

DISCOVER THE

Sheppey Shoreline



**A family guide to the
wildlife that can be found
on the island's beaches**

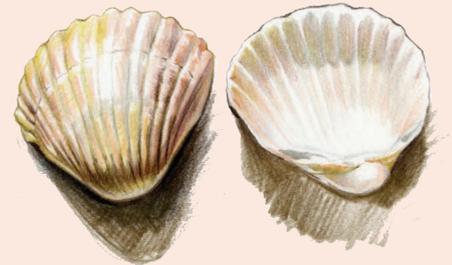


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Introduction

The Isle of Sheppey's beaches provide wonderful opportunities, to discover some of the impressive marine and birdlife found along its shoreline. This short guide will help you to find out more about some these inhabitants and where you might come across them. So if you don't know your Horn wrack from your Bladder wrack, remember to take it with you the next time you head to the beach and see what you discover, remembering to follow our Seashore Code.



glossary

Marine plants and animals

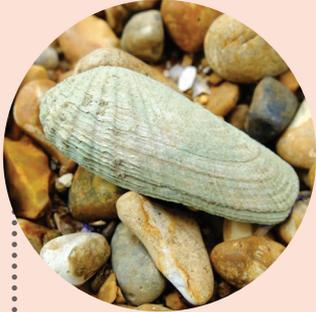
- Bryozoans** Microscopic creatures that live in colonies in the water.
- Crustaceans** Marine creatures with a hard shell and several pairs of legs, such as crabs, lobsters and shrimp.
- Fronds** The leaf like part of a seaweed.
- Molluscs** Creatures that have a soft body, such as a snail or mussel. Both of which have a protective hard shell.
- Plankton** Plants and animals that are carried along by the sea's currents.
- Siphon** A tube into which water either flows in or out of.

Features

- Groynes** Barriers (usually wooden) built out into the sea to control erosion.
- Mudflats** Stretches of muddy land, revealed at low tide.
- Rockpools** Pools of water between rocks at the edge of the sea, covered at high tide.
- Strandline** A line usually of seaweed and litter washed up the beach, marking the previous high tide.



Strandline



● **Common piddock shell** (up to 15cm) A clam-like shellfish that burrows into chalk and sometimes wood, where it spends the rest of its life.



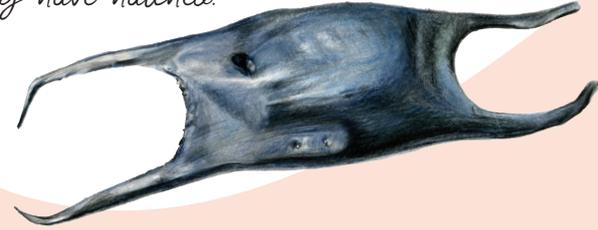
● **Bladder wrack** (90cm) Olive-brown in colour, this seaweed is the one most commonly associated with the strandline. Its branching fronds have pairs of spherical air-filled 'bladders' along their length.



Ringed Plover (18-20cm)

A small wading bird with a distinctive black and white pattern around its head and breast. Often seen running in short bursts along the waters edge.

Mermaids Purse (sizes vary)
These are the egg cases of dogfish, skates and rays, which often wash up on the beach after the young have hatched.



● **Razor shell** (sizes vary) Long and narrow, resembling an old cut throat razor, they live buried upright in soft sand where their siphons poke just above the surface to catch plankton.



Flora wrack (6-20cm)

The remains of a colony of tiny creatures known as Bryozoans. When still fresh they smell of lemons.

● Slipper limpet

(5cm) Introduced into Britain in the 19th century, they are conical in shape and usually found in curved chains or stacks made up of several individuals.



● Common Whelk

(up to 11cm) A large edible sea snail, whose empty shell is often used by hermit crabs as a home.



● Whelk Eggs

Laid by the Common whelk, these clumps of spongy egg cases are similar in appearance to bubblewrap. Baby whelks are cannibals and will often eat their brothers or sisters. They were once collected by mariners and used in a similar way to modern day sponges to clean themselves.

Netted Dog Whelk

(3cm) Much smaller than the common whelk, this meat eating sea snail lives beneath the sandy seabed, emerging to eat dead fish, crabs and other creatures.



