

# Periwinkles



## Littorinidae

Periwinkles are a family of sea snails that are found throughout the world's tidal coastal areas. They are important herbivores on UK rocky shores. They can be distinguished from "top shells", another common group of sea snail by looking at the opening to their shell, which tends to be oval or tear drop shaped. In top shells this opening is circular.

### How to find

Periwinkles can be found all the way from the high water line down to the low water mark and different species occur at different tidal heights. So make sure the you make your way all the way to the top of the beach when conducting your 20 minute survey. Species also vary a lot in their ecology, some are found under rocks, some on seaweeds, other in tiny nooks and crannies. So read the information below carefully before starting your survey.

### What's out there?

There are at least eight species that can be found on UK rocky shores. The common or edible periwinkle can be found at nearly all sites. The other *Littorina* species are also found very often, as can the small periwinkle.

## The Main Suspects



### Common periwinkle

*Littorina littorea*

- Largest UK species
- Sharp, cone shaped shell
- Found through the tidal zone



### Rough periwinkle

*Littorina saxatilis*

- Outer lip at the bottom of shell slightly inverted
- Many colour forms
- High shore



### Flat periwinkle

*Littorina fabalis/obtusata*

- Shell almost smooth
- Found on seaweed—mainly wracks
- Often yellow but can be olive brown

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## Other contenders



### Small periwinkle

*Melaraphe neritoides*

- Tiny— often found inside barnacle shells
- Very high shore
- Dark grey/black with high pointed spire

## The long shots—chink shells



### Pale lacuna

*Lacuna pallidula*

- Up to 12mm
- Wide opening to shell
- Also wide hole in the centre of the shell



### Banded chink shell

*Lacuna parva*

- Tiny—up to 4mm
- On wrack seaweeds
- Mid and low shore



### Banded chink shell

*Lacuna vincta*

- Up to 10mm
- Well marked bands on shell
- Often on saw wrack