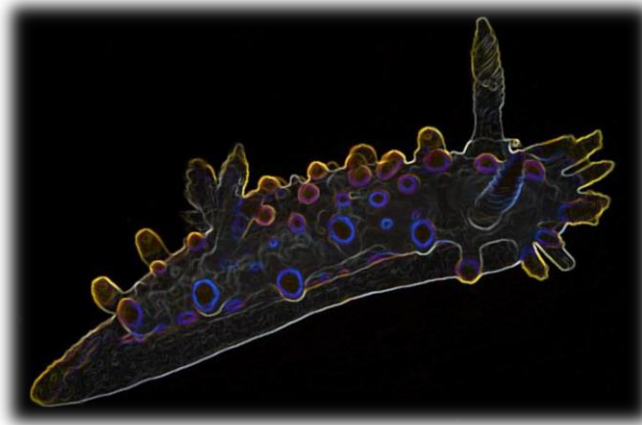


Connemara Nudibranch Species and Field Guide

By Maja Stankovski



Reefs, walls and wrecks in Connemara are teeming with different species of nudibranchs although that is not widely known. They are very easy to find on every dive site, you just need to know where and how to spot them. There are usually three things that nudis are doing underwater, so knowing that will help you spot them. They are feeding, fighting or mating, and they are usually found doing one of these things.

People often ask me why I love to photograph nudibranchs so much and this is especially difficult to explain to a non-diver. My excitement over sea slugs just seems alien to them. But as an underwater photographer, nudibranchs are not only patient, slow moving and photogenic subjects; they also come in such huge varieties and colours. Although shooting nudis in cold water is not as easy as in tropical waters, quite often the surge doesn't make it easy to take a sharp image and even their position doesn't make a great photo. But with some perseverance, you can take some great shots.

There are over 3000 known species of nudibranch and more are discovered constantly. Although they are fairly known in tropical waters and regularly noticed by divers, they are quite often missed or thought not to exist in cold water. Quite the opposite is true and you can find as colourful species in Ireland as you can in any tropical destination. There are over 70 known species only in Ireland.

From my experience, living as such tiny subjects in a vast ocean, they have gained a huge respect. Although they are hermaphrodites, this means that they have both female and male sex organs, but they require another nudibranch of the same species to reproduce which in a huge ocean is not a mean feat. Even that in its own right deserves my respect.

What are the best ways how to spot nudibranchs:

1. Understand their eating habits

Nudibranch will most likely be found on their favourite food and knowing what they prefer to it increases the chances of spotting them significantly. For example if you are looking for a nudibranch that likes to feed on Dead man's fingers, search for them on a dive site that has a healthy colony of the corals.

2. Try to find nudibranch egg masses

Nudibranchs lay their eggs in egg ribbons or rosettes and since they are mostly white in cold water, they are easy to spot. And if you spot the egg masses, there is a high chance there is a nudibranch close by. Explore the area around the egg mass closely and it's highly likely you will find a nudibranch within an area of 40cm x 40cm.

3. Understand their preferred habitat

Certain nudibranchs prefer to spend their time on kelp while others prefer rocky areas or corals. If you know which habitat they prefer, the chance of finding them will increase.

4. Slow down and inspect a small area

If you slow down, get close to the reef and inspect a small area with a torch, you will most likely find a nudibranch around.

5. Watch for movement

Even though nudibranch move quite slowly, they still do quite a bit of travelling and if you are looking for well camouflaged species, you need to watch for movement on their preferred food or habitat.

6. Watch for something that stands out

Certain species of nudibranch are not that well camouflaged and you can easily spot them if looking for something that stands out. For example bright coloured white or orange nudibranch will be easily spotted among jewel anemones or kelp.

How do you take good photos of nudibranchs?

1. Composition

Because nudibranch are often found on their favourite food , it is not very easy to compose the image nicely, so you have to be careful in composition and crop as much of the image as possible. Because nudis thrive on kelp, hydroids and other moving subject, you have to be really careful how to compose a shot that you still show the nudi in their own environment, but that it's not too busy and cluttered.

2. Background

A nudibranch won't look nice on a very busy background so when shooting nudibranch, try to find one that's on a less cluttered background or a pleasing one. If the nudibranch is not situated nicely and not in a good spot where you can take a good image, find another one. Where there was one, you will quite often be able to find another one close by.

3. Pleasing image

The most important thing in a nudibranch photo are sharp rhinophores. Also light has to be pleasing and if possible, some negative space in the background will make nudibranch picture stand out.

4. Behaviour

If possible, try to take a shot of nudibranch doing sth, i.e. feeding, laying eggs, moving about. This will quite often make an interesting and pleasing picture.

5. Lenses

While shooting nudibranchs in cold water, you will need a good macro lens or / and a wet diopter. This will help you crop the image and also take photos of the small nudis.

6. Strobe positioning

Strobe positioning is very important when taking a macro image and especially in cold sediment rich water so keep that in mind when shooting.