The Isle of Sheppey Beaches



Rockpools

● Beadlet anemone

(5cm) Named after the band of beads around the top of its body, most are individuals are rusty red but can also be green, brown or orange. Its tentacles retract when out of the water and it can resemble a blob of jelly.



Common Gobi Fish (6-7cm)

A small fish, grey or sandy colour with dark patches. They live in shallow inshore waters, often getting trapped in rock pools.

Common Mussell

(6cm) Sometimes known as the blue mussell, owing to its colouring. Its shell is fan shaped and it uses fine strands known as byssus threads, to anchor itself to rocks.



● Brittle star

(10cm) Related to the starfish, they have a small central disc with long slender arms which are easily broken off, hence their name.

You'll find
rockpools at
Minster

Shore crab (8cm)

Probably our most common crab, with a roughly heart shaped shell and five teeth either side of its eyes. Usually greenish in colour it can also be brown or red.



● Acorn Barnacle

(up to 2cm) The most common barnacle, it lives attached to hard surfaces such as rocks, boats, groynes and even other animals. It is usually grey-white in colour with a diamond shaped opening on the top.



Mudflats

● Sea Lettuce

(100cm) A common seaweed often found attached to rocks in sheltered shores. As its name suggests, it resembles a lettuce and is used in soups and salads in some countries.



Pacific Oyster

(up to 30cm)

An invasive non-native oyster that is also a popular seafood. Its shell is off white to yellow or bluish grey in colour, often with deep purple patches, that varies in both size and shape.



Common Cockle

(4.5cm) Commonly found in estuaries, it lives between the high tide and low tide mark. Its shell is ridged and thick, usually off white in colour or sometimes yellowish brown.



● Blow lugworm cast

These worms live in a u shaped burrow, about 30cm beneath the sand. The almost walnut whipped shpaed cast found on the surface, is the debris from their excavated tunnel.



● Redshank (28cm)

A common wading bird, known for its bright red legs. On the shore, they hunt for molluscs and crustaceans by probing their bills into the soft mud. The word 'shank' is old English for leg.



● Common Periwinkle

(3cm) A small edible sea snail with black or dark-grey brown and sometimes banded shell.

Oytercatcher (45cm)

A black and white wading bird, with a distinctive bright orange bill and red eyes. Despite their name, their food mainly consists of mussels, cockles and worms. They also have a very distinctive 'peep' or 'k-peep' alarm call.



Seashore Code

- Be gentle with any creatures that you find and if you pick any up, return them carefully afterwards.
- Give feeding or resting birds space
- Always take your litter home and recycle it where possible
- Don't pull seaweed off the rocks
- Keep an eye on the tide, so that you don't get cut off
- Only swim where and when it's safe to do so and never on your own
- Avoid getting too close to the cliffs
- Keep away from soft mud
- Keep dogs under close control
- Wash your hands before you eat anything

Useful contacts

Emergencies
999 (includes coastguard)

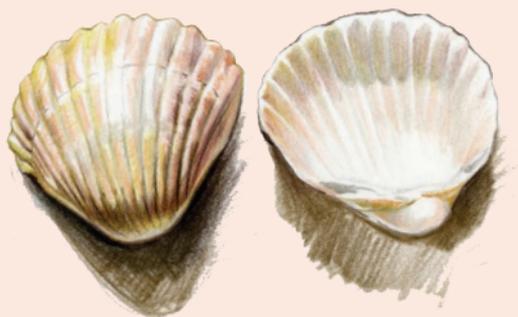
Non-emergencies
Kent Police **101**

Stranded marine mammals/injured birds
Kent Wildlife Rescue Service
07824 893399 (24 hours)
Record: *Take a photo if possible, location, date and size.*

Marine mammal sightings

Kent Seawatch -
Jon Bramley:
07810 278373 or
01227 765269
(phone or text)
jonathan.bramley@btopenworld.com
Record: *Species, location, date and time.*

Pollution
HM Coastguard - oil at sea:
01304 210008
Environment Agency -
shoreline pollution:
0800 807060
Record: *Take a photo if possible, location, time and date.*



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