Tamiami Trail
Suite 104, Sarasota, FL 34234
(941) 359-5841
e-mail: sbncp@segr.net

**SARASOTA
bay**

Recreational Opportunities Around The Bay

SARASOTA BAY BLUEWAYS



ABOUT THE AREA

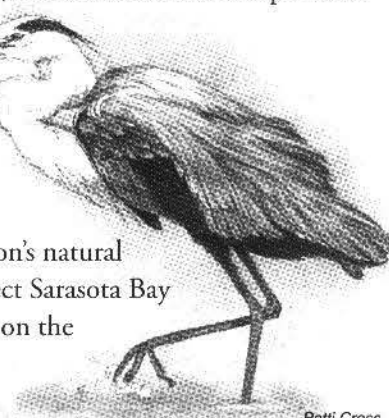
The Gulf Coast of Florida is a tropical paradise best known for its aquamarine waters and white sandy beaches. The area features outstanding fishing, boating and wildlife viewing opportunities.

Sarasota Bay

Sarasota Bay, a small subtropical estuary located on the Southwest Coast of Florida, is bordered by aquatic preserves—Terra Ceia Bay to the north and Lemon Bay to the south. The crown jewel of the area, Sarasota Bay, is classified as an Outstanding Florida Water and an Estuary of National Significance, designated and protected by the State of Florida and by the U.S. Congress. The Sarasota Bay region is home to a wide variety of marine life. The Bottlenose Dolphin is commonly seen throughout the area. The endangered Florida manatee, a subspecies of the West

Indian manatee, also resides in Sarasota Bay. In addition, the Gulf beaches along the Bay's barrier islands support loggerhead turtles and their annual nesting activities. In 1998, 4,538 nests of loggerhead turtles were found in the region. The Bay also supports a delicious array of fish and crustaceans such as Red Drum, Spotted Seatrout, Snook, Flounder, Blue Crab, Pompano, Mullet, Stone Crab and Shrimp. More than 80 percent of the fish we catch for food or fun depend on estuaries for all or part of their lives.

By boating safely and responsibly, and with enhanced awareness of the region's natural resources, you can help protect Sarasota Bay and the sea life that depends on the estuary for its survival.

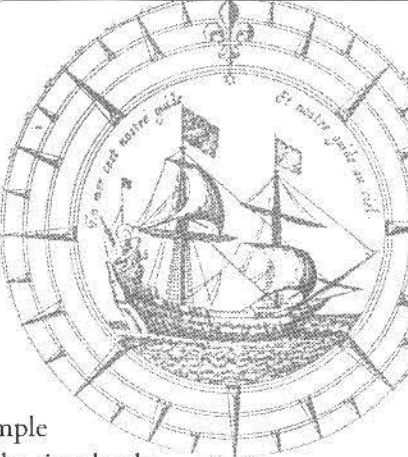


A Little Bit Of History

The rich heritage of Manatee and Sarasota Counties centers around the Manatee River and Sarasota Bay. Burial, midden, and temple mounds located along the river banks and bay shore have provided evidence of human habitation 10,000 to 12,000 years ago. Over the centuries, waterfront locations continued to attract inhabitants. When settlers first arrived in the 1840s, Florida was not yet a state. The territory was populated by scattered fishermen who came from Cuba and established ranchos on the coast for use primarily during the fishing season. Seminole Indians, though restricted by the federal government to interior lands, mingled with the new arrivals.

At its founding in 1855, Manatee County consisted of 5,000 square miles and extended from the Gulf of Mexico to Lake Okechobee and from Tampa Bay to Charlotte Harbor. In the 1870s, the notion of Sarasota Bay as a place for recreation originates. By that time the Webbs (early area homesteaders) were advertising the Webb Resort Hotel at Osprey and seasonal visitors began visiting the local bay area. A variety of schooners, some built locally, were used in the bays. In the early 1920s, all of Florida experienced a period of rapid growth. Within the first five years of that decade, the area's population more than tripled, and Sarasota County broke away from Manatee. Always important industries—agriculture and fishing—eased the counties through the depression of the 1930s.

