

New Zealand flatworm

Original produced by Max Wade, Vicky Ames & Kelly McKee of RPS. Adapted for Northern Ireland Environment Agency 2020.

Scan for more information



Species Description

Scientific name: *Arthurdendyus triangulatus*

AKA: *Artioposthia triangulata*

Native to: New Zealand

Habitat: Gardens, nurseries, garden centres, parks, pasture and on wasteland

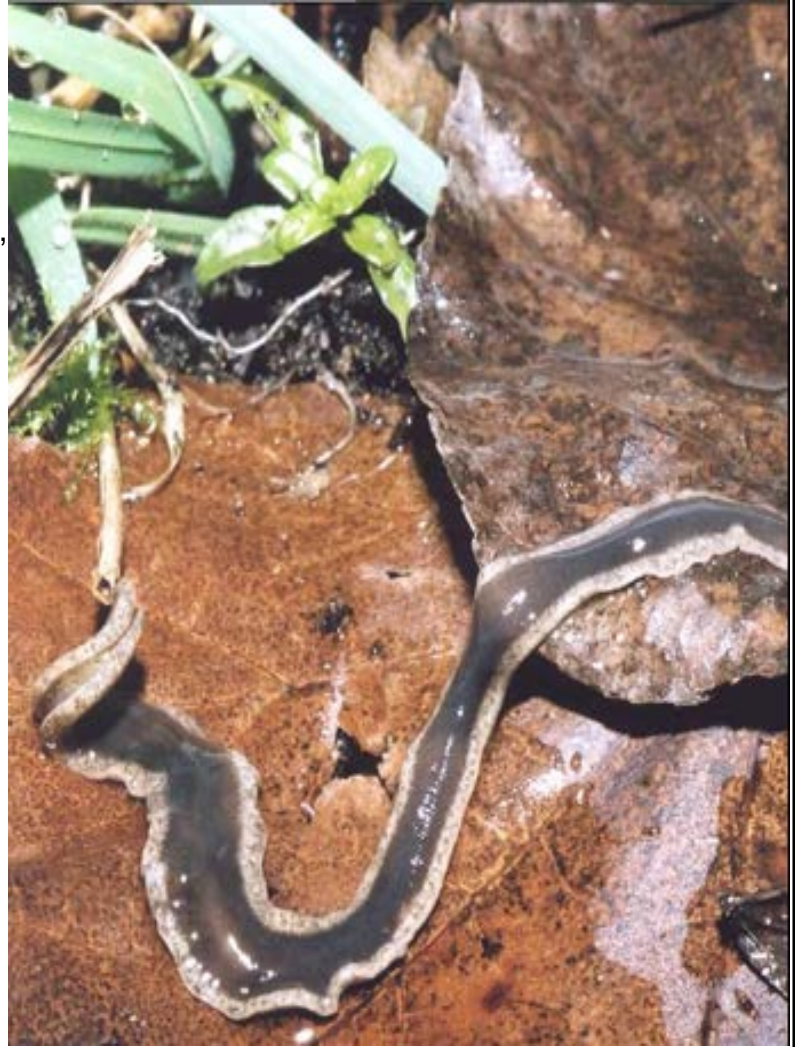
This flatworm is very distinctive with a dark, purplish-brown upper surface with a narrow, pale buff spotted edge and pale buff underside. Many tiny eyes. Pointed at both ends, and ribbon-flat. A mature flatworm at rest is about 1 cm wide and 6 cm long but when extended can be 20 cm long and proportionally narrower. When resting, it is coiled and covered in mucus.

It was introduced to Northern Ireland in the early 60's. It is currently known from all 6 counties where it is generally concentrated around built up urban areas.

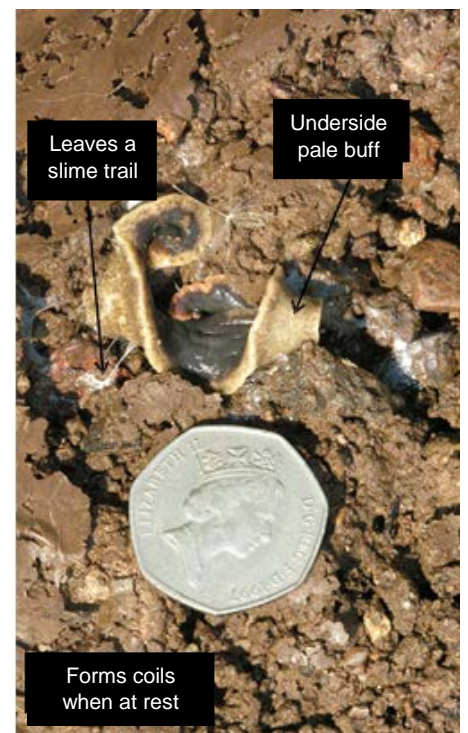
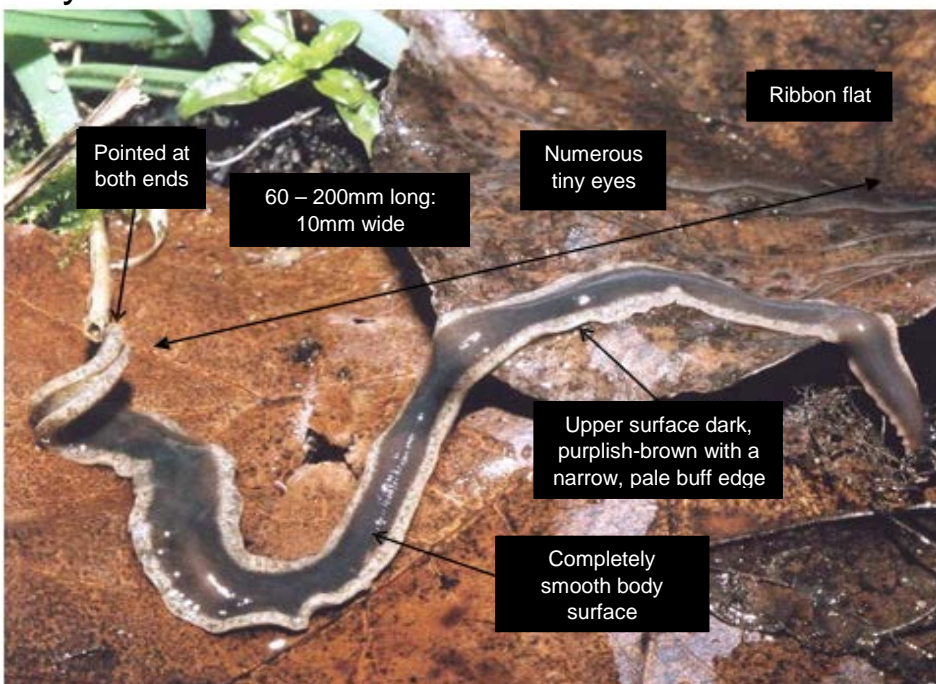
Native to New Zealand, the flatworm is found in shady, wooded areas. Open, sunny pasture land is too hot and dry with temperatures over 20°C quickly lethal to it.