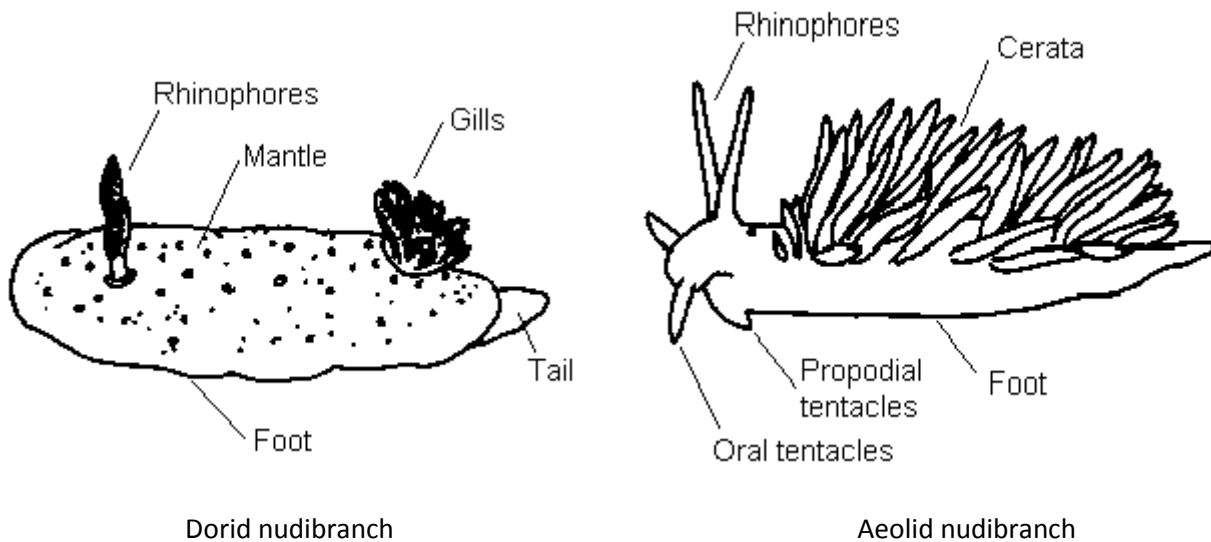
7. Other things that will help

While shooting macro images in a challenging environment as Atlantic, it helps to have a bit of extra weight. This will reduce your movement a bit and keep you steadier. Also if possible, reduce the focusing point on your camera to a single one. To get the sharpest image possible, try to focus on nudi rhinophores. That will give you the best chances to get a sharp image. Also try to use the higher f position that you would for wide angle images.

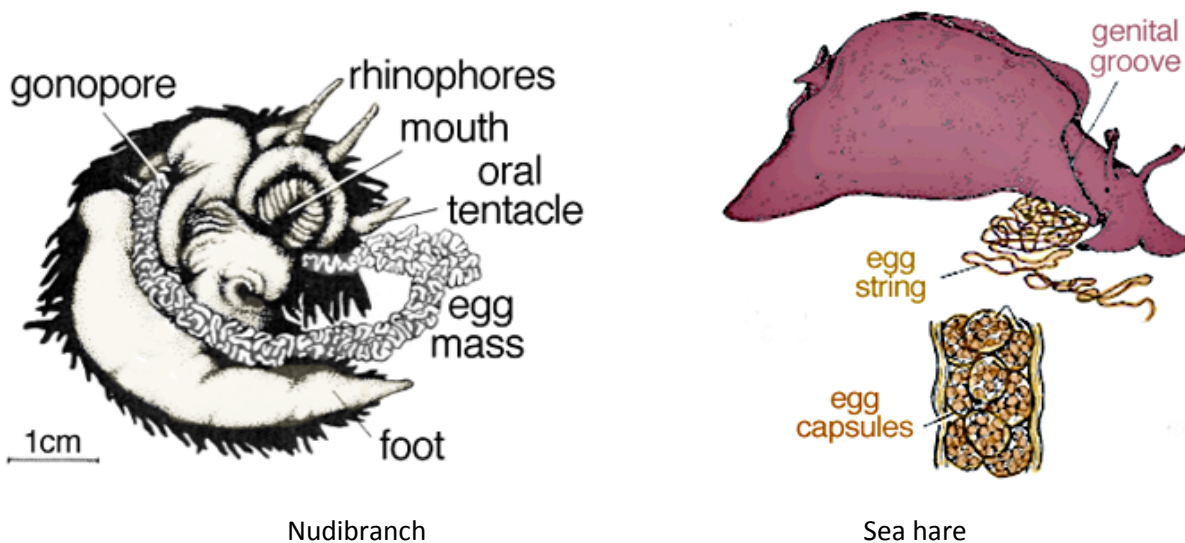


Anatomy of a nudibranch

There are two major types of nudibrachs, dorid nudibranch and aeolid nudibranchs. The main difference is that in dorid nudibrachs, the mantle is flatter and in aeolid nudibranchs it extends into cerata (long finger-like projections).



