

Leopard Slug (*Limax maximus*)

Other names: Great Grey Slug or Tiger Slug

Why are we looking for it?

The Leopard Slug is thought to be a widespread species, but is rather thinly recorded in the Scottish Borders and is also likely to be under-recorded in the Lothians. By launching a survey of the Leopard Slug, we hope to build up a better picture of where the species is found, and in what numbers, adding to our understanding of the species. We will also be able to use the data to monitor future changes in the Leopard Slug population.



Leopard Slug *Limax maximus* © Mike Beard

Identification features

- 10–15cm long when mature
- body of slug is grey or greyish-brown colour, with black spots/blotches
- front of body has marbled pattern of spots (never stripes)
- back of body has two or three pairs of stripes that run the length of the body, but never form a continuous line
- tentacles on the head are red-brown colour
- underneath (sole) is uniformly white and produces colourless mucus

Could be confused with...

The **Tree Slug** (*Lehmanna marginata*), which is superficially similar but smaller, and usually paler, having two dark coloured stripes on each side of the animal, including the front of the body. Rather translucent, especially in wet weather. It produces copious watery mucus when disturbed.

Dark forms may be confused with the rare **Ash-Black Slug** (*Limax cinereoniger*). However, the sole of adult Ash-Black Slugs is pale with dark margins, whereas the Leopard Slug has a uniformly whitish sole. This species is usually only found in ancient woodland.

Young slugs of other species could be confused with the Leopard Slug. By submitting a **photograph** with your record we can check the identification.

Ecology

The Leopard Slug can be found in a range of modified habitats throughout the year, including gardens, greenhouses and wooded areas. They prefer damp, shaded places beneath rocks or vegetation and are most obvious at night or after wet weather. Their diet includes fungi and decaying plant material.

Leopard Slugs have a very unusual and distinctive means of mating. In Spring and Autumn, a pair of Leopard Slugs will climb a tree or other structure, then hang suspended on a thick strand of mucus and intertwined with one another. After mating, eggs are laid in clusters of 50-130 in the soil or under stones. Individuals can live up to 3 or 4 years.

References

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