New Zealand flatworms prey on earthworms, posing a potential threat to native earthworm populations. Further spread could have an impact on wildlife species dependent on earthworms (e.g. Badgers, Foxes) and could have a localised deleterious effect on soil structure.

Under the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order (Northern Ireland) 2019 it is offence to keep; breed; transport to, from or within Northern Ireland, use or exchange New Zealand flatworm; or to release it into the environment.



Key ID features



Report any sightings via; CEDaR Online Recording - www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI, the iRecord app or Invasive Species Ireland website - <http://invasivespeciesireland.com/report-sighting>

Identification throughout the year

Egg capsules are laid mainly in spring but can be found all year round. They are shiny black, 4-11 mm long and 3-8 mm wide, and resemble shiny smooth slightly flattened black-currants. They contain 5-8 pale young flatworms which emerge after 2-3 months and are creamy white/pink in colour.

Field Signs

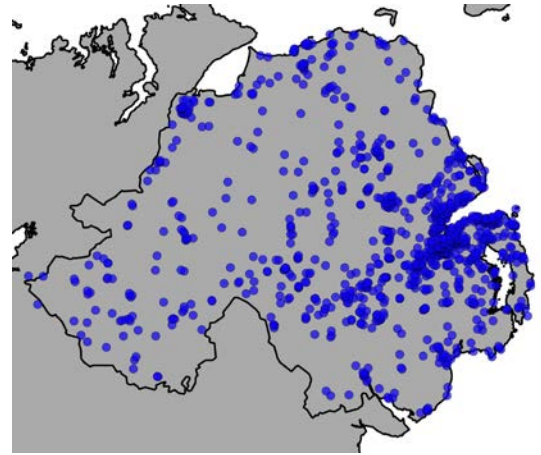
The flatworm can sometimes be found coiled up and covered in mucus under stones, wood, plastic etc. left on the soil surface. Shiny black egg capsules similar in appearance to a blackcurrant, found in the soil.

Similar Species

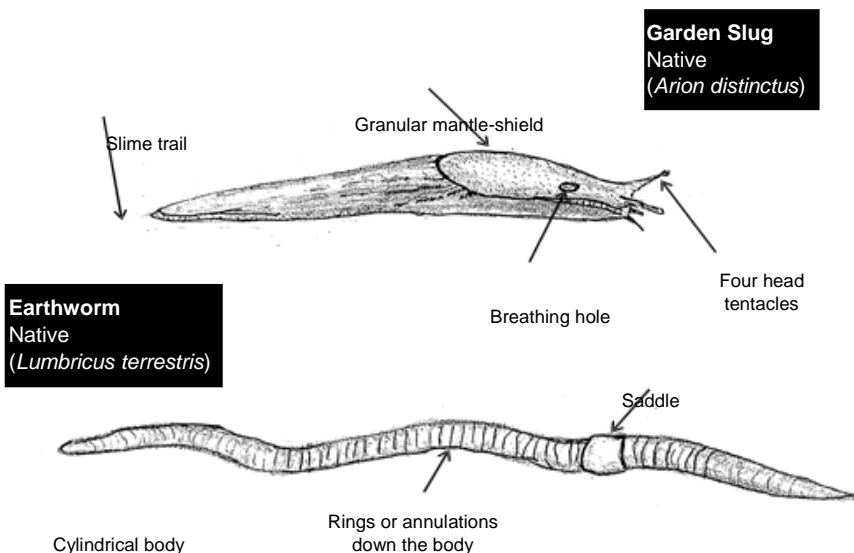
New Zealand flatworm is readily distinguished from earthworms and slugs (see illustrations). Other types of flatworm similar in appearance to the New Zealand flatworm have been found in the UK. This includes the orangey-red Australian flatworm (*Australoplana sanguinea*) and grey *Kontikia ventrolineata*

Distribution

Widespread and common throughout Northern Ireland



Source: NBN atlas Northern Ireland - <https://northernireland-species.nbnatlas.org/species/NHMSYS0021008370>
Check website for current distribution



References and further reading:

"Invasive alien species in Northern Ireland"
<http://www.habitas.org.uk/invasive/species.asp?item=50004>

Jones, H D (2005) British land flatworms. *British Wildlife*, 16, 189-194

Jones, H D (1995) The African and European land planarian faunas, with an identification guide for field workers in Europe. *Pedobiologia*, 42, 477-489

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