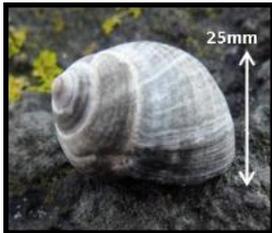


Seashell ID Guide



Use this handy guide to Scottish seashells to identify the species you find while exploring rockpools and the strandline of your local beach.



Common periwinkle (*Littorina littorea*)

Description: Shell with pointed whorls at side. Dark grey coloured with fine lines visible. About 2.5 cm high

Where found: On rocks, stones and seaweed. Feeds on algae and seaweed.

Similar species: The Small periwinkle (*Littorina neritoides*)- is smaller (about 0.5 cm high), smooth, blue-black and found further away from water. It feeds on lichens



Flat periwinkles (*Littorina obtusata*)

Description: Flattened whorled shell, various bright colour variations. Thickened opening of shell. About 1 cm high

Where found: Anywhere with brown seaweeds. Feeds on brown seaweed.

Similar species: The Open-mouthed flat periwinkle (*L. fabalis*) looks very similar, but generally the opening/ aperture of the shell is wider than the diameter of the shell whorl.

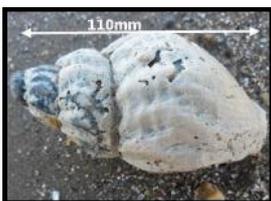


Common mussel (*Mytilus edulis*)

Description: Dark blue/ purple bivalve shell (occasionally dark brown). Length and shape can vary, but generally grow up to 10 cm (although 20 cm possible!).

Where found: Common around all British coasts, in large groups on rocky shores, attached to rocks, piers and in crevices. Filter feeder.

Similar species: The Mediterranean mussel (*M. galloprovincialis*) is similar, but only in south of England and Wales

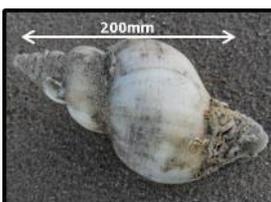


Common whelk (*Buccinum undatum*)

Description: A large yellow-brown whelk (up to 11 cm) with a spire of eight whorls with a distinctive ribbed surface. It's spongy egg mass can often be found washed-up on the shore.

Where found: Common around all British coasts. Carnivorous, but mostly scavenges on carrion.

Similar species: The Netted dog whelk (*Hinia reticulata*), Thick-lipped dog whelk (*Hinia incassata*) and Small dog whelk (*Hinia pygmaea*) have ribbed shells, but are all smaller (up to 3 cm) with thickened conical shells.



Red whelk (*Neptunea antiqua*)

Description: A large white/ pale coloured whelk (up to 20 cm in length) with red-brown colour around opening. Shell smooth with, rounded, finely-grooved whorls coming to a point.

Where found: Common around the coasts of Scotland. Carnivorous, feeding on worms and bivalves, but will also eat carrion.

Similar species: Other smooth whelks tend to have more flattened or less rounded whorls.

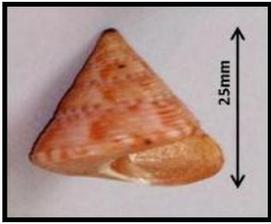


Dog whelk (*Nucella lapillus*)

Description: Small whelk (up to 4 cm) with smooth rounded whorls. Colours vary from white to dark brown with or without stripes.

Where found: On rocky shores. Feeds barnacles and mussels.

Similar species: None



Painted topshell (*Calliostoma zizyphinum*)

Description: Perfectly conical-shaped shell. Colour varies but usually pink-orange. Up to 3 cm high.

Where found: On rocky shores. Feeds on algae growing on rocks.

Similar species: None



Grey topshell (*Gibbula cineraria*)

Description: Shell with blunt conical whorls. Grey or yellowish with thin greyish-brown bands. About 1.3 cm high

Where found: On rocky shores, stones and seaweed. Feeds on algae.

Similar species: None

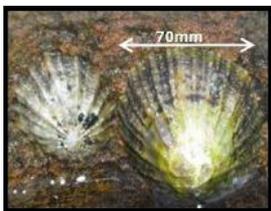


Flat or Purple topshell (*Gibbula umbilicalis*)

Description: Rounded shell with blunt conical whorls, more flattened than Grey topshell. Yellow - greenish colour with thick purple-red bands. About 1.3 cm high

Where found: On sheltered rocky shores, stones and seaweed. Feeds on algae.

Similar species: None

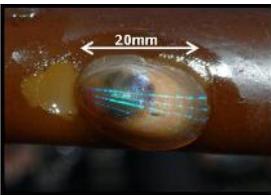


Common limpet (*Patella vulgata*)

Description: Steeply conical shell with rough ridges. Green-brown colour with rough ridges. Inside of empty shell greenish-grey. Up to 6 cm across and 3 cm high.

Where found: On rocks and stones. Feeds on algae on rocks.

Similar species: The China limpet (*Patella ulysiponensis*) is less steeply conical with a glossy white inside the empty shell. The Black-footed limpet (*Patella depressa*) is flattened and grows up to 3 cm across. The living creature has a dark greenish sole to the foot with pale tentacles.

