

# THE SHELLS OF LANGOSTEIRA

## COLLECTING SHELLS IN LANGOSTEIRA

People have been collecting shells for different reasons since pre-historic times. More recently, in 1480 a German Dominican named Felix Faber declared that pilgrims should not buy shells, but needed to find them at the end of their journey. This may be the origin of the custom of shell collecting in Langosteira. In those days, many pilgrims passed through here after completing their pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, and they continue doing so today.

But there are many more pilgrims now: last year, their number exceeded 25,000. And one must add to those numbers the more than 80,000 tourists who visit the Costa da Morte.

As the profile and number of visitors to Langosteira beach have changed, so too must our behaviour. The impact of such a large number of people collecting shells can be profound, which is why it has become necessary to change our old habits.



## Why shouldn't we take shells from Langosteira?

For other visitors. Removing shells negatively affects the experience for future visitors. Allow others to enjoy a beach full of surprises like you do.

- For the landscape. Shells are an important part of the Langosteira landscape. The uncontrolled collecting of shells produces changes in this landscape.
- For the animals. Many shells contain live animals that you may not notice.
- For the ecosystem. Shells are an important part of the beach ecosystem. Harvesting them jeopardises its stability and reduces diversity.
- The shells may be protected. Some of them belong to endangered animals.
- Shell collection is prohibited. The Galician Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Law of 5/2019 prohibits the possession of the remains of wild animals.

## WHY SHELLS ARE IMPORTANT FOR THE BEACH

Due to their size, shells help stabilise the sand on the beach. Removing them can increase erosion.

- When shells break up and disintegrate, they become part of the sand. 38% of Langosteira's sand originates from degraded biological remains, mostly mollusc shells and barnacles. Collecting shells therefore alters the sand composition, and affects the living conditions of algae and animals in the longer term.
- A multitude of animals use shells for shelter: hermit crabs live in them, barnacles and polychaete worms attach themselves to them, octopi and sea urchins use them for camouflage, and all kinds of invertebrates take refuge under them to avoid being eaten by larger animals.
- Shells serve as an anchor point for various types of algae and other organisms that create branched structures, like hydrozoans, bryozoans, etc.



## START A NEW HOBBY

We encourage you to leave the shells on the beach and instead begin to take photographs of these beautiful little jewels adorning Langosteira and reflecting its diversity. These photographs can even help you learn what kinds of animals live on the beach. Become a portraitist for Langosteira!!

- Bivalves. These have two fairly flat valves, and include various species of scallops, dams, razor clams, and cockles.



- Sea snails. These live inside their single, spiral-shaped shell.



- Sea snail operculums. Some sea snails close the entrance to their shell with a disc-shaped, smooth and slightly thickened lid of limestone. The most famous of these is the Bolma rugosa, a species protected by the Xunta de Galicia and classified as endangered. Collecting them is prohibited and incurs a fine.



- Limpets and abalone. These are actually marine snails with flat shells and no spiral. They live attached to rocks.



- Barnacles and percebes. These crustaceans also stick to rocks, with limestone plates for protection, and can be found on the beach. Percebes are actually footed barnacles.