All nudibranch have a pair of sensory tentacles called rhinophores on their head. Nudibranch's eyes are very poorly developed and they can barely detect light and shade, but rhinophores on their head are sensitive to taste, smell as well as touch. They use them for navigation, to find food and mates and they also give sea slugs some spatial awareness. They can detect the direction that smells are coming from by comparing intensity on each rhinophore. In nudibranchs the gills are probably the most important respiratory organ, however gaseous exchange also occurs over the entire body surface. In dorids the gills consist of several feather-like structures that encircle the anus. In aeolids the cerata function as gills. In some nudibranchs the front region of the head is extended to form an oral veil. This structure varies from one species to another e.g. in *Dendronotus frondosus* it has branched processes; in *Polycera quadrilineata* it forms up to six finger-like processes and in *Doto* species it is smooth edged with two lateral flaps.



To find out more about nudis, you can use the following websites:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nudibranch>

<http://www.asnailsodyssey.com/LEARNABOUT/NUDIBRANCH/nudiEgg.php>

<http://www.advancedaquarist.com/2007/11/afeature2>

<http://marinelife.about.com/od/invertebrates/tp/Information-About-Nudibranchs.htm>

<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcorals/values/medicine/>

<http://marinelife.about.com/od/invertebrates/tp/Facts-About-Nudibranchs.htm>

<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/invertebrates/nudibranch/>

http://emeralddiving.com/nudibranch_facts.html

<http://www.seaslugforum.net/showall/aegipunc>

<http://legacy.earlham.edu/~brickte/>

If you need help identifying nudis, the following website (in my experience) offers the best help

<http://www.nudibranch.org/Scottish%20Nudibranchs/>

Onchidoris bilamellata

This is quite a large nudibranch, approximately 2cm in size, sometimes up to 4cm. It has a mix of colours, from almost completely white, lighter brown to darker brown. Its habitat is mostly colder water up to 30m of depth. This nudibranch is famous for large aggregations in late winter or early spring when it can be seen in large numbers and that spawn usually coincides with the bloom of barnacles. It is easiest to spot in January and February due to these aggregations and the fact that they are slightly larger in size then, but it can be seen around all year round.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Julia T, Doonee Beacon, Thany Beg

Preferred habitat: rocky areas, soft corals (dead man's fingers), wrecks.

Limacia clavigera

This is a small nudibranch, max size up to 2 cm. It is a white-bodied dorid with numerous orange-tipped projections on its body and orange spots on its back. Its gills and perfoliate rhinophores are orange or yellow-tipped. It is a very common nudibranch and can be found all year around all numerous dive sites from shallow to deeper water. It is a very easy nudibranch to spot in the shallow areas among the kelp while doing a safety stop.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Julia T, Doonee Beacon, Thany Beg, Bird Rock, Rusheen Point, Carrigaddy Beag, Inish Barna, Inish Turk dives sites, Inishbofin dive sites

Preferred habitat: kelp (often found munching on colonial bryozoan), seaweed, red algae, bryozoan encrusted stones



Flabellina lineata

Flabellina lineata is a very photogenic nudibranch the size of approximately 2 – 3 cm, but sometimes it can grow up to 5cm. This is a very common nudibranch and easily recognisable based on the white line running through its body. It can be found in cold water and even in warmer waters all the way south in the Mediterranean. The colour is usually from dark reddish brown to bright red. It feeds on hydroids such as Tubularia indivisa. It can be found on most dive sites in Connemara and it's easiest to spot while feeding on



hydroids.

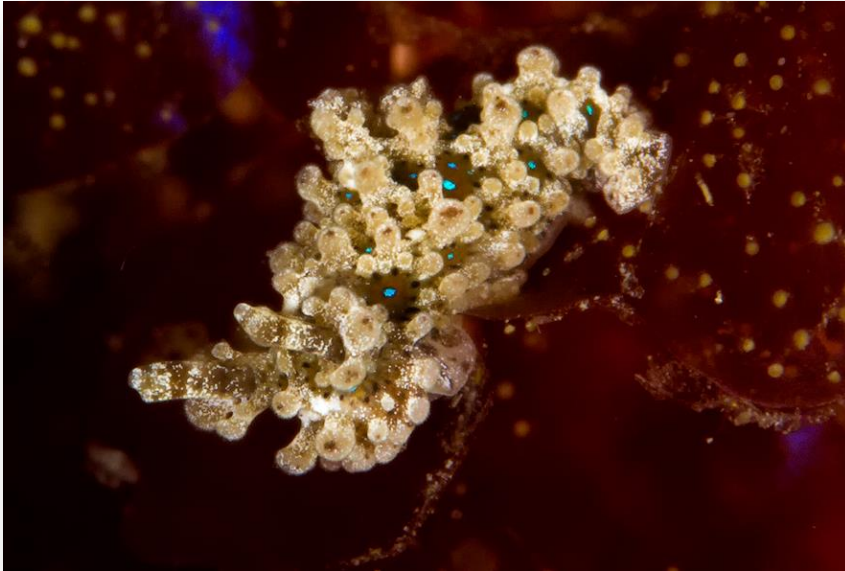
Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Julia T, Doonee Beacon, Thany Beg, Bird Rock, Rusheen Point, Carrigaddy Beag, Inish Barna

