

Shell Mound Paddle

Shell Mound offers excellent inshore fishing opportunities within the Cedar Key and Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuges. This location consists of ample fishing spots just a short paddle from the launch point which is positioned next to the observation pier at Shell Mound.

Information:

Approximately six miles north of Cedar Key lies Shell Mound, an ancient, Native American shell pile where the Native Americans disposed of empty oyster and clam shells along with other items. Cedar Key's Shell Mound is identified as the Central Gulf Coast's largest shell mound, stretching over an area of five acres and reaching to a height of 28 feet above sea level. Some shells and artifacts sourced from Shell Mound have been dated back as far as 2,500 B.C.

Top Baits:

Top water baits such as the Skitter Walk and Heddon's Super Spook in natural and mullet colors. Popping cork rigged to a dead shrimp tipped jig-head.

Gulp Shrimp

Z Man Paddler baits in white and mullet colors.

Red Fish Magic Spinner Baits

Mullet, Shrimp, Bull Minnows

Yo-Zuri Crystal Minnow Deep Diver (green or blue color)

Length:

3 miles (paddling around Hog Island)

Resources:

Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge

16450 NW 31st Place

Chiefland, FL 32626

Phone: (352) 493 – 0238

Weather, Tides, Wind, Lunar:

https://www.windfinder.com/forecast/cedar_key_daughtry_bayou

<http://fl.usarbors.com/monthly-tides/Florida-West%20Central/Cedar%20Key>

WARNINGS:

Storms can push in quickly from the Gulf onto Shell Mound; paddlers should maintain a keen awareness of the weather around them and utilize weather tracking software such as MyRadar and Windfinder to properly plan their outing on the water. The Shell Mound area is riddled with oyster bars and mud flats where paddlers can quickly become injured or stuck in the mud if they exit their vessel. It is advised to remain in your kayak unless stepping onto a white sand beach. The areas surrounding Shell Mound are very tidally influenced and even the shallowest drafting boats can become stranded on low tide. For this reason, paddlers unfamiliar with the area should head back to the launch point no more than 3.5 hours after high tide to avoid becoming stranded.

Information:

Paddle time from the Shell Mound observation pier, around Hog Island and back will take approximately two hours. Extra time should be allocated for fishing purposes. Changing tides, wind and weather may add additional time to the paddle. This paddle should not be attempted in winds greater than 14 MPH due to the open water exposure of this paddle. Winds out of the east or west are ideal and inexperienced paddlers should not attempt this paddle in winds greater than 6 MPH.

Peak Fishing Times and Areas:

Departing the launch site at Shell Mound, paddlers should head northwest and begin to work their way around Hog island. Fish activity and feeding picks up significantly four hours after low tide. On high tide, look for disturbances in the water where gamefish can be seen ambushing schools of bait close to the grass.

Spot 1: Fish the back bays on the east side of Hog Island, located just west of the launch point. On high tide look for gamefish to be pushed up tight against the grass edges along this eastern side.

Spot 2: Paddling north, fish the thin strands of grass that mark the oyster bars located in the middle portion of hog island off the eastern edge.

Spot 3: Situated to the east of Hog Island's northern, upper 1/3 lies an oyster bar in the shape of a whale tail, try fishing this spot on high tide with cut mullet or live shrimp beneath a bobber or popping cork.

Upon reaching the northern tip of Hog Island, paddlers should turn back south and begin to work their way down Hog Island's western shore. The fishing along this shoreline begins to pick up about half way down the island where the oyster bars become visible. Try fishing the deep pockets that abut these oyster bars while keeping a lookout for transition zones where these deep pockets quickly transition into shallower water. Fish all transition areas that you locate.

Spot 4: Spot 4 marks a deep trough surrounded by shallow oyster bars. This area is a good spot to soak bait because gamefish like to collect in this deep water holding area.

Spot 5: This spot is located just south of Spot 4 and features another deep water holding area.

Spot 6: Schools of redfish like to collect in this area, particularly along the line where the sandy bottom meets the grass flat. The area off the white sand beach is also a great place to cast net mullet and bull minnows for bait.

Spot 7: Spot 7 marks a deep hole where gamefish will congregate on a falling tide to feed on bait that is carried out by the tide. Try fishing this deep pocket on a falling tide with live or cut bait.

Continue to fish the deeper holes that abut the oyster bars along the southern tip of the island before turning back north to head for the launch point. As you work your way back, try casting reaction baits such as a Super Spook from Heddon or a Crystal Minnow Deep Diver from Yo-Zuri to illicit a bite. While paddling back towards the launch point, consider crossing over to the east bank and fishing along this edge. This shoreline boasts a deep edge and a sharp drop-off where gamefish are liable to be laid up anywhere along the grass line.

