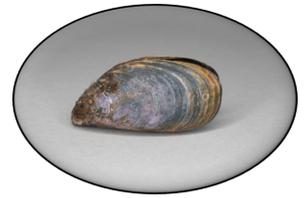
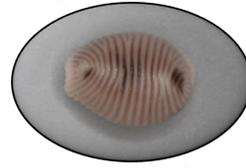


# Orkney Sea Shells

Marine molluscs are a large family of invertebrates that live in our oceans and seas. There are many mollusc species that can be found around Orkney's coast and their shells often wash up on the beaches across the islands. The most common of these fall into two categories, gastropods and bivalves.

The gastropods are snail-like animals with a single shell. The bivalves can be recognised by their two part shells known as valves which are connected by a central hinge. Most seashells are the hard, protective outer layer that protects the mollusc within.

The shells in this guide are those which appear on Orkney's beaches most frequently. Happy hunting!



Arctic cowrie & spotted cowrie

*Trivia arctica* (left) & *Trivia monacha* (right)

Groattie buckie

**Colour:** Pale pinks and whites. *Trivia monacha* 'the spotted cowrie' has up to three dark spots along the back of the shell, while *Trivia arctica* does not.

**Habitat:** Alive, the animals are often found on the lower shore or in the sublittoral zone around sea squirt colonies. The shells can be found washed ashore on rocky coasts most often on the strandline.

Common mussel

*Mytilus edulis*

Craa shell / crow mussel / krane / kraeno

**Colour:** Navy blue or brown.

**Habitat:** Lives in sheltered areas in large communities. Often connected to a hard surface by the protein threads it creates. Shells can be found washed ashore on most beaches.



Common limpet

*Patella vulgata*

**Colour:** Various shades of grey and brown.

**Habitat:** The living animal can be found attached to rocks in the intertidal zone. The shells can be found on most stony beaches.



Flat periwinkle

*Littorina obtusata*

**Colour:** Yellows, browns and oranges, often with a thick spiralling stripe or a delicate chequered pattern.

**Habitat:** Lives in areas around certain brown seaweeds such as knotted wrack, toothed wrack and bladder wrack that live in the middle shore. The shells can be found on most stony beaches.



Grey top shell

*Steromphala cineraria*

Leddie whelk / silver willie

**Colour:** Grey with a tessellating pattern.

**Habitat:** Found around the lower shore around various seaweeds and under rocks. Can also be found in tidal rock pools.



Edible periwinkle

*Littorina littorea*

Buckie / tangy buckie

**Colour:** Grey with spiralling darker bands.

**Habitat:** The living animal can be found attached to rocks from the upper shore down. The shells can be found on most stony beaches.



Queen scallop

*Aequipecten opercularis*

Gimmer shell

**Colour:** Whites, pinks, yellows, oranges and browns. Often with darker concentric bands.

**Habitat:** Can be found between tide marks on fine sands and gravel but more often at approximately 100m offshore. They are common but the shells can be hard to find washed ashore.



Painted top shell

*Calliostoma zizyphinum*

Sholtie

**Colour:** Ranges from pinks to yellows to purples. Often has darker coloured vertical stripes.

**Habitat:** Can be found living from very shallow depths to 300m on seaweed covered rocks. Shells can be found



Common whelk

*Buccinum undatum*

Cod buckie / slavery buckie

**Colour:** Grey or brown.

**Habitat:** Mostly a subtidal species. The shells can often be found on most beaches.



Netted dog whelk

*Tritia reticulata*

**Colour:** Dark reddish brown.

**Habitat:** A burrowing species often found on rocky shores but is also found in some sandy conditions. The shells can be found on most beaches but not as frequently as other dog whelks.



### Blue rayed limpet

*Patella pellucida*

**Bishop / lady limpet / mary shell**

**Colour:** Pale semitranslucent yellow with bright iridescent blue stripes.

**Habitat:** This species lives on the fronds of brown seaweeds like thongweed, toothed wrack and false Irish moss. The shells can be found on the strandline on most rocky shores.



### Pellucid limpet

*Patella pellucida*

**Colour:** Pale yellows and browns.

**Habitat:** This species lives on the seaweed holdfast of brown seaweeds, like thongweed, toothed wrack and false Irish moss. These shells can often be found on the strandline of rocky shores.



### Thin tellin

*Macomangulus tenuis*

**Colour:** Ranges from pale pinks to yellows and whites.

**Habitat:** Lives in fine sands around the middle shore into the sublittoral zone. Their shells can be found on both rocky and sandy beaches.

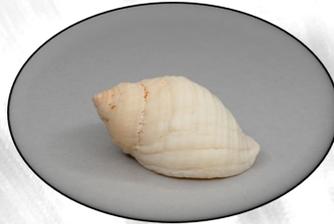


### Common pelican's foot

*Aporrhais pespelecani*

**Colour:** Sandy yellow.

**Habitat:** The living animal is only found in the sublittoral zone on silts and muddy sands. The shells occasionally wash up on stony shores.



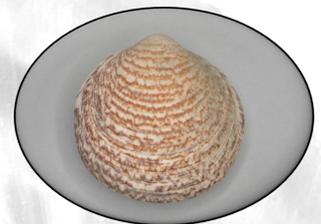
### Dog whelk

*Nucella lapillus*

**Cattie-buckie / katty whelk**

**Colour:** Ranges from whites, greys and browns to purples, oranges and pinks. Often they have thick coloured spiralling bands.

**Habitat:** This animal can be found attached to rocks between the high and low tide lines. It often lives in and around other communities of molluscs such as limpets and periwinkles, which are the dog whelk's source of food. Shells can be found on most rocky shores.



### Dog cockle

*Glycymeris glycymeris*

**Colour:** White or off-white with a tessellating in browns, yellows or purples.

**Habitat:** Burrows to shallow depths in the fine sands approximately 100m offshore. Found on most beaches.



### Striped venus

*Chamelea striatula*

**Colour:** Off-white, pale brown or pale pink.

**Habitat:** Lives partially burrowed into sands and silts from the lower shore down. Can be found on most beaches.



### Auger shell

*Turritellinella tricarinata*

**Witches hats / hornies**

**Colour:** Pale brown and off-white.

**Habitat:** Lives in muddy, sandy sediments on the sea floor filtering seawater for food. The shells can be found on the strandline, often in the same places you would find cowries.



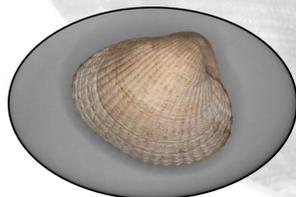
### Razor clam

*Ensis ensis* (above) & *Ensis siliqua* (below)

**Spots**

**Colour:** Brown that peels off to white.

**Habitat:** Lives in large communities burrowed into sands. Most commonly found on sandy beaches though occasionally on rockier shores.



### Common cockle

*Cerastoderma edule*

**Colour:** White, greyish or pale brown.

**Habitat:** Burrows to a shallow depth in the intertidal zone on sands and silts. Shells most frequently found on sandier beaches but are present on rockier shores.