The region experienced a population explosion after World War II, with the accompanying growth in industry, shopping centers, schools and tourist attractions and accommodations. As they did centuries ago, the scenic and bountiful waters of Manatee and Sarasota still draw new residents and visitors to its beautiful shores.



YOU CAN HELP PROTECT SEAGRASSES!

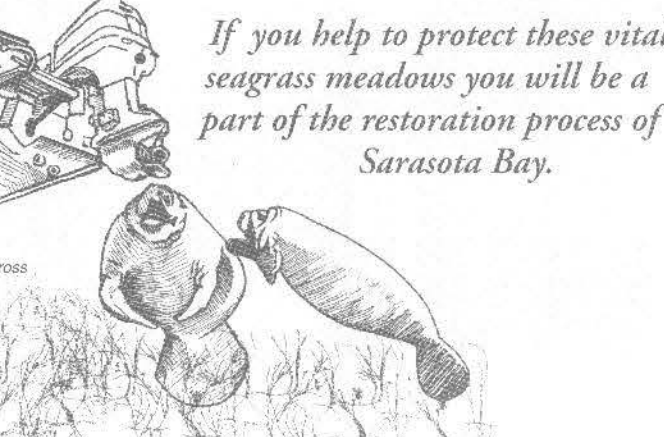
Powerboats can damage seagrass beds. Surveys show almost half of local powerboaters run aground in seagrass beds and spin their propellers which carve out bare, sandy trenches that damage the fragile plants.

Here are some tips to avoid running through seagrass beds with your boat.

- Read the water color!
*Brown, Brown, Run Aground.
Blue, Blue, Cruise On Through.*
- Keep track of the tides. Even at high tides some beds are vulnerable.
- Look for buoys, which mark the edges of some grass beds.
- Read navigation charts. Seagrass is shown as light green; note seagrass coverage in this Sarasota Bay Blueways Guide.
- Read the water. A seagrass bed may appear as a large dark area underwater.

If you do run into a seagrass bed, you will be leaving behind a mud trail where your prop has churned up the bay bottom, clouded the water, and likely cut seagrass roots. It is what you do next that counts:

- Stop the engine.
- Tilt the motor then.
- Pole or walk out of the shallow grass flat.



BIRDS OF THE BAY AREA

Some common birds to this region that you might see include Great Blue Heron, Snowy Egret, Great Egret, White Ibis, Brown Pelican, Osprey, Wood Stork, Roseate Spoonbill, and the endangered Florida Scrub Jay, to name a few. The reverse side of this Sarasota Bay Blueways Guide lists bird viewing opportunities such as bird hot spots and bird rookeries.

Loss and fragmentation of habitat is a threat to all birds and to all the species that inhabit the Gulf Coast region.

If you help to protect these vital seagrass meadows you will be a part of the restoration process of Sarasota Bay.

Please do your part to protect bird habitat!



ESTUARINE HABITATS

Estuaries, where fresh water from rivers and creeks mixes with saltwater from the sea, are also known as "cradles of the sea." Estuaries provide important spawning grounds and nurseries for at least two-thirds of the nation's fisheries and are among the most biologically productive areas in the world. The two most local important Bay habitats are seagrasses and mangroves.

Seagrasses

Seagrass meadows characterize most of the shallow waters of the area. The most common species of grass in the area are shoal grass (*Halodule wrightii*), widgeon grass (*Ruppia maritima*), turtlegrass (*Thalassia testudinum*), and manatee grass (*Syringodium filiforme*).

Seagrass beds are important to estuarine productivity in many ways. They contribute to the nutrient cycle through decomposition of leaf fragments. The grass beds provide protective nursery area for juvenile fish, shrimp, and crabs, and provide a surface for growth of algal epiphytes which serve as food for fish and crustaceans. Manatees feed directly on seagrasses. Seagrass roots also bind soils and reduce erosion and turbidity during strong tidal currents or storms.