Preferred habitat: rocky areas, soft corals, wrecks, current swept bedrock, boulders, even kelp stripes



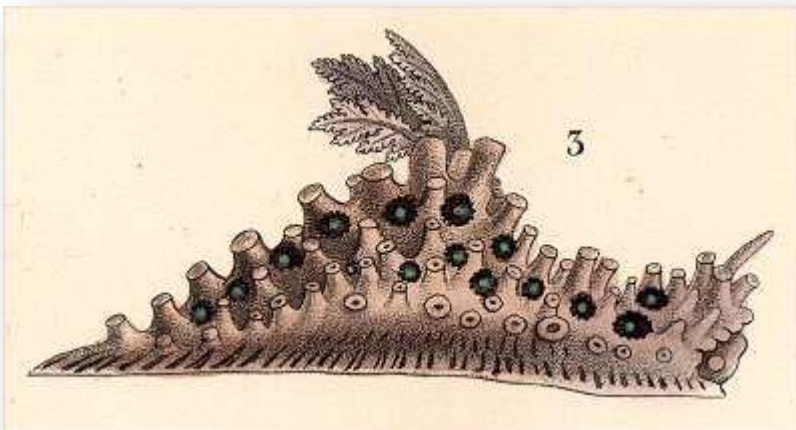
Aegires punctilucens

This is a small nudibranch from 1 to 2 cm in size. It is very inconspicuous, brown (rarely white) in colour, but can be easily identified by the many knob-shaped tubercles and the tiny iridescent blue spots scattered over the back of the animal. It feeds on sponges where it can be usually found and it is found in shallow water up to 30m. This particular individual was found on 6m among the kelp on seaweed.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Bird Rock

Preferred habitat: well camouflaged among its food, found on sponges, kelp and seaweed



Aeolidiella glauca

This is quite a large nudibranch, up to 4.5 cm in size, the body is orange brown in colour with brown surface pigment on the dorsum. It is usually found in deeper water, but occasionally also in shallow water. It can be found in sheltered muddy inlets due to its favourite food (Sagartiid anemones prefer sheltered areas) but also in on exposed rocky coasts. This nudibranch is quite scarce and found in small numbers.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Julia T, Inish Barna, Rosheen Point

Preferred habitat: sheltered muddy inlets, wrecks, sometimes also on rocky coasts

Tritonia plebeia

This nudibranch is a smaller nudibranch usually up to 2cm in size, very seldom it reaches up to 3 cm. The body colour is usually pale yellow or beige with dark brown blotches. It blends in well with its preferred habitat which is grazing on the soft coral Dead man's fingers (Alcyonium digitatum) that are exposed to currents. It has six finger-like processes on its oral veil and up to six pairs of arborescent lateral gills. It is widespread in the North-East Atlantic, from the Arctic to the western parts of the Mediterranean. It is frequent all year round in clear off shore waters.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Doonee Beacon, Thany Beg, Bird Rock

Preferred habitat: current exposed walls on Dead man's fingers or amongst bryozoan or undergrowth nearby



Janolus cristatus

This photogenic nudibranch is quite a large nudibranch and it can grow up to 7.5 cm in size. This is a semi-transparent nudibranch with numerous swollen cerata, each with a thin dark thread of digestive gland running through the centre. The tips of the cerata are coloured with an iridescent bluish-white pigment. It can be quite difficult to distinguish what is the front of the nudibranch and what is the back, you have to carefully watch for its rhinophores which are quite well disguised among the cerata. It feeds on erect bryozoans such as Bugula and it can be found on rocky sheltered areas, wrecks. Janolus cristatus has been found as far north as Norway down through the British Isles, Ireland and the French Atlantic coast. It has also been recorded in Moroccan waters as well as in the Mediterranean Sea.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Doonee Beacon, Thany Beg, Bird Rock, Julia T, Rusheen Point, Carrigaddy Beag, Inish Barna, Inish Turk dives sites, Inishbofin dive sites

Preferred habitat: sheltered rockfaces, wrecks, protected reefs, sometimes found on kelp and seaweed to, but generally prefers sheltered areas



Flabellina browni

This nudibranch can grow up to 5cm in size and it has a white streak down the dorsal midline from the last cerata to the posterior tip of the foot, and both the wrinkled rhinophores and long oral tentacles are streaked with white. The digestive gland can range in colour from red to dark brown or black. It seems to prefer current exposed locations where its major food source, the hydroid *T. indivisa*, can be found. You can find it on walls, wrecks, reefs and even kelp.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Doonee Beacon, Thany Beg, Bird Rock, Julia T, Rusheen Point, Inish Barna, Inish Turk dives sites, Inishbofin dive sites, The 60 footer wreck

Preferred habitat: exposed walls, wrecks, pinnacles, kelp, seaweed



Colpodaspis pusilla

This is a tiny sea slug with an internal shell that reaches maximum size of 5mm, this particular individual was only 3mm. The shell is covered by the mantle and there are two prominent head tentacles. The tentacles, tail and mantle are coloured with powdery white pigment. It is known from south-western Britain, western Ireland and southern Norway from 4-150m. It is rarely found bar by divers and not much is known about its eating habits, it is presumed to feed on sea squirt, the pinhead squirt.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Doonee Beacon

Preferred habitat: rocky reefs and walls in strong or moderate tidal streams, this particular individual was found on Dead man's finger coral.

