



Slug Introduction

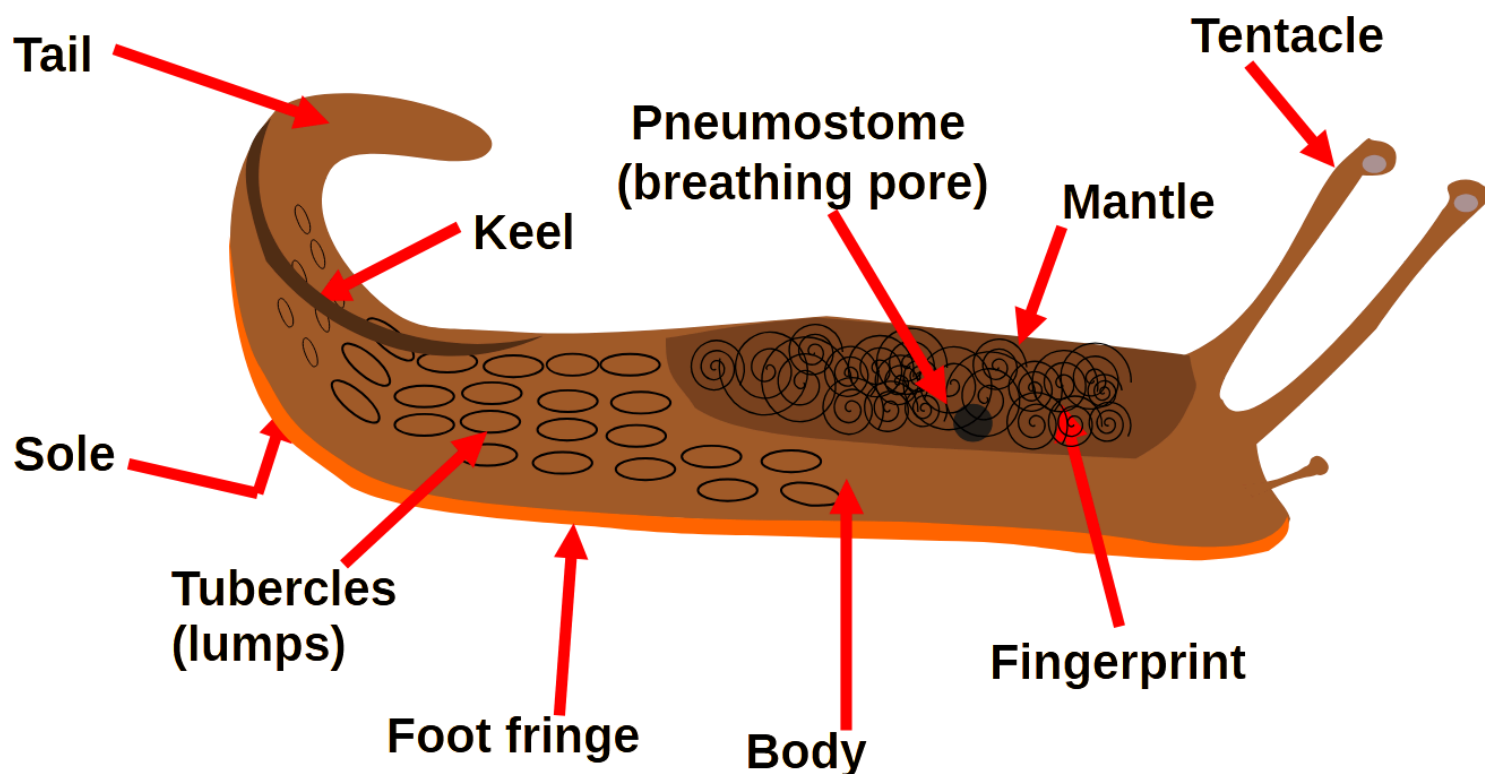
There are over 40 slug species in the UK, Ireland and the Channel Islands. Guernsey has records of 23 species, some historical. It is likely there are some unrecorded species – new arrivals that have not yet been recorded.

Identification generally depends of physical characteristics of the slugs. The colour of slugs is very variable and, at best, can be only a guide. For example, the Large Black Slug (*Arion ater*), can be black, brown, yellow, orange, grey, white and anywhere in between.

