



FACTFILE

ROCKY SHORE EGGS

In spring, many birds build nests and lay eggs. People may not realise that many marine animals also lay eggs. Eggs that come from the sea look very different to bird eggs though – some look like pouches, others resemble small capsules, whilst others look like ribbons of slime! Eggs are often laid in clusters and in large quantities because the chances of young surviving to adulthood in the sea are very low. Lots are eaten by predators or swept away by currents, so the **more** eggs they have, the **higher** the chance that some of their young will survive.

Crustaceans such as crabs and lobsters produce lots of eggs. For example a female **shore crab** can lay up to 185,000 eggs at a time! These tiny eggs are attached to the underside of the crab for protection until the offspring are mature enough to be released into the water. Crabs and lobsters bearing eggs are referred to as “**berried**”.



A type of sea snail called a **dog whelk** lays its eggs in small yellowish capsules, often under rocky overhangs on the shore that are visible when the tide is out. Each capsule contains up to 1,000 eggs.

A small sea snail named the **flat periwinkle** lays its eggs on seaweed in small flat discs, each of which contains hundreds of eggs.



The **sea lemon**, a yellow sea slug, lays eggs in a long ribbon folded into a rosette formation. These ribbons contain a huge number of eggs, to provide the best chance of survival for some of them.



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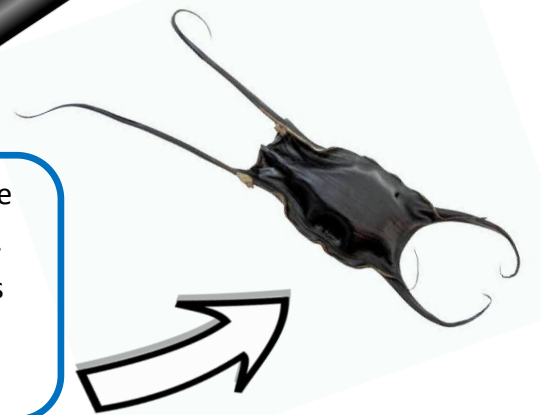
It's important **not to disturb** the eggs that develop in rock pools and in our seas. **Please don't touch or remove any developing eggs that you see.** However, once the egg cases have done their job and are empty, these can sometimes be blown onto the shore. Have you ever noticed egg cases such as the examples below?



Common whelks lay large clumps of eggs on rocks under the sea. The empty cases are referred to as 'sea wash balls', as these were once used by sailors for washing!



'Elasmobranch' (pronounced "ee-las-mo-brank") is the name given to the group of fish containing sharks, skates and rays. Many elasmobranch species hatch out from tough egg cases that have 'horns' and long curly tendrils which attach onto rocks or seaweed while developing.



Sometimes referred to as a 'mermaid's purse', you can report findings of these egg cases to **The Shark Trust's Great Eggcase Hunt**. This project helps researchers gain a better understanding of the species around our shores. Egg cases vary in size and colour depending upon which species it belongs to. Identify and record it at www.eggcase.org



Stay safe on the shore – check tide times, take care on slippery surfaces and wash your hands after your visit.