Cadlina laevis

This nudibranch is quite easy to spot due to its bright white or almost translucent colour. Occasionally there is a yellow border around the edge of the mantle. The mantle tubercles are very short. One of the most characteristic features are the white or lemon-yellow glands situated towards the mantle margin. Mature specimens may reach 3.2 cm in length. They are usually found on exposed rocks, walls and areas that are exposed to current where their preferred food is located which is slime-sponges, especially *Halisarca dujardini*.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Doonee Beacon, Thany Beg, Bird Rock, Julia T, Rusheen Point, Inish Barna

Preferred habitat: exposed walls, wrecks, pinnacles, kelp, seaweed



Eubbranchus vittatus

This almost translucent nudibranch can grow up to 2cm in size. Sometimes it has scattered patches of opaque white and brown. On body the brown of the viscera shows through the body wall as well. The cerata have a white band near the tip and a one to three green or brown bands below it. It seems to feed exclusively on hydroid *Kirchenpaueria pinnata* (pictured below) and that is abundant on dive sites like Rusheen Point, Inish Barna and Doonee Beacon. This species is frequent in the north west of the British Isles and Ireland but much scarcer in the south, although records extend to Torbay, Devon and Galicia, NW Spain. It appears in shallow waters up to 30m.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Rusheen Point, Inish Barna

Preferred habitat: silt covered rocks and walls, mostly found on hydroid *Kirchenpaueria pinnata* upon which it feeds on

Eubranchus farrani

This nudibranch is quite a small one, up to 2.3 cm in size maximum. The body is typically white or grey-white, with orange-tipped rhinophores and oral tentacles. The cerata are swollen with yellow or white bands of pigment at the tip. It is found all around the British Isles, Ireland and from Norway to the Mediterranean. It is found in shallow water up to 30 meters max feeding on hydroids, especially those that grow on kelp (*Obelia geniculata*). The spawn (pictured below) is a ribbon laid in a spiral of about two turns, flared out on its upper margin.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Bird Rock

Preferred habitat: kelp covered in hydroids, walls covered in hydroids



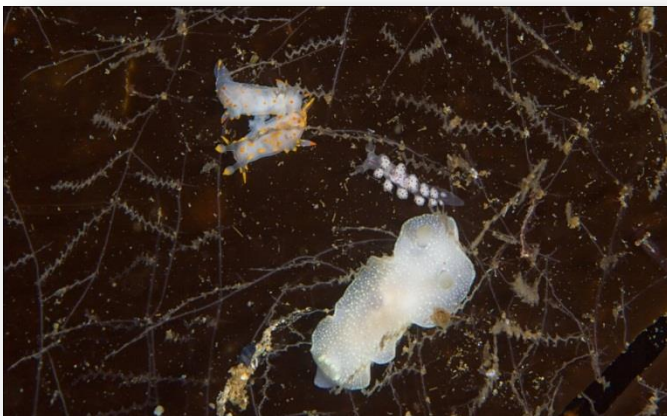
Doto coronata

This is a very small nudibranch that grows up to the size of 1.5 cm. This is a very common species recorded all around the British isles, Ireland and is found in shallow waters feeding up the hydroids, primarily *Obelia geniculata* and *S. cupressina*. The body of this nudibranch is pale yellow or white with crimson pigment lining up to form streaks or blotches. The spawn consists of a ribbon which is laid in a concertina fashion and is usually laid on hydroid or kelp.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Doonee Beacon, Rusheen Point, Inish Barna, Inish Turk dives sites

Preferred habitat: exposed walls, pinnacles, kelp, seaweed, hydroids



Diaphorodoris luteocincta

This tiny nudibranch can grow up to 1.1 cm in size prefers rocky areas and areas that are exposed to current. Its popular name is orange clubbed nudibranch and it feeds on special type of bryozoans such as Crisia and it can be found on silt covered rocks. It can be found all around the British Isles, Ireland and it has been reported even from Norway.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Doonee Beacon, Thany Beg, Bird Rock, Rusheen Point, Inish Barna

Preferred habitat: exposed boulders, walls, silt covered rocks



Aplysia punctata

Aplysia punctata is the most common sea hare found in Connemara. The colour (depending on what they feed upon) is from brown to purplish, black or even olive green. There are white splashes and small, dark spots on both body and tentacles. The species can grow up to 20 cm in size, but usually they are up to around 8cm. They can be found from Greenland, North West Europe all the way to Mediterranean see in shallow waters up to 30m. The sea hare is often found in between seaweeds and kelp, they have a shell which is internal and covered by the mantle. Despite the mantle, they do not swim. The eggs are pink and laid in tangled threads. When the species mate, they produce long chains which can be quite a sight.