Pest species can cause harm or damage, usually to crops, although the term pest is subjective and defined by humans. Few slug species are pests although, those that are pest species are often present in very large numbers. Even the Large Black Slug which may eat some growing plants spends much of its time eating decaying matter, dog droppings etc. and, on balance, is probably more beneficial than harmful to the garden. Slugs in Guernsey are generalist species and can be found in all sorts of habitats. The abundance of slugs in an area is an indication of good soil health. The best places for slug recording are usually gardens, with the compost heap being the best habitat to spot them.



Slug Anatomy

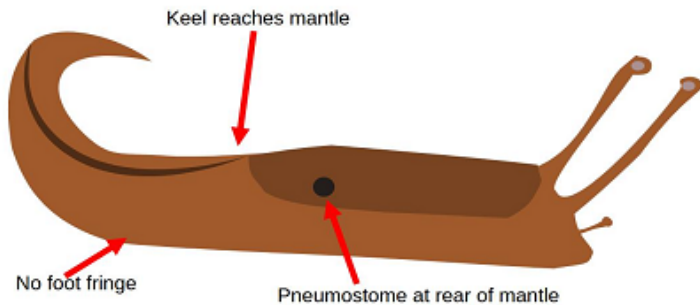


Slugs, having evolved from ancestral snails, are not bilaterally symmetrical, meaning their body isn't the same on both sides. The right hand side is most important for identification.

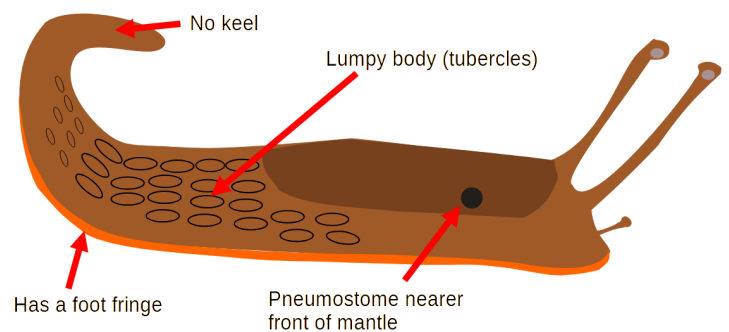
There are four main groups of slugs, shown in the below images and all of which are present in Guernsey.

To identify which group a slug belongs to, look for the following:

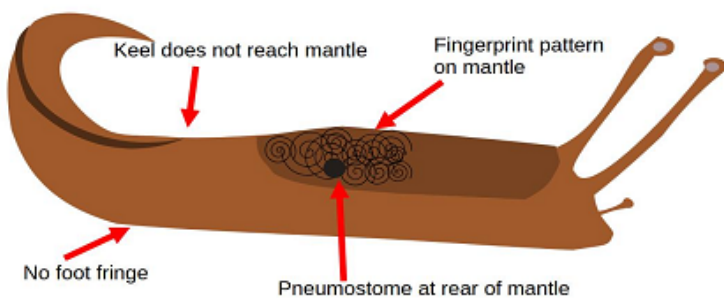
- Does it have a foot fringe?
- Is the pneumostome close to the rear of the mantle or nearer the front?
- Is there a keel? If so, does it reach the mantle or not?
- Is there an external shell at the rear of the body?



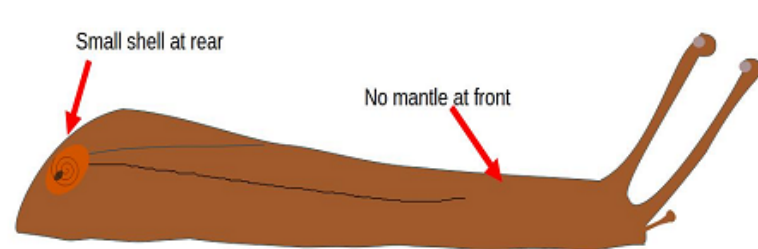
Keeled Slugs (*Milacidae*)



Roundback Slugs (*Arionidae*)



Short-Keeled Slugs (*Limacidae*)



Shelled Slugs (*Testacellidae*)

Once you have decided which group the slug belongs to, see if you can identify the species. Some of the common species are included in this guide. Please note that there are slugs present in Guernsey other than those shown in this guide.

