

## Species of the Week

Shanny

*Lipophrys pholis*



The Shanny is a fish common to rocky shores and tidal pools round the coast of Ireland and the UK. It is a species of Blenny, which is a general name used to describe a number of species that have long eel like bodies and short blunt heads. The Shanny stands out from other blennies by their distinct lack of head tentacles. They can grow up to 16cm are usually yellowy-brown or greeny-brown and covered in dark spots or blotches, making them well camouflaged against the seafloor where they spend most of their time.

The adult stays in the same area for their entire life after settling there as a juvenile. Spawning takes place from April to August and collections of eggs can be found stuck to the undersides of boulders. The males will guard the eggs after fertilisation has taken place and will remain there until the eggs hatch. The juveniles will then take two years before they become sexually mature.

They can be commonly found in rock pools and intertidal waters, buried under boulders and sometimes around man made structures. They will live at a maximum depth of 8 meters meaning they can't travel far outside of the intertidal zone. The intertidal zone is the area between low and high tide marks on the coastline, pretty much all of the new area that you can see when the tide is all the way out. Shannys are active during the day and especially at high tides, where they forage on almost any invertebrate that they come across including small shellfish, barnacles, worms, crabs and even seaweeds.

What's really interesting about them is that if the tide recedes and they are caught out of water they are able to breath air for a number of hours before the tide comes in again and their slimy skin means they aren't at risk of drying out either. Their amphibious adaptations and their highly varied diet make them a common sight all across the eastern Atlantic from the south of Norway right down to Morocco and into the Mediterranean. Despite their abundance they are not fished commercially and are instead used as an indicator species for pollution. Due to the fact that they are sensitive to contaminants and never leave their local area.

So next time you're exploring rock pools at the beach keep an eye out for a Shanny hiding under the rocks and in the seaweed.