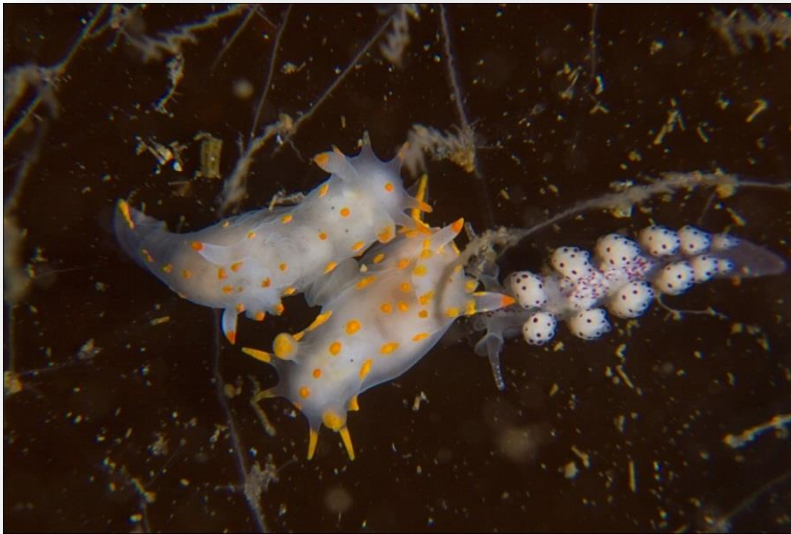
Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Rusheen Point, Inish Barna, shore dives

Preferred habitat: among seaweed, kelp



Polycera quadrilineata

This is a very common nudibranch and can grow up to the size of 4 cm although it's usually smaller than that. It is white with yellow or orange blotches and occasionally some black dots as well. There is usually a row of ovoid blotches down the midline of the back together with others on the flanks and the dorsal metapodium. The preferred diet consists of encrusting bryozoans, especially *Membranipora membranacea*, but also *Electra pilosa*, *Callopora dumerilii*, *Celleporella hyalina* and *Tegella unicornis*, usually on the lower shore, or in shallow offshore situations, to 60 m. It is very common around British Isles, Ireland and also Greenland, Iceland and the European coast from Norway to the Mediterranean Sea. The eggs are spawned in a short white curved ribbon. It can be easily spotted while feeding on *Membranipora membranacea*, This bryozoan forms lacy patches on kelp fronds.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Julia T, Doonee Beacon, Thany Beg, Bird Rock, Rusheen Point, Carrigaddy Beag, Inish Barna, Inish Turk dives sites, Inishbofin dive sites

Preferred habitat: feeding on bryozoans on kelp



Polycera faeroensis

This nudibranch is a very common one and it can grow up to 5cm in size although I have rarely seen it grow that big in Ireland. It is commonly found on the west and south west coasts of Scotland, Wales, England and Ireland. It has a slightly swollen translucent body with pigment blotches of yellow. The yellow pigment covers the frontal tubercles and most of the papillae close to the gills. *Polycera faeroensis* can commonly be found feeding on erect bryozoans *Crisia* and *Bugula* sp. in shallow water on steep rock faces. It prefers shallow water up to 35m of depth.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Julia T, Doonee Beacon, Thany Beg, Bird Rock, Rusheen Point, Carrigaddy Beag, Inish Barna, Inish Turk dives sites, Inishbofin dive sites

Preferred habitat: wrecks, walls (often among jewel anemones), boulders,



Facelina auriculata

This is a quite a small nudibranch, usually around 2cm max, but it can reach up to 4cm in favourable conditions. It has a white body and numerous small purple cerata with slight blue sheen on the head and ceratal surfaces, that is characteristic for this species. There are streaks of white pigment on both sets of tentacles. The cerata are also streaked with white (or sometimes a bit yellow), as is the tail of the animal. Found under boulders on shore as well as in the sublittoral. You can find it all around the British Isles, Ireland and from Norway to the Mediterranean. This is the most common nudibranch I've found so far in Connemara on almost every dive site in shore and further out. It feeds on variety of hydroids where it can be often found.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Julia T, Doonee Beacon, Thany Beg, Bird Rock, Rusheen Point, Carrigaddy Beag, Inish Barna, Inish Turk dives sites, Inishbofin dive sites

Preferred habitat: rocks, boulders, wrecks, walls covered in hydroids in shallow and deeper water



Tritonia hombergii

This is the largest nudibranch in Irish waters. It can grow up to the size of 20cm. A typical feature is all the gills along the edge of the mantle and not in the tail as most other nudibranch species. This particular individual on the picture is a juvenile, so it's only about 3cm in size. The colour varies from white to pinkish brown. As a juvenile, it is well camouflaged to be on its prey Dead man's fingers (Alcyonium digitatum) where it can be often found, but when older it turns yellow, orange or brown and it starts to hide under boulders and rocks on the same current exposed locations. You should not touch this slug, as it can give blisters. These are caused by a secretion from the warts on the mantle. This nudibranch is known from North-West Europe, from Norway to Spain.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Thany Beg, Doonee Beacon

