

Subject
Science

The Life of a Queen

Summary
Life History and illustration of the Queen Conch

Overall Expectations.
Students will read a non-fiction text about the Queen Conch.

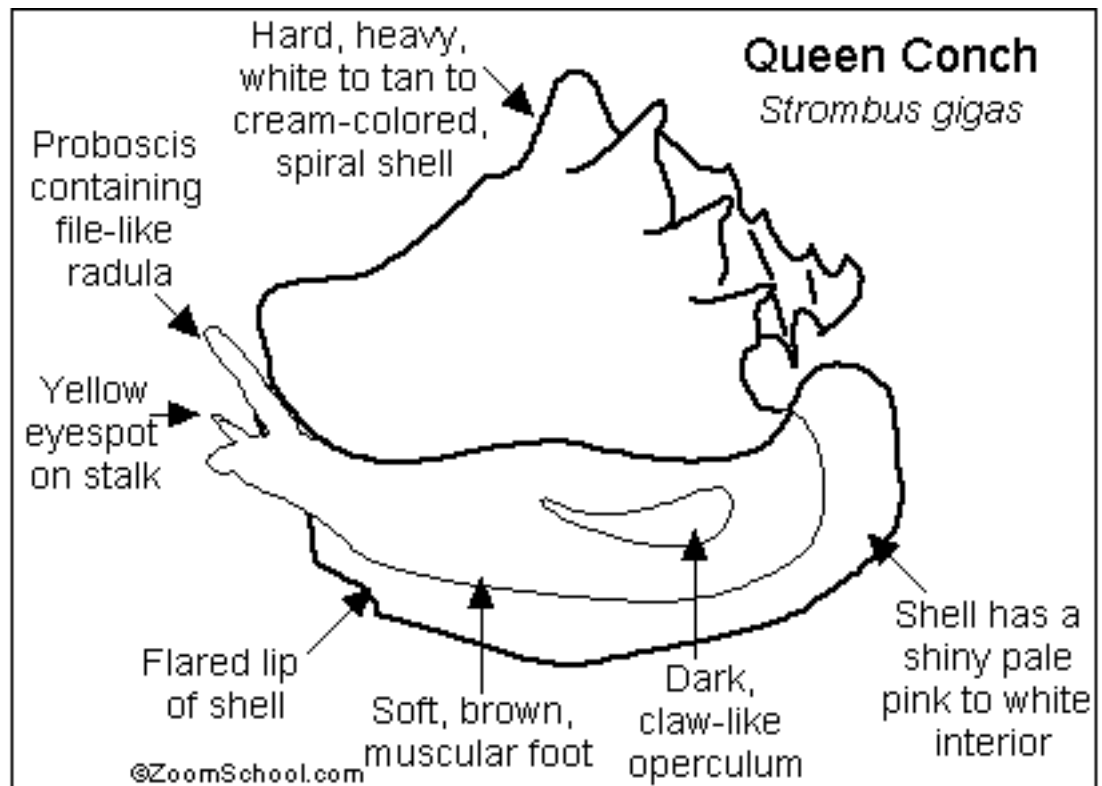
Specific Expectations
Students will read about the Queen Conch.

Students will develop an understanding about the life cycle of the Queen conch and be able to colour the illustration for accuracy.

Author
Kim Saunders

BACKGROUND

Daniel mentioned in his journal that his family catches Conch. The species of conch caught and eaten in the Bahamas is the Queen Conch. Here is a brief description of the life of the Queen and what she looks like.



Adapted from the website Enchantedlearning.com

The Queen: The Queen Conch is a giant *sea snail* and a member of a family of animals called mollusks. Like other members of its family, it carries its home on its back. Because these animals don't have a backbone they are all called *invertebrates*. Can you think of other animals that live in a shell and are *invertebrates*, too? The Queen Conch is found in warm shallow waters in grass beds of the Caribbean Sea and can live from 10 to 25 years.

Their predators: Conchs have a number of predators and are eaten by many animals at different stages of their life. Animals such as Spotted Eagle Rays and southern Rays, Hermit crabs and Spiny Lobsters all feast on very young conch. Smaller predators such as Porcupine fish, Spotted Snails and the Blue Crab also eat the young conch. The Spiny Lobster patiently nibbles the conch shells to pieces trying to eat the prize inside. However, one of the Queen Conch's largest predators in the ocean is the Loggerhead Turtle. With its massive jaws, the Loggerhead turtle crushes the Adult conch shell to feast on the animal inside. Of course the Queen Conch's largest predator on land is people. People love to eat the full grown adult conch.

The shell: The Queen Conch has a beautiful large, spiral shell often lined in pink. The conch's mantle, a thin layer of tissue located between the body and the shell, creates the shell. The conch builds the hard shell from calcium carbonate that it extracts or takes from the sea. The shell is up to 1 foot (30 cm) long. The lip of the shell is flared and there are spines to deter its many predators. Sometimes, you'll find Horseshoe crabs inside empty conch shells.

Their anatomy: The Queen Conch's body is divided into 3 parts - the head, the visceral mass, and the foot (which is small). The conch has two pairs of tentacles on the head; it has a light-sensitive eyespot located on each of the larger tentacles. The smaller pair of tentacles is used for smelling and touching. The small brown *operculum*, which is like a trap door, is located on the foot and looks and works a bit like a claw or a pointed toenail. Young conchs can bury themselves in the sand when they are in danger, using their *operculum*.

Diet: Conches eat grasses, algae, and floating organic debris. They eat using a *radula*, a rough tongue-like organ that has thousands of tiny denticles, tooth-like protrusions that look like a chainsaw.