Birding Tips

- Enjoy viewing bird rookeries from at least 100 yards away. These rookeries harbor nesting colonies and flocks of feeding birds. Boaters and operators of personal watercraft should slow down in order to reduce wake in these birding areas. Bird islands and mangrove areas are being eroded by boat wakes and boating noise and high speeds are disruptive to the wildlife.
- Report injured seabirds that need assistance. Consult this Sarasota Bay Blueways Guide Resource Directory for contact information.
- Pick up marine debris if you find it and don't discard any fishing line or other trash, which can be lethal to seabirds and other marine life.
- Enjoy the beauty and rare elegance of these magnificent water birds, and remember the best opportunity for viewing is by being quiet and moving slowly.



MANATEES, TURTLES & DOLPHINS

Manatees

The Florida manatee, a subspecies of the West Indian manatee, is Florida's official marine mammal. Florida Department of Environmental Protection officials estimate there are about 2,400 of these gentle, harmless, fascinating mammals living in Florida. These gentle giants can grow to a length of 10 feet and can weigh up to 3,000 pounds as adults. Locally, manatees can be found around the fringes of the Bay from April to December. Their numbers are lowest during January and February, when they leave Sarasota Bay to find warm-water refuges elsewhere at power plants and springs. Their distribution in Sarasota Bay corresponds to areas of good seagrass coverage. Seagrass coverage is denoted on the reverse side of the Sarasota Bay Blueways Guide.

Unfortunately, the leading causes of death among Florida manatees are human-related. These include collisions with boat hulls and propellers, entanglement in float and fishing lines and ingestion of foreign objects, such as garbage thrown from boats. You can be part of the solution to ensure these gentle giants make a comeback in Florida.

HELP SAVE THE MANATEE!

- Observe all manatee regulatory zones and caution areas.
- Stay in designated channels. Channel depth reduces the likelihood of killing or injuring manatees. Use idle speed whenever you are outside channels or in shallow water.
- Avoid shallow seagrass beds, where manatees forage.
- Wear polarized sunglasses to reduce the glare on the water, which will assist you to see manatees.
- If you fish, don't discard fishing lines, hooks or nets in the water. The refuse can harm manatees as well as other

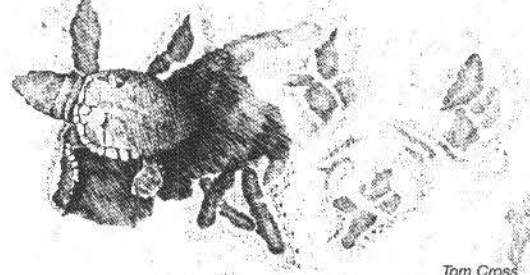
- marine life.
- It is illegal to harass, hunt capture, kill, or feed any marine mammal, including manatees. Anything that disrupts a manatee's normal behavior is a violation, punishable under federal law by up to a \$50,000 fine, one-year imprisonment or both.
- Remember we must learn to peacefully coexist with the wildlife that inhabits our area and state, manatees have just as much right to enjoy the Bay and the Florida waterways as we do.
- Save the manatee...your children, and your children's children, will thank you for it!

Sea Turtles

The Gulf beaches along the bay's barrier islands support loggerhead turtles and their nesting activities during May through October, the nesting season. Five species of sea turtles inhabit the Gulf Coast region: loggerhead, green, hawksbill, leatherback, and Kemp's ridley. However, loggerhead turtles, which are classified as threatened, are the predominant species on our beaches.