Preferred habitat: dead man's fingers, boulders, under rock faces, wrecks

Geitodoris planata

This nudibranch is quite a large nudibranch, it can reach up to 6.5 cm but it's not seen very often. It is characterised externally by a row of star-shaped whitish patches down each side of the mantle from behind the rhinophores to the gills. It is very similar to common sea lemon nudibranch, but it usually has a brown or purplish brown dominance. This is a shallow water species and feeds upon sponges. It has been recorded from Norway to the French Atlantic coast, and in the Mediterranean Sea (Naples), up to 45 m.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Julia T

Preferred habitat: sponges, boulders, rock faces, wrecks

Facelina bostoniensis

This nudibranch is one of the largest nudibranchs in Irish waters. It can grow up to the size of 5.5 cm. The body is translucent white with rosy pink area around the mouth. The long, mobile oral tentacles can equal half the total body-length. The tips of the oral and rhinophoral tentacles are covered with opaque white pigment. It is found all around British Isles and Ireland up to the western Mediterranean and even northeast coast of North America. It is a shallow water species. The diet consists of the hydroids Tubularia larynx, T. indivisa and Clava multicornis.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Julia T, Rusheen Point, Inish Barna

Preferred habitat: found feeding on hydroids, wrecks,



Flabellina pedata

This nudibranch is one of my favourite ones due to its bright colours and photogenic appearance. It is normally around 2cm in length, but sometimes you can see them in size up to 4cm. The body, oral tentacles and rhinophores are purple, and the tentacles and cerata are tipped with white. They are usually found on their hydroid food *Eudendrium ramosum*, you can find them on moderately exposed rocky areas. It is a very common nudibranch, but rarely abundant. Mostly you will find one or two individuals together max.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Doonee Beacon, Thany Beg, Bird Rock, Rusheen Point, Inish Barna, Julia T

Preferred habitat: dark shallow walls, boulders, rock faces, wrecks, hydroids (*Eudendrium ramosum*)



Aeolidia papillosa

The grey / cream sea slug is a large marine slug that can grow up to 12 cm in size. It eats sea anemones. Even though anemones have stinging cells, the sea snail is not affected. In fact, it attaches the stinging cells of the anemone to the flakes (cerrata) on its back, making itself poisonous. This is how it protects itself from enemies. The flakes also serve as gills: they take in oxygen from the water. The front tentacles are cone-shaped with thick darker coloured bases and white tips. It is very common on the Atlantic coast of Europe and North America and the Pacific coast of North America.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Julia T

Preferred habitat: areas covered with sea anemones, particularly beadlet anemones and sometimes snakelocks anemones or even plumose anemones

Doto fragilis

This nudibranch can grow up to 3.5 cm in size, but usually individuals average in around 2cm. One variety, with a dark brown body and paler cerata, feeds on the hydroids, *Nemertisia antennina* and *N. ramosa*. Another variety with a transparent white body with brown pigment only on the head, feeds on *Halecium muricatum*. Has up to 10 pairs of cerata, each with up to 13 concentric circles of pale tubercles. The rhinophore sheaths are trumpet-shaped with flared outer rims. It is common in Ireland and all-round the British Isles, and from Norway to the Mediterranean.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Inish Barna

Preferred habitat: usually found on silty sites where hydroids are abundant, specifically *Nemertisia antennina* and *Nemertisia ramosa* (pictured above)

Archidoris pseudoargus

This is a very common nudibranch around Ireland and UK, it is more commonly known as sea lemon nudibranch. It is a very large nudibranch and can grow up to size of 12cm. The mantle bears many short blunt tubercles. The mottled coloration of this nudibranch probably aids camouflage. The colours include yellow, brown, pink, green and white. The sea lemon feeds mainly on sponges, especially the breadcrumb sponge (*Halichondria panicea*). The spawn is bright yellow or white broad ribbon laid in a spiral (rosette like) attached by one edge.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Rusheen Point, Doonee Beacon

Preferred habitat: low shore, found under boulders or feeding on breadcrumb sponges

Favorinus branchialis

This nudibranch grows to about 2.5 cm in size, but usually it's around 1cm and is not very common. It is usually present where a lot of other nudibranchs are located as all favorinus species, it feeds on the spawn of other nudibranchs and sea slugs. The body is translucent white and it has white surface pigment with a triangle or diamond shape on the head. The rhinophores are distinctive brown in the basal portion and a white tip.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Inish Barna

Preferred habitat: wherever nudibranchs are abundant

Doto maculata

This nudibranch can grow up to 1 cm in length; this particular individual was smaller than 1cm. The body is translucent white (or even brown or black sometimes) with dark red or black spots on the tops of the cerata tubercles. There are 4 or 5 pairs of cerata of rounded tubercles. This species feeds on the small plumulariid hydroid *Halopteris catharina*. It is not very known how common it is, but it's present in the Irish Sea, west coast and around British Isles.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Inish Barna

Preferred habitat: feeding on hydroids, silty sites, walls, boulders

Doto pinnatifida

This is one of the largest doto nudibranchs, it can grow up to 3cm in length .It is translucent pinkish colour and is characterised by black tipped tubercles on the sides of the body and on the cerata. Occasionally there are a few of these tubercles on the dorsum. The rhinophore sheaths have a series of black spots around the edges. This animal eats solely hydroids Nemertesia antennina. It is a fairly widespread nudibranch and can be found all around Ireland.

