



# MarLIN

## Marine Information Network

Information on the species and habitats around the coasts and sea of the British Isles

## Ear-shaped shell (*Otina ovata*)

MarLIN – Marine Life Information Network  
Marine Evidence-based Sensitivity Assessment (MarESA) Review

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A report from:

The Marine Life Information Network, Marine Biological Association of the United Kingdom.

**Please note.** This MarESA report is a dated version of the online review. Please refer to the website for the most up-to-date version [<https://www.marlin.ac.uk/species/detail/2318>]. All terms and the MarESA methodology are outlined on the website (<https://www.marlin.ac.uk>)

This review can be cited as:

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*Otina ovata* on a rock covered by the barnacle *Semibalanus balanoides*.

Photographer: Peter Barfield

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See online review for  
distribution map

Distribution data supplied by the Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS). To interrogate UK data visit the NBN Atlas.

**Researched by** Eliza Gibson-Hall

**Refereed by**

This information is not  
refereed.

**Authority** (T. Brown, 1827)

**Other common  
names** -

**Synonyms**

*Otina otis*

## Summary

### 🔍 Description

The ear-shaped shell is one of the few marine air-breathing gastropods found near the high water mark in north-west Europe. It resembles a tiny limpet with one distinctive large shell compartment (or whorl). The shell is semi-transparent, oval, and usually up to only 2 mm in length. 'Ear-shape' refers to the shape of the shell aperture, which also has a pale, curved, outer lip. The shell exterior is smooth in appearance and the interior is glossy with no umbilicus. The shell is reddish-brown to purple in colour, but rare white specimens are found.

### 📍 Recorded distribution in Britain and Ireland

Recorded along the west coast of Scotland, south-west of England, south and north Wales, the Isle of Man, and the west coast of Ireland.

### 📍 Global distribution

Recorded from the coasts of the British Isles, Belgium and northern France.

## Habitat

They are restricted to humid, shaded areas at high water, usually in rock crevices, caves, and the small niches formed by empty barnacle shells.

## ↓ Depth range

Upper shore

## Q Identifying features

- Up to 2 mm in length
- Shell and aperture ear-shaped
- Reddish-brown to purple
- Cannot withdraw body entirely into the shell

## Additional information

*Otina ovata* requires humid air, of near to 100%, in order to survive. If unable to find a humid location they clamp down on rocks, similar to a limpet. They do not survive under extended periods of submergence (12-hour cycle) and are, therefore, limited to the high water mark. They prefer humid, shaded crevices with a smooth surface along the higher intertidal. This can include moist caves but they favour cracked rock or empty barnacle tests (Morton, 1954). They are inconspicuous due to the small size and specialised habitat and may be under-recorded. However, they often occur in groups of around 10 individuals to preserve moisture. They are usually recorded in the *Chthamalus* zone (*Chthamalus stellatus*) (Morton, 1954).

## ✓ Listed by

**SBL**

## Further information sources

Search on:

    **NBN WoRMS**

## Bibliography

De Kluijver, M., 1993. Sublittoral hard-substratum communities off Orkney and St Abbs (Scotland). *Journal of the Marine Biological Association of the United Kingdom*, 73 (04), 733-754.

Morton, J.E., 1954. The crevice faunas of the upper intertidal zone at Wembury. *Journal of the Marine Biological Association of the United Kingdom*, 33 (1), 187-224. DOI: [10.1017/S0025315400003568](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0025315400003568)

Morton, J.E., 1955. The functional morphology of *Otina otis*, a primitive marine pulmonate. *Journal of the Marine Biological Association of the United Kingdom*, 34 (1), 113-150. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002531540000864X>

## Datasets

Conchological Society of Great Britain & Ireland, 2018. Mollusc (marine) data for Great Britain and Ireland - restricted access. Occurrence dataset: <https://doi.org/10.15468/4bsawx> accessed via GBIF.org on 2018-09-25.

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Fenwick, 2018. Aphotomarine. Occurrence dataset <http://www.aphotomarine.com/index.html> Accessed via NBNAtlas.org on 2018-10-01

NBN (National Biodiversity Network) Atlas. Available from: <https://www.nbnatlas.org>.

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South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre, 2018. SEWBRc Molluscs (South East Wales). Occurrence dataset: <https://doi.org/10.15468/jos5ga> accessed via GBIF.org on 2018-10-02.