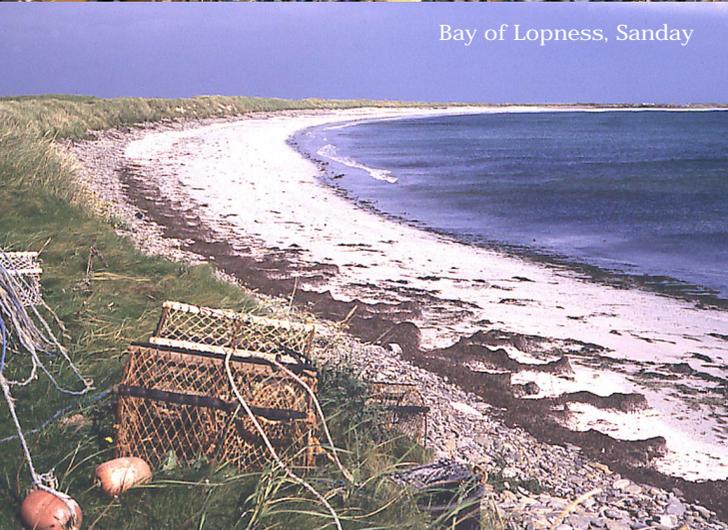




Newark Bay



shell sand



Bay of Lopness, Sanday

finding seashore animals

- Look carefully amongst seaweed
- Lift stones and look underneath - but always replace rocks in the same position and the same way up
- Sit quietly and watch

seashore code

- Life on the shore is fascinating to look at, but we also need to treat it with respect
- Watch shorelife without disturbing it
- If you really want a closer look, collect one animal carefully and place in a bucket of seawater for a short time only
- Return sea creatures to the spot where you found them
- Don't pull shells like limpets off the rocks
- Protect animal's homes. If you lift rocks or move seaweeds, replace them carefully the way you found them
- Don't pull seaweeds off the rocks, there is usually loose weed around
- Don't take creatures home in a bucket, they won't live long
- Only take home empty shells
- Leave bird corpses on the beach, they are counted in a monthly beached bird survey

- Take care on slippery rocks and seaweed
- Be aware of the incoming tide
- Watch out for waves
- Flotsam and jetsam washed up on the beach can be dangerous - leave well alone

please remember

- To take care on cliffs - they can be dangerous
- To avoid disturbing nesting birds
- To keep dogs under control at all times
- To take your litter home with you
- Not to pick wild flowers
- Respect private property



photography: SNH, RSPB, Richard Welsby design and illustration: Iain Ashman



cover images: top Dingtjeshowe bottom dunes at Dingtjeshowe



find out more about our rich and varied wildlife



beaches to visit

on the mainland

- 1 Brough of Birsay - HY 243 284 - a mixture of sand and rock and a causeway to the Brough make this an excellent shore to visit. Many shells get washed up below the Brough, look for grottie buckies (cowries) here. Access - parking adjacent to the beach, picnic area.
- 2 Skail, Sandwick - HY 235 194 - wide sandy bay near Skara Brae. Access - car park close to the beach, toilets, disabled parking and toilets, top of beach has large pebbles to walk over.
- 3 Warebeth - HY 234 086 - sandy and rocky beach near Stromness. Access - track along the shore from Stromness, or car park close to the beach. Toilets.
- 4 Waulkmill Bay - HY 381 065 - gently shelving beach, good for swimming. Look out for potato urchins and colourful thin tellins. Salt marsh at the back of the beach. Access - 2 parking areas, one with steep steps down to the shore, the other a narrow path.

