

Tips to help you hunt

Nurdle Hunt Method

Method Overview:

- Hunt for nurdles!
- Count how many you find
- Record the number of people hunting
- Record how long you were hunting (minimum 10 minutes)

Method Detail: Before you start

- Identify the back of the beach (away from the water)
- Find the strandline (usually a line of seaweed and other debris left over from the last high tide). Stranded seaweed, wood and often plastic or other forms of marine litter will indicate the strandline.
- Nurdles will often be in the most recent strandline and the back of the beach in the oldest strandline / caught by grass (see figure 1).
- If your beach is really big, you may want to identify a stretch of the beach where you would like to survey. Pace out the section of beach you want to survey.
- Using your recording sheet ([download here](#)) fill in the bits of information you can:
 - o How many volunteers are taking part
 - o Start time / Date
 - o Location



Fig 1. Graphic showing potential nurdle presence on a sandy beach.

Now you're ready

- Walk the length of your chosen area looking for nurdles
- Nurdles are very small and tricky to see so take your time and get close to the ground. Sometimes nurdles are nestled in grass at the back of the beach or covered by seaweed.
- Use your recording sheet to tally the nurdles you find. If there are too many you may want to estimate the number or remove them to count later.

*If you are collecting and removing nurdles, please make sure you use appropriate equipment or protective clothing. We recommend using gloves, sieves and / or tweezers to remove the nurdles, but insist that you wash your hands after touching nurdles or other marine litter when your survey is complete.

Remember:

Take photos! Share your story on Instagram, Twitter and/or Facebook. Post your event and photos on our [Facebook page](#).

TAG US! @greatnurdler (on Instagram and Twitter!)

When finished:

- Record the stop time
- Record the number of nurdles found (you might need to do this at home in the warm)
- **Wash your hands**

Note: Please ensure you take suitable health and safety precautions during your beach clean. We recommend washing your hands thoroughly after handling any marine plastic debris, including plastic pellets / nurdles.

The Great Nurdle Hunt is run by [Fidra](#) an SCIO and Scottish Registered Charity. SCO43895.
www.nurdlehunt.org.uk | www.fidra.org.uk

Submitting your results

- When you have completed your nurdle hunt please submit your results to our website as soon as possible using the [online form](#)

MORE TIPS!

It's a tricky business hunting for nurdles!

Coastal geography, tides, currents, and wind mean floating plastic nurdles get washed up on different beaches at different times. Small and lightweight they are blown around and once on land eventually get caught in sheltered nooks and crannies.

[Check out our video](#) for more guidance

WHERE TO LOOK

Amongst other plastic:

The best place to start your hunt is amongst accumulations of small pieces of plastic above the tide line (this is the line of seaweed and other debris left by the last high tide).

Paths:

Look on sheltered tracks and paths at the edge of the beach. Often nurdles can accumulate at the edges.

Vegetation:

Nurdles are very light and can be blown by strong winds onto the shore, from the sea. They often get caught in the base of the grasses and rocks at the top of the beach.



Fig 2. Nurdles in strandline (Image Credit: Jace Tunnell, Corpus Christi, Texas, USA.)

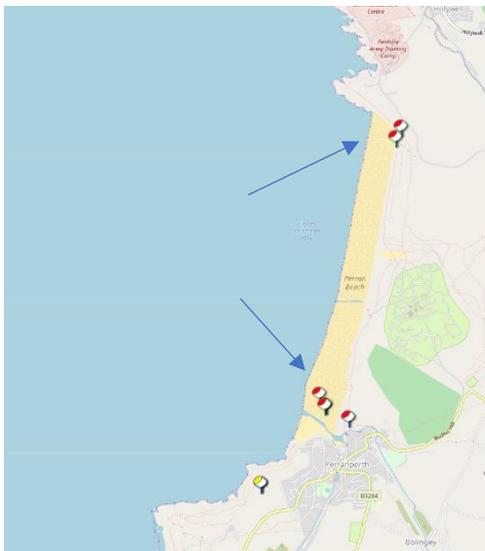


Fig. 3 Nurdles collecting at the edge of a bay or near the headland. Nurdle submissions shown on The Great Nurdle Hunt's [Nurdle Map](#).

Strand line:

The sea washes all sorts of marine debris up onto the shore. Nurdles are washed up with them onto the high tide mark where they get trapped in the strand line debris. (See figure 2)

Sandy Beach:

It is easier to hunt on sandy rather than stony or pebbly beaches

Headlands:

Beach litter often accumulates near the headlands of bays or towards a corner of a bay. (See figure 3)

KNOW YOUR NURDLES

Nurdles are hard to spot! They are very small and their colour often blends in with the sand or can be covered up by seaweed, shells and blades of grass. So, when on your hunt slow down and get close to the ground. Take your time.

Colour:

Nurdles can vary in colour from black to blue, yellow to white. Often pellets are clear or white but they become yellow over time, so keep your eyes peeled for all different types.

Size and Shape:

Between 2-5mm in diameter, often shaped like a lentil, these pesky pellets are small!

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This image shows the variation in different types of nurdles.

Download our [Nurdle ID Chart](#) to help separate true nurdles from other beach debris!



You may also come across another type of pellet – these are called biobeads and are very similar to nurdles but are used by a different industry. They are also plastic but these beads, often black-grey and wrinkly or ridged in appearance, are used as an aeration aid in water treatment. Let us know if you find these pellets too!

Below are some photos which give you an idea of the different types you might find useful:



Image Credit: Jodie Harper, Crooklets Bay (Bude) Nov 2018



Image Credit: Dawn Thomas – Mixture of biobeads and nurdles



Image Credit: Yvonne Olsen – Nurdles, near Oslo

COLLECTING NURDLES

Please remember that nurdles [adsorb toxic pollutants from the ocean](#). If you want to collect them, we recommend the use of gloves or a pair of tweezers. Also remember to wash your hands with soap and water thoroughly after touching beach debris.

Note: You don't have to collect all the nurdles you find, the most important part is the number of nurdles you think are present on the beach during your nurdle hunt!

Do you need to organise uplift of the debris you collect? If removing large amounts of pellets or marine litter you may need to think about how you will take it away from the beach.



EQUIPMENT LIST (suggested)

We've heard news of all sorts of methods to remove microplastics from sand, gravel and other beach debris. Below is a suggested equipment list and some examples of their use:

- Hand sanitizer – useful to use follow handling nurdles, before washing hands.
- Thin gloves (eg. Nitrile or latex gloves) – to protect your hands from excessive contact with marine debris
- Plastic or metal tweezers – to remove individual nurdles
- Sieve – to separate nurdles from the sand
- Bucket / heavy duty bin bags – To collect nurdle finds and other marine debris.
- Old jam jar (to keep you nurdle finds in and spread the word of plastic pellet pollution)

Note: we realise that we have suggested a number of plastic items. If you already own alternative items, we don't recommend purchasing this for a single event. We would always recommend borrowing equipment where possible. However, if used multiple times and kept safely or disposed of correctly then they may be a useful purchase.

METHODS OF REMOVAL

Sieves:

Sieves of all shapes and sizes can be useful on a sandy beach.



A simple sieve works wonders
(Image credit Vanessa Balci)



A mesh bin can be used for industrial scale removal
(image courtesy of Rob Arnold)



Flotation:

Many (though not all) nurdles and microplastic will float in water, so a quick way to separate them from sand can be to simply put the collected nurdles, sand and debris in a bucket of water and scoop off the plastic fragments from the top placing them in another bucket.

Floating nurdles (left and right) plus a sinking yellow airgun pellet (right)