

New Zealand flatworm

Arthurdendyus triangulatus

Invasive: High impact

Species profile

- Habitat:** Terrestrial.
- Distribution in Ireland:** Widespread in Northern Ireland, sparse elsewhere.
- Status:** Established.
- Family name:** Geoplanidae.
- Reproduction:** Species is hermaphroditic meaning that all individuals can reproduce (upon reaching sexual maturity) after mutual fertilization. Eggs are produced and it can increase its population by ten-fold within a month.

Identifying features

- Shape:** Flattened body with pointed ends without segmentation. Forms a coiled shape sitting on a bed of whitish mucus when at rest.
- Colour:** Colours can range from grey, black but normally chocolate brown with a contrasting pale and yellowish speckled rim with brown. Underside is yellow to light buff in colour covered in grey/brown speckles.
- Size:** Can range from 5 to 20cm and is covered in a sticky mucus.



New Zealand flatworm, showing flattened body with pointed end segments - Aisling Nic an tSithigh



New Zealand flatworm is covered in a sticky mucus giving it a shiny appearance - (FERA) GBNNSS



Coiled New Zealand flatworm showing its underside along with its egg - Sonya Oldham



New Zealand flatworm

Invasive: High impact

Threats

Reduction in biodiversity as the species feeds on native earthworm species.

Due to this predation on native earthworm species, the fertility and the drainage of agricultural ground could be put at risk.

The species can last up to a year without food, making it difficult to control.

Species is easily spread through the transport of its eggs in plant and soil material.

Human Hazard: Be careful and wear gloves when inspecting species as the mucus which covers its body may irritate the skin and cause allergic reactions.

Where to look for it

Most commonly found in gardens and landscaped areas.

As the species cannot burrow, check under pots, stones, logs and other obstacles on the ground. The species tends to prefer heavy/dark objects.

Check for adults and eggs in potted plants before placing in the ground. Eggs are pea-sized, black and shiny.

Laying out a sheet of black plastic with weights around edges can act as a trap.

Similar species

May be confused with Horse leech (*Haemopsis sanguisuga*) although this species is green in colour and has segmented rings which are absent on the New Zealand flatworm.

Another non-native flatworm is the Australian flatworm (*Australoplana sanguinea*) although this species is orange or pinkish in colour and tends to fold rather than coils when at rest.



Underside of New Zealand flatworm - Heather McDonald



A horse leech at rest will generally look much bulkier compared to flatworms - H. Krisp



Australian flatworm which is a similar invasive species but differs in colour and resting position - Derek Keogh

An Chomhairle Oidhreacht
The Heritage Council



Produced with funding from The Heritage Council
and the EPA STRIVE Programme 2007-2013

View Ireland's distribution of this
species on <http://maps.biodiversityireland.ie>

National Biodiversity Data Centre fact sheet.
Text: Colette O' Flynn & Oisín Duffy (Version 1) November 2013.