- 5 Evie Sands - HY 376 264 - very good shell beach. Look out for Faroese sunset shell, tower shell and 'grottie buckie' (cowrie). Access - use access road to the Broch of Gurness, limited parking in layby near the beach, or park at the Broch.
- 6 Scapa Bay - HY 440 088 - sandy beach close to Kirkwall. Access - parking adjacent to beach, toilets, picnic area. Also cliff walk from west end of bay.
- 7 Inganess Bay - HY 475 087 - another beach close to Kirkwall. Access - parking adjacent to the beach, picnic area, also a footpath through wetlands and along a burn.
- 8 Newark Bay - HY 571 042 - south facing bay in Deerness. Access - car park close to beach, picnic area. Also coastal path to Aikerskaill.
- 9 Dingieshowe & St Peter's Pool - HY 548 034 2 bays on each side of a narrow isthmus. Dingieshowe is sandy and backed by sand dunes, while St Peter's Pool is muddier, with lots of bivalve shells and teeming with wading birds at low tide. Access - car park adjacent to beach, toilets.
- 10 Glimps Holm - HY 474 987 - steeply shelving beach close to the third Barrier. Good view of block ships. Access - parking area close to beach at each end.

- 11 Fourth Barrier Beach - ND 479 953 - extensive sand spit at low tide, steeply shelving, blockships. Access - car park close to beach, toilets.
- 12 Sands of Wright - ND 424 935 - a sandy beach to explore in South Ronaldsay. Access - parking, picnic area and toilets close to the beach.

on the isles

- 13 Hoy - Rackwick is a beautiful beach noted also for its colourful stones
- 14 Shapinsay - Veantrow Bay and Bay of Sandgarth
- 15 Stronsay - 3 large sandy bays give Stronsay its shape, all are worth visiting - Rothiesholm or Bu Sands, St Catherine's Bay and Mill Sands. Rothiesholm is very good for shells.
- 16 Sanday - this island lives up to its name and has numerous lovely sandy bays. Some of the best and most easily accessible are: Backaskaill, Tresness and Newark, Lopness and Whitemill Bay.
- 17 Eday - Sands of Doomy and Mussetter and the Bay of London
- 18 North Ronaldsay - Nouster Bay and Linklet Bay
- 19 Papa Westray - North and South Wick, white sand bays and good places to see seals
- 20 Westray - Grobust and Sand o' Gill near Pierowall
- 21 Rousay - Saviskaill Beach is a sheltered bay with a nearby seal haul-out site.



Sand and Rock
Many of the sandy beaches mentioned in this leaflet also have rocky areas - see our 'Rocky Shores' leaflet to find out about life on the rocky shore.

marram grass



bird's foot trefoil



heart's ease pansy



cut trough shell



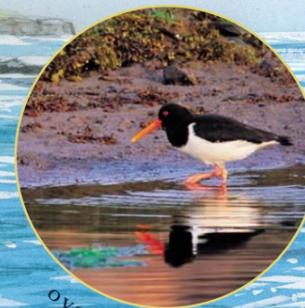
striped venus



turnstone



curlew



oystercatcher



cockle



Faroese sunset shell



thin tellin



blunt gaper



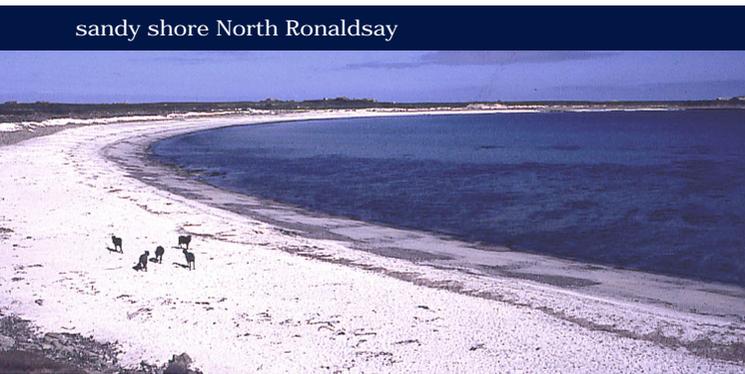
razor shell



sanderling

life on a sandy shore

At first sight a sandy bay can look rather empty of life. It rarely is though, if you know where to look. Most of the animals of the sandy shore hide below the surface by burrowing in the sand. At low tide this is how they protect themselves from drying out, from predators and from heat or frost. On a very exposed shore there is very little life because the sand particles are continually ground together by the waves. More sheltered beaches can support a greater variety of burrowing animals and there is plenty of organic matter (derived from dead animals and seaweed) for them to feed on.



