Shells: Who Lives in there?

**Knobbed Whelk**

The shell of the knobbed whelk is the NJ state shell. The image to the left shows the whelk’s egg case. This sea snail starts off very small. See the picture below of a new whelk next to a dime.

**Oyster**

There are five species of oysters. The Atlantic oyster found in NJ is known to be larger and more coma-shaped than others. Oysters can make pearls but it can take up to 7 years to make and it happens rarely.

**Mussels**

Often found attached to rocks and docks, these bivalves are great filters. Mussels are one of the most common shells in the world.

**Moon Snail**

Moon snails produce one of the most collected shells on the beach. They also produce a strange egg case that you most likely have seen on the beach. Moon snails spend time both in the shallow and deep ocean.

**Bay Scallop**

Easy to identify with its fan-shaped protrusions along its hinge. These bivalves are smaller versions of their sea cousins.

**Jingle Shells**

Given the name from the sound they make when they hit each other. Gypsies would use them on their skirts and jewelry.

**What made that hole?**

You can often find clam shells with a hole in it, but what caused it. It was a sea snail like the moon snail! They have a mouth part called a radula, that they use to drill a hole into the shell to eat the clam.

**Sand Dollar**

This is a rare find but it is possible to find them. Sand dollars are related to sea stars. They have a squishy skin-like cover over the hard skeleton-like shell. They move with suction cup tube feet.

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**Watch your Food!!!**

Love ‘em or leave ‘em, sea gulls are iconic on the beach in the summer. While we refer to them all as gulls there are many different species of gull. On the NJ Coast you can find many gulls during different times of year. The most common during the summer are the following:

- **Herring Gull**
- **Laughing Gull**
- **Ring-billed Gull**

Sand under a microscope looks like little rocks. Sand will reflect the color of the rocks that naturally occur in the area. For example, Hawaii is known for its black sand beaches because of the lava rocks that give the sand its color. In NJ most of the sand is tan because of quartz.

The sand varies from beach to beach along the Jersey Shore. [Read this article about how and why the sand is different.](#)