

Beachcombing

Identification Chart

Razor Shell



These huge clams live mostly buried in the sand or in mudflats, and are filter feeders, feeding on plankton in the water. Seaweed, oysters, and tube worms can grow on the parts of the shell sticking out from the sand.

Oyster



There are many different types of oysters such as native flat, pacific or hammer. Young oysters are called 'spat' and will float in the sea until they settle and attach themselves to shells and rocks creating a reef. The coating inside is called nacre and is used by the oyster to make pearls.

Jingle Shell



A type of oyster with a very shiny, thin shell that is almost see-through. One side of the shell attaches to hard objects like rocks or other shells, so the shells you find washed up are almost always the left shells which remain free.

Cockle



Cockle shells can be many colours and textures. They live under the wet sand and can pull themselves through to find food. If they have a hole in their shell, they have been eaten by a meat-eating snail, usually a sand snail, using its sharp tongue to drill.

Scallop



These can also be called fan shells. They are a type of clam or bivalve which means they have two shells joined at the base. They are some of the only clams that can use their two shells to swim through the water using jet propulsion.

Clams

Screw Shell



These native Australian sea snails can live up to 140 metres below the surface of the ocean. Not to be confused with the brown-coloured New Zealand Screw Shell, which is an introduced pest species. What kind of magical creature do they remind you of?

Pheasant Shell



These patterned beauties belong to algae-eating snails that live in shallow reefs of southern Australia. When washed up alive, they have a large white shell lid or operculum that protects the snail inside from drying out.

Abalone



A large sea snail shell coated with mother-of-pearl on the inside. The holes allow water in when the snails are stuck to rocks, this helps them to breathe. As they grow, new holes are made, and older holes are filled in.

Sand Snail and Egg Mass



Living sand snails can be seen when the tide is low creating trails through the wet sand as they move. Thousands of their eggs are laid inside clear jelly sacs, protecting them from strong currents and drying out. Be sure to return them to the sea!

Top Shell



A shell with brown and white spots and a pink tip. The spiral shape of this shell lets us know a snail has made it. This sea snail uses its radula or sharp tongue to scrape algae and bacteria from seagrass leaves.

Snails

Port Jackson Shark Egg Case



The spiral, brown egg case helps to protect the baby shark inside for up to 12 months as it grows. It blends in with the seaweed and helps it to stay wedged on the seafloor until the shark pup hatches.

Cowfish



You can see the hexagonal bony plates that protect this fish as an armour around its body. When they feel threatened, the cowfish create a toxic slime that oozes from their skin to put off predators.

Fish

Fulgurite



A bolt of lightning is five times hotter than the surface of the sun, so can melt the sand on a beach where it lands. As this melted sand cools and hardens, it forms a fulgurite or lightning stone. Tap two together and they sound like glass!

Fulgurite

Sea Glass



Broken, sharp pieces of glass can end up on the beach as litter. The sand and water smooth their edges over time, so they are safer to pick up. Sea glass can be taken home as a beach souvenir as it does not belong in the ocean.

Litter

Footprints



Check to see who has been on the beach before you. Use your detective skills to discover if other people, dogs, or birds have been walking over the sand.

Land Animals