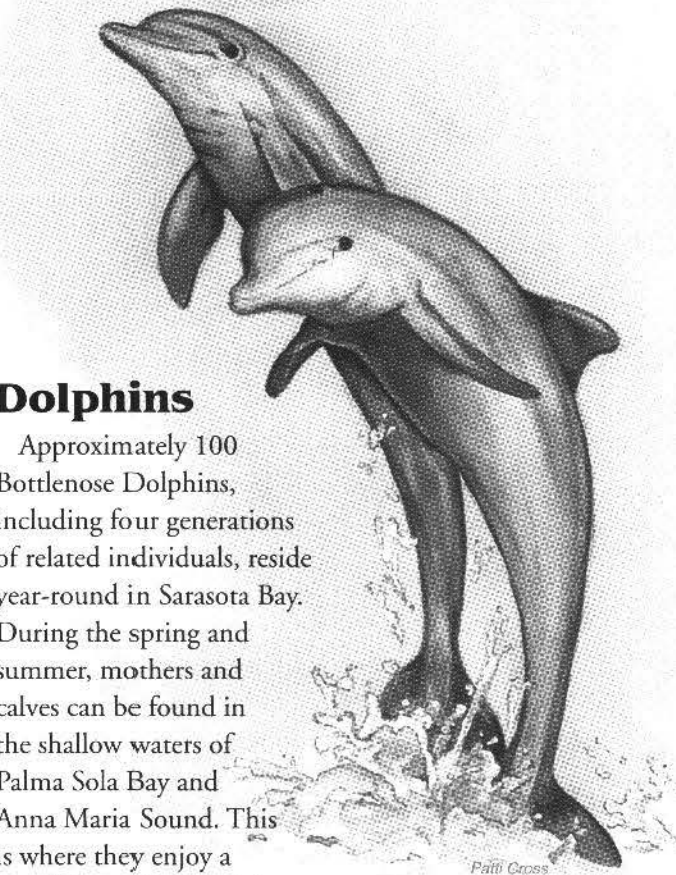
YOU CAN HELP TO PROTECT SEA TURTLES!

- Never approach sea turtles coming ashore or disturb nesting sea turtles or hatchlings. Biologists estimate that only about one out of every 2,500 hatchlings survive to the age of sexual maturity.
- Beachfront property owners should turn off exterior lights in areas where nesting takes place. Bright artificial lights discourage nesting sea turtles from coming ashore and disorient hatchlings, preventing them from reaching the sea.



Dolphins

Approximately 100 Bottlenose Dolphins, including four generations of related individuals, reside year-round in Sarasota Bay. During the spring and summer, mothers and calves can be found in the shallow waters of Palma Sola Bay and Anna Maria Sound. This is where they enjoy a plentiful meal of pinfish, pigfish and striped mullet. Additionally, the newborns are safer in the shallow coastal waters away from such predators as adult Bull Sharks, which swim in the Gulf offshore in the summer. In the fall and winter, dolphins are more frequently found in the passes and along Gulf shorelines. The dolphin population of Sarasota Bay suffers from boating collisions and disturbances and littering of marine debris such as fishing line and plastic bags. These injuries and deaths are senseless and can be prevented. Please follow safety cautions to ensure protection for our region's longterm resident dolphin community.



BOATING SAFETY

Safe, responsible boating on Sarasota Bay and other Florida waterways is every boat operator's responsibility. As more boaters continue to cruise the area's waterways for recreation, safe boating becomes increasingly important to prevent accidents, injury and death. It is the responsibility of the boater to know and observe boating laws. For more information on agencies and organizations that offer safe boating classes and for contact information on receiving boating education material, please see the Resource Directory within this Sarasota Bay Blueways Guide.



Booze & Boats Don't Mix!



BOATING TIPS

- All boats must be registered. Register at your local tax collectors office.
- Learn to swim.
- Wear your Personal Flotation Devices (PFD).
- Don't drink and drive. Studies indicate as many as 50 percent of all boating accidents may be alcohol related.
- Carry a fire extinguisher.
- All recreational boats must be equipped with visual distress signals and a whistle.
- Use navigation lights between sunset and sunrise.
- All vessels should carry an anchor and anchor line of sufficient weight and strength.
- Follow Navigation Rules. Conduct the vessel in a prudent manner and at safe speeds.
- To aid in navigation, use channel markers. Red, green pass in between.
- Make sure your boat and equipment are in good condition.
- Be aware of changing weather conditions.
- Follow all slow speed and minimum wake designations.

