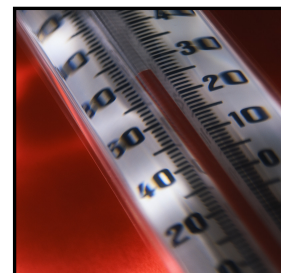


Nature Notes

...from Sharon

Marine Life and Extreme Cold

This edition of Nature Notes is a diversion from the usual; however, it comes from questions at Barefoot Beach Preserve and relates to nature. Did you ever wonder how low water temperatures could affect our marine life and where water temperatures reported on the news are derived? After the reports on a local TV station of local water temperatures dipping down to 48° F, I certainly wondered what would happen to our Southwest Florida marine life and how and exactly where temperatures could be recorded so low. So started my search...



Much marine life that inhabits the tropics and subtropics such as our area can not tolerate extended low water temperatures, especially the young—just as native plants of these areas can not tolerate low air temperatures. This past weekend, we saw numerous marine animals, which could not survive the cold temperatures, brought to shore by the tides. There were reported sightings of various types of marine life, including guitar fish, spotted eel, cow fish, parchment worms in their casings, and even some sipunculid worms, which are one of very few species of non-segmented marine worms. While kayaking, I spotted a snook barely moving at the water surface. Although the water temperatures are now near 60° F, we are seeing increasing results at Barefoot Beach from affects of the prior low temperatures the Gulf endured.

There were such high numbers of affected marine life throughout Florida that, on January 16, 2010, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission enacted a temporary suspension of bag and size limits and general methods of take for saltwater fish. This order will allow people to legally dispose of dead fish from the water and on the shore. This will expire February 1, 2010, unless repealed or extended. See http://myfwc.com/docs/Newsroom/EO_10_02_DeadFish.pdf for details. Due to the prolonged natural cold weather event that caused significant, widespread mortality of saltwater fish, a closure for taking live tarpon, bonefish, and snook has also been ordered throughout Florida. For further information, see http://myfwc.com/docs/Newsroom/EO_10_03_SnookTarponBonefish.pdf. The FWC has taken these actions to address the conservation needs of affected marine fisheries.

Now for where temperatures are derived... Are you aware that NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) has remote stations all over the world that report specific data continually throughout the day? The following are some of the information that remote stations record in real time:

- Water Levels
- Wind speeds
- Air temperature
- Water temperature
- Barometric pressure

In most cases, the information is relayed to and recorded by NOAA via satellite. There are around 30 stations in the region designated as “Gulf of Mexico–Eastern” that covers our area. The station in Collier County nearest Barefoot Beach is at Latitude: 26° 7.9' N. Longitude: 81° 48.4' W, which is at the Naples Pier and was established March 21, 1992. There is a station in Fort Myers at Latitude: 26° 38.8' N Longitude: 81° 52.2'. The present installation was established January 31, 1998. NOAA also has partners that provide data from individual sites. In the Gulf of Mexico—Western Region, there are also data “buoys” that record information far off shore within the Gulf.

If you would like to check out the information being reported at the Naples station, just go to the link <http://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/geo.shtml?location=8725110>. For Fort Myers, go to this link: <http://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/geo.shtml?location=8725520>.