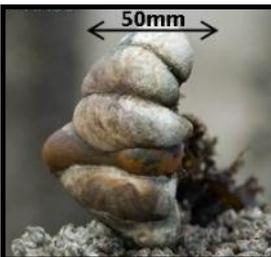


Blue-rayed limpet (*Patella pellucida*)

Description: Distinctive flattened limpet. Shell orange-brown with 'rays' of electric blue. Up to 2 cm length.

Where found: On large kelps, where it feeds.

Similar species: None



Slipper limpet (*Crepidula fornicata*)

Description: Invasive non-native from America. Low conical shell up to 5 cm in length and 2.5 cm high. Forms stacks of individuals, the largest at the bottom is female and the smallest at the top is male.

Where found: On hard rocky or muddy shores. Filter-feeder.

Similar species: None



Common cockle (*Cerastoderma edule*)

Description: Oval white bivalve shell with around 24 ridges. Each half of full shell (valves) equal in size. Up to 5 cm in length.

Where found: On sandy shores. Burrows into sand and siphon feeds on plankton.

Similar species: The Lagoon cockle (*Cerastoderma glauccum*) is similar, but mostly on the south coasts of Britain and saline lagoons in the Western Isles. One edge (posterior) is straightened rather than rounded, giving it an angular shape.



Spotted cowrie (*Trivia monacha*)

Description: Small egg-shaped shell flattened underneath. Shell with many ridges and three dark spots. Up to 1.2 cm in length.

Where found: On rocky shores. Predator of seasquirts.

Similar species: The Arctic cowrie (*Trivia arctica*) is slightly smaller (1cm) and lacks the dark spots



Pelican's foot (*Aporrhais pespelecani*)

Description: Small pale, pointed shell with up to 10 whorls with thickened ridges. Distinctive flared-lip with up to 5 projecting blunt lobes (often worn) resembling a birds-foot. Up to 4 cm.

Where found: Sandy shores. Feeds on algae and detritus.

Similar species: The De Serre's pelican's foot (*Aporrhais serresianus*) has fewer whorls in shell (up to 8) and flared-lip with narrow pointed lobes.

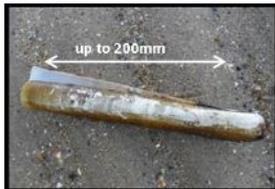


Curved or Common razor shell (*Ensis ensis*)

Description: Slender razor shell with both sides evenly curved. One end truncated and other rounded. Up to 13 cm long.

Where found: Lives in burrows in soft sands. Feeds on plankton and debris using a siphon.

Similar species: *E. arcuatus* grows to 15 cm with one long edge straight and the other curved. *E. directus* is an invasive alien, broader and evenly curved along both edges with truncated ends.



Straight or Pod razor shell (*Ensis siliqua*)

Description: Large razor shell with both sides straight. Up to 20 cm long.

Where found: Lives in burrows in soft sands. Feeds on plankton and debris using a siphon.

Similar species: The Grooved razor shell (*Solen marginatus*) grows to 12 cm with parallel straight edges and distinctive grooved-lip at the top of each half-shell (valve)



Tower or Auger shell (*Turritella communis*)

Description: Elongated, pointed shell with about 20 whorls sculptured with 3 to 6 bold growth lines. Colour varies from red-brown to yellow or white. Mouth opening relatively small and concave. Up to 5.5 cm in length.

Where found: On sandy shores. Filter-feeds on fine particles of debris and algae.

Similar species: None

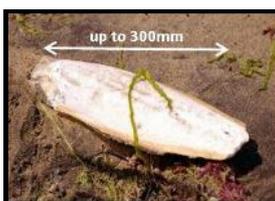


Queen scallop (*Aequipecten opercularis*)

Description: Thick oval shell with around 20 bold ridges. Both half of the shell (valves) are concave. Generally pinky-red colour. Up to about 9 cm diameter. Can actively swim by 'shell-clapping' to avoid predators such as starfish.

Where found: Generally widespread around all coasts.

Similar species: The King or Great scallop (*Pecten maximus*) has 15-17 bold ridges with the right valve concave and the left valve is flat.

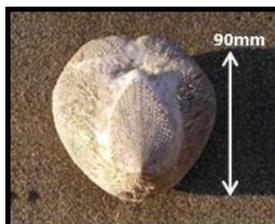


Cuttlefish bone (*Sepia officinalis*)

Description: The internal shell or cuttlebone of the Common cuttlefish (*Sepia officinalis*), is often washed ashore. Up to 30 cm in length.

Where found: Tends to be found on sandy shores. Cuttlefish mainly feed on crabs and other crustaceans

Similar species: The cuttlebone of the Elegant cuttlefish (*Sepia elegans*) is smaller and tapered, appearing almost arrowhead-shaped at the rear end. Up to about 6 cm in length.



Sea potato shell (*Echinocardium cordatum*)

Description: The internal shell of the Sea potato heart urchin is brittle and brown. The living creature is covered in a dense mat of yellow spines. Up to 9 cm in length.

Where found: Sheltered, sandy shores. The living Sea potato is a burrower and feeds on small particles of debris collected using its tube feet.

Similar species: None

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