sandy shore North Ronaldsay

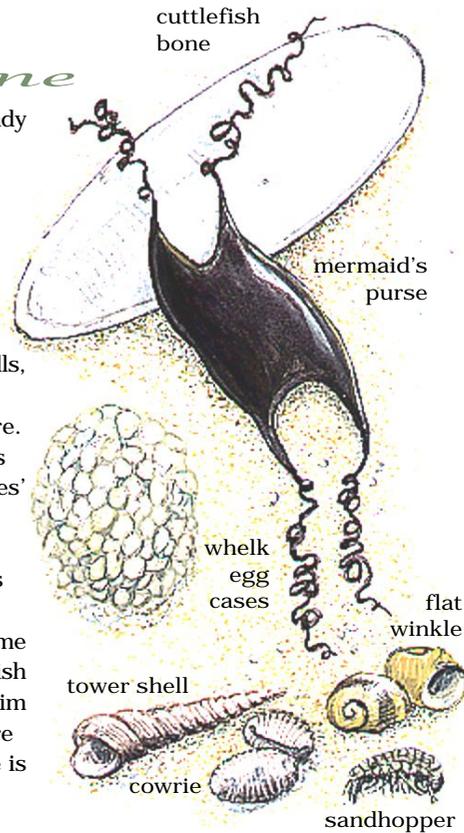


worm casts

Many worms, such as lugworms, also live in the sand and have a similar mechanism for feeding. Look out for worm casts on the surface as evidence of worms living down below in the sand. The burrowing animals have many predators on the beach. The voracious burrowing starfish eats molluscs and worms whole, while the carnivorous necklace shell dissolves neat holes in bivalve shells to reach the soft insides. Waders frequent the beach, using their bills to probe in the sand and at very low spring tides many people in Orkney dig for spoots.

on the strandline

The strandline on a sandy shore, where seaweed and other debris is washed up, is a good place for finding empty shells. Not just the burrowing bivalves that live on the beach but also shells, such as cowries, from different types of shore. Other interesting finds include cuttlefish 'bones' which are really the internal shells of this relative of the octopus and the 'mermaid's purse' which is the home of the very young dogfish before it is ready to swim free. The main creature living in the strandline is the sandhopper.



plants of the shore



oysterplant

A number of flowering plants have learnt to cope with living in sandy soil and with salt laden winds. Plants such as sea rocket and the rare oysterplant have thick leathery leaves to help them survive in these maritime conditions. Plants such as marram and lyme grass are very important for the stabilisation of sand dunes. The sandy 'links', common behind beaches in Orkney often support an attractive display of wild flowers, such as heart's ease pansy and bird's foot trefoil.

birds on the beach

Many birds visit the sandy shore for feeding and roosting. Flocks of waders avoid direct competition for food because of the varied lengths of their bills, which means they eat different kinds of prey at different depths in the sand. Long-billed oystercatcher and curlew use their bills to probe deeply in the sand for burrowing molluscs and worms. The shorter billed redshank and dunlin feed nearer the surface, while ringed plovers feed on the surface and turnstone peck along the strandline. Sanderling feed at the tide's edge and are easy to identify as they run up and down the beach following the waves. Flocks of gulls feed and roost on the beach; herring gulls scavenging along the high tide line and black-headed gulls feeding in shallow pools left behind by the outgoing tide.

what lives in the sand?



Seashells from the group of animals called bivalve molluscs are the most common creatures on sandy shores. These include shells such as cockles and razor shells (spoots). They burrow into the sand and then extend long tubes called siphons to the surface for feeding and breathing. They suck in sand and water, extract the edible parts and pump out anything inedible.



redshank