

Fish : Rockpool & Shore Rarities

(found in the drained Walpole Tidal pool or lower shore – sand & reef)

1) Lesser Weever Fish (*Echiichthys vipera*)

Tends to look rather bad tempered with a grumpy expression. Usually cleverly hidden buried in sandy areas, awaiting for food to blunder into range. This species can deliver a painful sting if stood on, so a degree of foot protection is sensible as a Weever (1a) is very difficult to see in shallow water, especially when partially covered. DO NOT HANDLE - POISONOUS SPINES.

2) Butter fish or Gunnel (*Pholis gunnellus*)

A beautiful cousin of the Blennies. Common name alludes to its slippery skin and thus a difficult to catch. The orangy form is illustrated, but green varieties are occasionally found. The dozen or so black spots along the bottom edge of the top fin are a good identification guide.

3) Short spined Scorpion fish or Bull-Rout (*Myoxocephalus scorpius*)

Very mottled colouration, tends to hide up in crevasses or under rocks. Very adept at changing colour to blend into the background, thus a secretive species.

4) Lesser spotted Catshark (Dogfish) (*Scyliorhinus canicula*)

The most commonly found shark found in British inshore waters. Blends in well with the background. Unfortunately, only usually found as vile smelling cadavers on the beach left as discards by fisherman. Specimen shown is a youngster. The egg cases are seasonally very common. Adult can be 60cm or more.

5) Common Eel (*Anquilla anquilla*)

More than likely a juvenile on the way back to fresh water after hatching in the mid Atlantic Ocean. Could be mistaken for a small Conger, but the main difference between the two species is that the bottom jaw protrudes slightly in the common Eel. The culinary delicacy of “Jellied” fame.

6) Goldsinny Wrasse (*Ctenolabrus rupestris*)

There are several species of wrasse that occasionally are seen in local areas – Corkwing Wrasse in particular can also be quite colourful.

7) Grey Mullet (*Chelon labrosus*)

Large timid fish that congregate in small shoals, can move like very quickly when disturbed. Specialised bottom feeders. Illustration shows a young individual. Often seen in Ramsgate harbour. Adults 50cms.

8) Lump sucker (*Cyclopterus lumpus*)

These cumbersome looking fish can up to football-size, but usually much smaller when discovered inshore. They have portly bodies and drab colouring, except in breeding colours when males are bright orange/red. The ‘sucker’ refers to the modified fins underneath the body that have evolved to cling to the reef!

Arrows indicate aids to identification.

Images & text by Lester Hovenden, NEKMPA Coastal Warden

North East Kent



Marine Protected Area



The North East Kent Coast is one of the best sites in Europe for wintering birds, and marine life of the chalk caves, reef and sandy bays.

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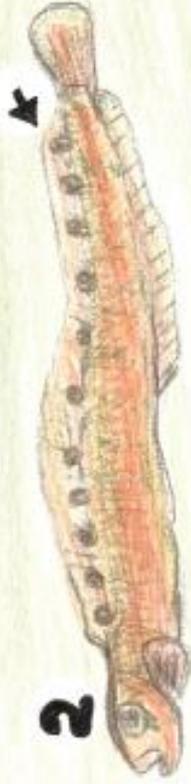


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