

Hitchhikers on Ocean Plastics

Some sea creatures use floating plastics or other waste to travel around the world. Here are some that we have found on UK shores. If you look closely you could see some of these too. Let us know on Twitter via @CardiffCurator.

national
museum
wales
amgueddfa
cymru

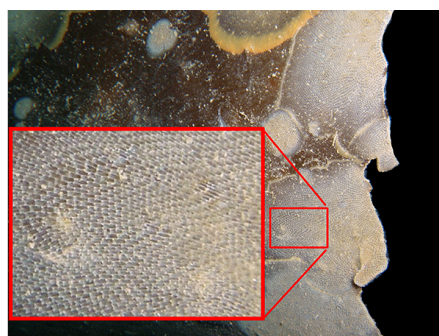


Skeleton Shrimp

Caprella septentrionalis

Skeleton shrimp have slender bodies and grasping appendages (like arms) that allow them to hide amongst seaweeds, hydroids and bryozoans. This species is native to the UK but non-native species such as *Caprella mutica* from Japan can also be found here now.

Around 5cm at its longest, with a pair of grasping appendages halfway along its long, thin body. The non-native *C. mutica* has spines along its back and a different shaped grasping appendage to the native *C. septentrionalis*.



Sea Mat

Membranipora membranacea

An bryozoan forming a lace-like crust on seaweed, kelp and other surfaces, even floating plastics. This species is known from the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

Bryozoans are colonial like corals, made up of many small individual animals (zooids). The zooids are rectangular and less than 0.5mm in length. They appear as tiny, white, boxlike compartments that align and spread. They have tiny feeding tentacles called lophophores and feast on microscopic food particles.



Florida Rock Snail

Stramonita floridana

A carnivorous gastropod from the Caribbean that eats oysters and mussels by stripping away pieces of shell using its strong teeth. Reported in the south of England along with unhatched eggs.

Up to 33mm high, the shell resembles our dog whelks but has a much wider and taller aperture (opening) coloured red, orange or pink inside, usually in radiating stripes.

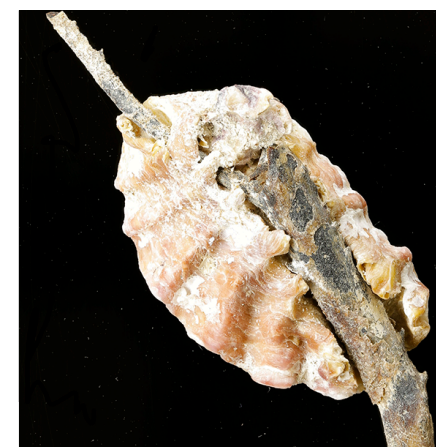


Bicolor Purse Oyster

Isognomon bicolor

Unlike true oysters it uses byssus threads (like mussels) to anchor itself to mangrove roots in the Caribbean but can attach to ocean plastics too. It is an invasive species in Brazil, so one to keep an eye on here.

Flattened, elongated shells up to 35mm long. Creamy to purplish, flaky outer shell, internally the nacreous layer (mother of pearl) stands out from the rest of the shell and the top has a ligament that looks like a row of notches.



Frond Oyster

Dendostrea frons

In its native habitat in the Caribbean the frond or racoon oyster attaches to corals using projections of its shell known as clasps. These can also grasp ropes and other hard surfaces.

Elongated, up to 5cm long, crinkled margin shell with shelly projections to clasp narrow objects. Can be pinkish in colour externally and yellow/white inside.



Nature on your doorstep

Find more nature guides [URL] or get in touch with our museum scientists for help with identification: [URL]