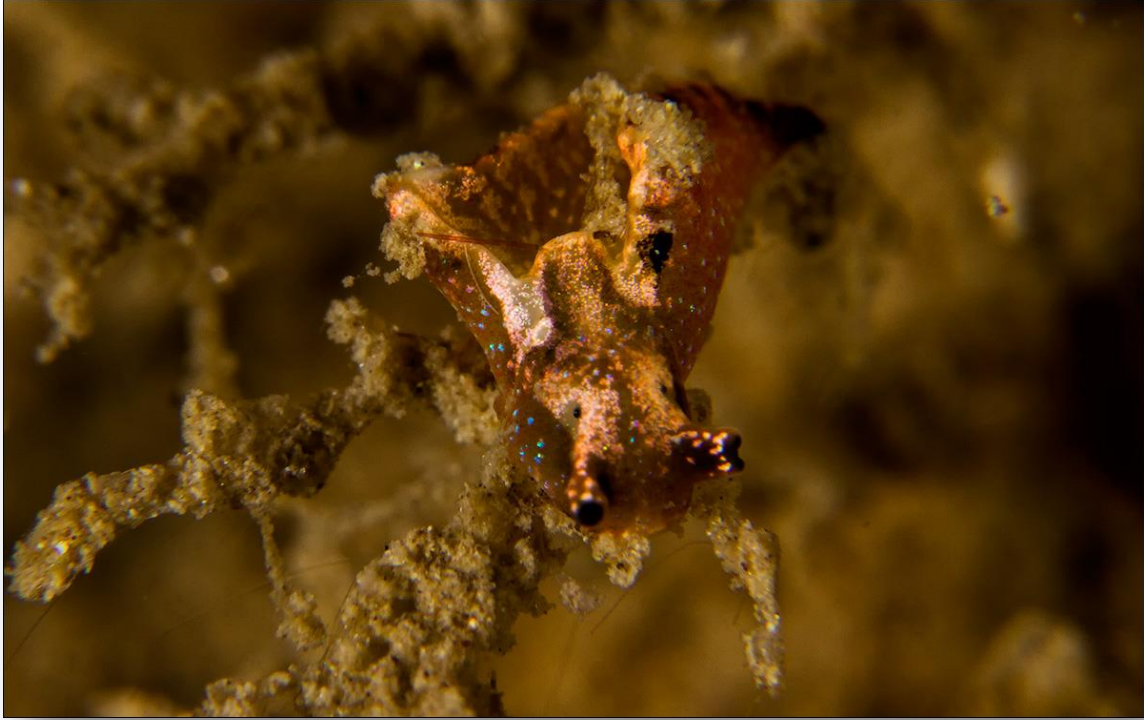


Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Inish Barna

Preferred habitat: areas and walls where hydroids called “Nemertesia antennina” (pictured) are abundant

Elysia viridis

This sea slug can grow up to 4.5 cm in size although this individual was only 0.5 cm in size. There are usually scattered iridescent red, blue and green spots, and there can be white patches on the parapodial edges and black markings in the head and elsewhere. It eats algae called *Cladophora* and *Chaetomorpha* as well as coenocytic algae, so that means it is found in silty sites, mostly in shallow water where those algae are abundant.



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Rusheen Point

Preferred habitat: walls, shallow water abundant in algae and seaweed

Trapania Pallida

This nudibranch can grow up to 1 cm in length; it is translucent white in colour with white patches on its rhinophores, gills and tail. The main recognizable feature is re-curved processes at the base of the rhinophores and alongside the gills. It is usually found amongst bryozoans, hydroids and sponges on rocky sublittoral cliffs and outcrops, in depths of 10-20 metres. It can be found on the west coast of Ireland, Western Scotland, all the way to France and Spain. It is fairly scarce but I found two individuals together although this poor individual has parasites (the white growth around the gills).



Dive sites where this nudibranch was spotted: Bird Rock

Preferred habitat: on hydroids and sponges on rocky sublittoral cliffs and outcrops

Sources:

- <http://www.seaslug.org.uk/>
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nudibranch>
- <http://www.habitas.org.uk/marinelife/>
- <http://www.seaslugforum.net/>
- <http://www.marlin.ac.uk/>
- personal experience

Pictures:

Taken by Maja Stankovski while diving with Scubadive West.