

## Wexford's Marine Wildlife



### Bewick's Swan

This is smaller and more goose like than the Whooper or Mute Swan. It has a characteristic yellow base to its bill. It arrives here in

October from its Siberian breeding grounds.

### Red Throated Diver

This elegant diver is commonest in winter, when its mainly grey plumage makes it difficult to see against a grey winter sea. It prefers sheltered sandy coasts but can also be seen regularly in Wexford Harbour.



### Grey Seal

The grey seal is the commonest seal in the Wexford area. It breeds on the Saltee Islands and pups are born in late summer or autumn.

It is frequently seen lying out on sand banks at Raven Point.

### Golden Plover

It often associates with Lapwing, this attractive plover usually winters on farmland, where flocks of several thousand can be seen. It breeds on upland moors.



### White Fronted Goose

A winter visitor from Greenland, this grey goose is of international importance with up to 10,000 birds wintering on the North Sloblands.



### The Dogwhelk

This is a common sea shell found on rocky shores, often in large numbers, from the middle shore to the shallow water. Its colour can vary, but is usually a grey/cream and often marked or patterned with dark brown bands. It lays eggs on the seashore usually in crevices and under seaweed from the middle shore down. The eggs can be found in large groups and look like yellowy brown grains of rice standing on end.



### Common/Curved Razor Shell

This bivalve (double shell) has a long thin slightly curved rectangular shell, which is sometimes found empty on the shore. The two halves, or valves are held together by a strong ligament along one side. When the shell is closed the ends remain open, creating a tube like effect. It is a filter feeder and must remain close to the surface as its siphon is very short. If disturbed, it can rapidly pull itself deeper into sand by extending its strong, muscular foot, which it uses to pull its shell downwards.



### Common Mussel Shell

This bivalve (double shell) mollusc prefers to attach itself to a hard structure.

Its shell is slightly oval shaped and it may be blue, black or brown. Inside it is pearly white with a darker blueish-black border. Mussels often live together in huge beds, in areas where there is plenty of water movement. The water carries tiny animals and plants, which the mussel filters out, using its gills. It attaches itself to stones, rocks and to other mussels using strong hair-like byssus threads.

### Common Otter Shell

The common otter shell is a bivalve and it is difficult to find alive, as it usually burrows 20-23cm into the sand or mud on the extreme lower shore. It is commonly found washed up on sandy and muddy beaches. Its smooth oval-shaped shell is made up of two slightly cupped valves, joined by a hinge-like ligament. It can grow to 12cm in width and is yellowish-white, often with a brownish horny covering. It has a long siphon that it uses to reach the surface, to draw in food.



### The Mermaid's Purse

This is the egg case laid by the dogfish in deeper waters. It has long twisted tendrils on each corner which are used to attach

the egg case to seaweed and other floating structures. It is light brown and almost see-through. The egg case is usually only seen when it is washed up on the shore, and then it is dry and hard. It is normally empty, as the young fish will have hatched by the time the case is



### Marsh Orchid

This is very common on marshy grassland and wet heathland. The flowers are unmistakable with bright crimson petals and darker red markings of lines, loops and spots conspicuous on the lip. They have pointed leaves with hooded tips, unspotted. It generally blooms in June or July.



### Fragrant Evening Primrose

This is a tall willowy yellow flowered herb growing abundantly around the Curracloe/Ballinesker area. The Primrose part of the name refers to the yellow colour, which is yellow when they are young, as they age and fade they turn orange and rose-red. The evening part of the name refers to the fact



that they don't fully open until evening time. The fragrant scent fills the evening air. The plant is native to Chile and it was introduced to Ireland as a garden flower. It escaped into the wild from gardens and naturalised itself in Curracloe. The plant flowers from June to September.

### Sea Holly

This plant has blue-green "holly"-like leaves and blue flowers that appear from May to July. The plant grows by the sea and is found all around the Wexford coast.



### Sea Bindweed

This creeps over sand dunes around the Irish coast. Up to 5cm across, its funnel shaped pink flowers appear from June to September. Its stems are often buried in



the sand and its long white runners help to bind the sand.

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