KEEP OUR BAYS AND WATERWAYS CLEAN

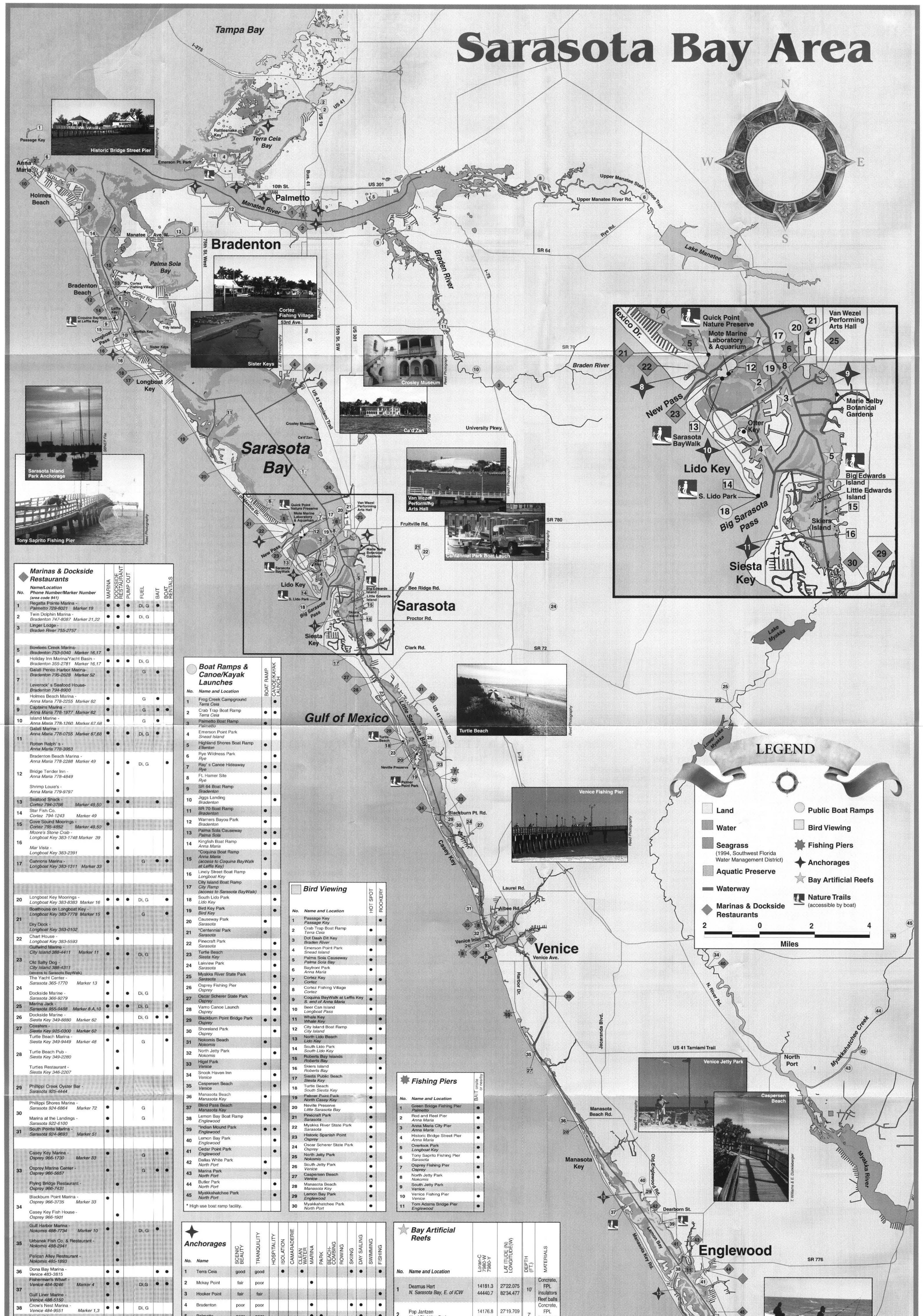
- Stow it, don't throw it. Littering degrades our environment and is unsafe for marine life. Please keep trash from blowing overboard and take in what you take out.
- Be careful feeding us. Don't overfill your tank. Toxic