Short-Keeled Slugs

Leopard Slug (*Limax maximus*)



Size: Up to 15 cm

Colouring/markings: Brown with very variable darker markings, dotted, lined or mottled.

Habitat found in: All.

Additional information: Native. Usually found on its own, feeds on decaying matter or small invertebrates (including slugs).

Tree Slug (*Lehmanna marginata*)



Size: Up to 9 cm

Colouring/markings: Pale buff, white stripe (not a keel) along back, bands on mantle.

Habitat found in: Anywhere with steep, algal-covered surfaces including trees, rocks, walls.

Additional information: Native. Feeds as it climbs to the top – whether it be a 30 metre tree or 1.5 metre gravestone.

Three-band Slug (*Ambigolimax*)



Size: Up to 9cm

Colouring/markings: Pale buff to brown with variable markings from almost none to dark blotches. Always with three bands on the mantle, the central one can be very faint.

Habitat found in: In or near gardens. Compost heaps favoured.

Additional information: Non-native. A recent arrival which can be abundant. There are two species which can only be separated by dissection.

Green Cellar Slug (*Limacus maculatus*)



Size: Up to 13cm

Colouring/markings: Various shades of green with darker mottling. It is separated from the Yellow Cellar Slug (*Limacus flavus*) by the lack of a continuous yellow central line from tail to mantle.

Habitat found in: Mostly near human habitation. It is nocturnal and generally leaves slug trails indoors after foraging. Its diet consists of decaying organic matter, fungi and algae.

Additional information: Non-native. It is a recent arrival in Guernsey. On the mainland, over the last 25 years, it has almost completely replaced the similar Yellow Cellar Slug (not included in this guide).

Short-Keeled Slugs

Tramp Slug (*Deroceras invadens*)



Size: Up to 5cm

Colouring/markings: Brown with grey sole and white patch around pneumostome.

Habitat found in: Anywhere, common in gardens.

Additional information: Another pest species, invasive non-native but now very common.

Netted Field Slug (*Deroceras reticulatum*)



Size: Up to 5cm

Colouring/markings: Fawn with small dark speckles (but can range from almost white to almost black).

Habitat found in: Anywhere, common in gardens.

Additional information: A native pest species. It can be identified by its milky-white mucus.

Keeled Slugs

Budapest Slug (*Tandonia budapestensis*)



Size: Up to 7cm

Colouring/markings: Grey or brown with a lighter keel. The sole always has pale edges with a dark central band.

Habitat found in: Gardens and fields.

Additional information: Non-native. A major pest of potatoes. Often rests in a C-shaped position.

Worm Slug (*Boettgerilla pallens*)



Size: Up to 5cm

Colouring/markings: White, sometimes with a lilac tinge. The thread-like keel is usually lilac coloured. Overall shape is long and thin. The mantle is pointed at the rear.

Habitat found in: Anywhere.

Additional information: Non-native. Usually solitary. Spends much time underground. Not considered a pest.

Roundback Slugs

Large Red Slug (*Arion rufus*)



Photo credit Chris Glead-Owen

Size: Up to 14cm

Colouring/markings: Anything from white to black but generally orange with a brighter foot fringe.

Habitat found in: Anywhere.

Additional information: Status undetermined. One of five species all of which are the same size and general appearance. All can be of almost any colour and separating the species can sometimes require dissection or DNA analysis.

Dusky Slug (*Arion subfuscus*)



Size: Up to 7cm

Colouring/markings: Golden or orange-brown with darker bands on the flanks and mantle. The sole is very pale.

Habitat found in: Probably less common in gardens than in wilder habitats. Often seen on trees in woodland.

Additional information: Native. Releases non-sticky, bright orange mucus when stroked.

Brown Soil Slug (*Arion distinctus*)



Photo credit Adrian Sumner

Size: Up to 4cm

Colouring/markings: Brown-grey body with dark bands on the mantle. The tubercles are covered in tiny yellow dots which can be seen under a 10x lens. The sole varies from pale yellow through to orange yellow.

Habitat found in: Anywhere.

Additional information: Native. This is a pest, often present in large numbers.

Tawny Soil Slug (*Arion owenii*)



Photo credit Jane Thomas

Size: Up to 4cm

Colouring/markings: Brown overall with a broad darker central band along the back.

Habitat found in: Gardens.

Additional information: This species was only described in 1979. Believed to be native and has spread significantly on the mainland.