



Photographing Marine Life

By Paul Kay

Tips for taking photographs on the shore

If you want to start taking photographs of marine creatures then you can do so on the shore. Creatures can be found and photographed at low tide but you will need to learn about tides to find out the best time to visit the shore.

When you are taking pictures of marine plants and animals the most important thing to do is to know about what you are photographing. The more you understand about a subject, the more likely you are to get a photograph that shows it at its best. For example, the common beadlet anemone can just look like a blob of jelly on the rocks, but find one submerged in a small rockpool and you might see a row of blue 'beads' under its tentacles. Showing these makes for a much more interesting photograph. There are lots of books available which will tell you what creatures and plants are on the shore, including a pocket sized one published by the Sherkin Island Marine Station (see page 15).

YOUR CAMERA AND CARING FOR IT

Digital photography has made it much easier to take photographs so read how the camera works and experiment with it.

If you take a camera onto the shore do make sure that it doesn't get wet or even get damp hands on it - digital cameras (and phones) don't like salty seawater at all!

Some cameras are 'waterproof' and can even be used in rock pools or whilst snorkelling and these are the best to use.



Keep the camera (and yourself) safe if walking over rocks to get to a rockpool.

SAFETY

Knowing about tides will help keep you safe. Don't be caught by a fast, incoming tide.

Keep back from the water's edge if photographing in rockpools. Watch out for unexpected waves.

Be careful on the rocks. They can be slippery.



KNOW YOUR SUBJECT



Knowing an animal's habits can help you get a better picture.

Some animals move fast, particularly when spooked - you may need to move slowly so as not to frighten them.

Some creatures look different when out of water, such as anemones.



Photograph creatures in rockpools, on the rocks, on the sand, at the edge of the tide line.

LIGHTING

Sunshine and cloud cover will affect the light and the quality of photographs. Very bright sunshine can make photographs look very pale.

Check where the light is coming from. Do you need to use a flash?

It is easier to photograph life in a rockpool on overcast days as bright sunshine reflects off the surface of the water.



USING THE CAMERA

Hold your camera so that it doesn't shake and distort the photograph.

Use the camera's macro settings for up close shots.

Try to have a focal point in the photograph to make it more interesting.

Take lots of photographs but from different angles and using different settings on the camera. Study them at home to see which ones work the best.