RECREATIONAL FISHING

COMMON NAME	LEGAL SEASON	HABITAT	FISHING TIPS
FLOUNDER	All year	Channel edges on sandy bottoms, near tidal passes and docks.	Use live shrimp, sand fleas, sardines, pinfish or jigs bounced along bottom as you drift. Minimum size limit: 12"
RED DRUM (REDFISH)	All year	Near docks and pilings, deeper holes and channels during warmest and coolest months; around grassbeds and oyster bars.	Use live shrimp fished on bottom or free-lined, or use soft-bodied jigs bounced slowly on bottom, or small gold spoons. Minimum size limit: 18" or no more than 27". Daily bag limit: one.
SHEEPSHEAD	All year	Near bridges, docks, seawalls and pilings.	Use live shrimp, sand fleas, or hermit or fiddler crabs on small hook. Fish just off the bottom. On the first tug, lower the rod and then strike hard. Minimum size limit: 12"
SNOOK	All year except: Dec. 15-Jan. 31 & June, July, Aug. Closed	Canals, tidal creeks and other deep, warm waters in cool months; tidal passes and the Gulf in warmer months.	Use live pinfish, small mullet, shrimp or sardines free-lined or fished with a bobber or use jigs and minnow-like lures. Beware of the snook's razor-sharp gills. Minimum size limit: 26" or no more than 34". Daily bag limit: 2.
SPOTTED SEATROUT	All year except:	Seagrass beds when water	Use live shrimp or pigfish (grunts)

RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (Patrol) Enforces saltwater fishing and boating laws and regulations. Call to report any manatee harassment, injury or death.	(888) 404-3022
Florida Marine Research Institute Estuarine and marine scientific research; a division of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.	(727) 896-8626
Florida Sea Grant College Program University of Florida Marine Extension Service for educational information on Florida's coastal zone and marine resources.	(352) 392-1837 (941) 742-5980
Hart's Landing A 24-hour hotline for the latest tides and fishing information.	(941) 366-TIDE
Manatee and Sarasota County Environmental Departments Sarasota County Natural Resources Department Manatee County Division of Environmental Management	(941) 861-6230 (941) 742-5980
Manatee, Sarasota and Venice Audubon Society Local chapters of the National Audubon Society.	(941) 364-9212 (941) 388-4441
Note Marine Aquarium and Laboratory An independent, non-profit marine research and education facility. Provides an automatic weather monitoring station for current wind speed and direction, water and air temperature.	(941) 388-1908
NOAA Weather Service Broadcast 24-hour weather and marine forecast.	(813) 645-2506
WX-1 162.500 MHz on VHF marine radio	
Pelican Man's Bird Sanctuary A sanctuary for more than 200 species of injured birds. Contact the sanctuary to report injured wildlife.	(941) 388-4444
Power Squadrons Sarasota Anna Maria Island Venice Local boating organizations promoting and offering the public classes on boating skills and safety.	(941) 386-9532 (941) 792-4467 (941) 365-5-AIL
Sarasota Anglers Club & Sport Fishing Club A family-oriented recreational fishing and community service organization. Sponsors sportfishing tournaments.	(941) 924-9864



	LATITUDE (N) LONGITUDE (W)	DEPTH (FT.)	MATERIALS
3 7	27°22.075 82°34.477	10'	Concrete, FPL insulators Reef balls
8 1	27°19.709 82°33.849	7'	Concrete, FPL insulators Reef balls
6	27°19.727	10'	Concrete, FPL

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