



Some Coastal Animals around Ireland

by Karin dubsky

Snake-lock Anemone *Anemonia viridis*

A brown stemmed blob stuck onto rock with ~200 moving tentacles which it cannot retract. Symbioses with green algae turns tentacles green with purple hue to stinging cell covered tips.

Where: Rock pools, expanding range north, climate change indicator.



Honeycomb Worm *Sabellaria alveolata*

Bristle worms which form biogenic reefs. Each little worm makes a sandy tube for itself, stuck to another or a rock creating the honeycomb like reef. When the tide is in tentacle heads poke out to trap passing food. Careful, quite rare, easily damaged.

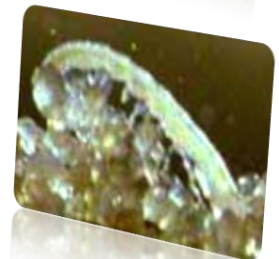
Where: low intertidal, open coasts, outer estuaries beside rocks with rough sand.



Sand-hopper *Talitrus saltator*

Small curved crustaceans (> 2.5 cm) which hop by flexing the body and eat washed up seaweed. Important as efficient converters of vegetation into biomass.

Where: buried along the tide line and splashzone – see holes in the sand. Lift washed up seaweed to feel the tickles when dozens hop off your hand.



Sea potato or Heart urchin *Echinocardium cordatum*

A hairy grayish potato sized urchin (Echinoderm) The fragile shell is easily crushed. When washed up, hairy spines rub off quickly leaving a white heart shaped dot lined empty shell with apex hole

Where: buried just below the sand surface from 3 to 230 m below the sea. Look on sandy beaches after storms.



Grey Seal *Halichoerus grypus*

A man sized plump fish hunting sea mammal with big eyes. Greys are larger than the Common seal, have longer snouts and pups have white fur. Half of the world's population lives around the UK and Ireland.

Where: In water and on remote rocky shores to haul out, mate and give birth.



Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

A colourful small, short-legged wader, with orange bill and legs. Note black-and-white pattern on its head, breast and broad white wing-stripe seen in flight. It lays well camouflaged eggs on sand and gravel in the splashzone – easily trampled.

Where: feeds in the intertidal and nests on shingle and sand in the splashzone,



European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Furry grazing mammals with long ears and short tail which built extensive burrows, and have special adaptations to digest tough plants. Rabbits are silent except when caught. Introduced to Ireland and 'farmed' on dunes by monks for their fur and meat.

Where: look for the burrow with many entrances, hard dung pellets, then wait till dusk when they come out to graze.



Flounder *Platichthys flesus*

An almost rectangular flatfish with lumps down its spine (plaice is smooth) It lives close to the seafloor, or half buried in sand preying on worms and crustaceans. Look out for tiny transparent baby flounders in pools or frilly marks left by larger ones as they hurried over the seabed.

Where: in brackish sandy and gravelly ground of estuarine waters and up tidal rivers all year round.

