



Nature
on your
doorstep

Treasures of the Strandline

The strandline is where animals and seaweeds are washed up and left behind by the tide. Removed from their usual habitat, they could have travelled some distance in the water. Look closely next time you visit the beach and see what you can find.

Find more nature guides or get in touch with our museum scientists for help with identification: museum.wales/collections/on-your-doorstep



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Mermaid's Purses

Egg cases of sharks and rays. Often washed up onto shore after the baby fish hatches. Purse shape and size differ between species and can be used to identify which one laid it.



Hornwrack

Flustra foliacea

Often mistaken for seaweed, but actually a colonial animal called a bryozoan. Usually attached to rocks on the seabed but may be ripped free by storms.



Cuttlebone

Internal shell of a cuttlefish that helps the animal maintain its position in the water. It is all that remains after the animal dies and rots away and is often washed up onto shore.



Crab shells

Crabs shed their skin in order to grow and it is more likely a discarded shell than a dead animal that will be found. Many different types of crab shell might be found here.



Ambergris

Can be black, brown or amber. Famed for its use in the perfume industry. Produced in the intestines of sperm whales and thought to form around sharp beaks of eaten squid to protect the whale from harm.



Sea Potato

Echinocardium

Sea urchins that burrow in the sand. Spines are lost after death. The smooth, hollow shell floats and can be found in the strandline if it is not broken first.



Common Whelk eggs

Buccinum undatum

Common whelks produce large balls of eggs. The balls float once the baby snails have hatched and often end up in the strandline.



Sandhoppers

Talitrus saltator

Turn over a piece of wood or seaweed and you may find lots of these small (2cm) jumping crustaceans! They come out at night to eat decaying seaweed and other detritus.



Bladder Wrack

Fucus vesiculosus

Seaweeds like this turn black and shrivel up as they dry. Look for the bladders of Bladder Wrack and the jagged edges of Toothed Wrack.



Kelp seaweeds

Laminaria

Finding a clawed 'holdfast' from a kelp like this could mean there's a kelp forest nearby. At very low tide look for kelp plants sticking out of the water.