

NEWSLETTER

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First observations of the polycerid nudibranch *Gymnodoris arnoldi* (Burn, 1957) in New South Wales, Australia

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The nudibranch *Gymnodoris arnoldi* is an enigmatic slug, infrequently observed and relatively unknown. Originally described as *Nembrotha arnoldi* Burn, 1957 based on its apparent similarity to other *Nembrotha*, it was later moved to the genus *Gymnodoris* by Burn in 1962 (Burn, 1957, 1962). There are few records of it in the scientific literature and there is a paucity of information regarding its anatomy and biology.

According to Burn (1957) it exhibits a “minutely spiculate” body, leading Rudman (2001) to doubt its generic placement in either *Gymnodoris* or *Nembrotha*. Furthermore, its association with the encrusting bryozoan *Beania magellanica* (Busk, 1852), purported to be its food source (Burn, 1989, p.773; McDonald & Nybakken, 1997), contrasts with the known diet of other *Gymnodoris* which consists primarily of other sea

slugs, their eggs, or, in the case of *Gymnodoris nigricolor* (Baba, 1960), as a parasite on the goby *Amblyeleotris steinitzi* (Klausewitz, 1974) (Coleman, 2008). Some *Nembrotha*, however, are known to consume bryozoans (McDonald & Nybakken, 1997). To resolve its generic position, a thorough morphological re-examination is needed in combination with molecular analysis.

Gymnodoris arnoldi is a south-eastern Australian endemic species (Burn, 1957, 1962, 1975, 2006; 1989; Grove, 2006; Rudman, 2010) with a range that includes: South Australia, where it was photographed by Neville Coleman at Port Noarlunga in November 1970 (Coleman, 2008, p. 305); Tasmania where it was photographed by Neville Coleman at Bruny Island in February 1972; and northern to central Victoria where it has been observed most frequently. (cont'd on p.3)

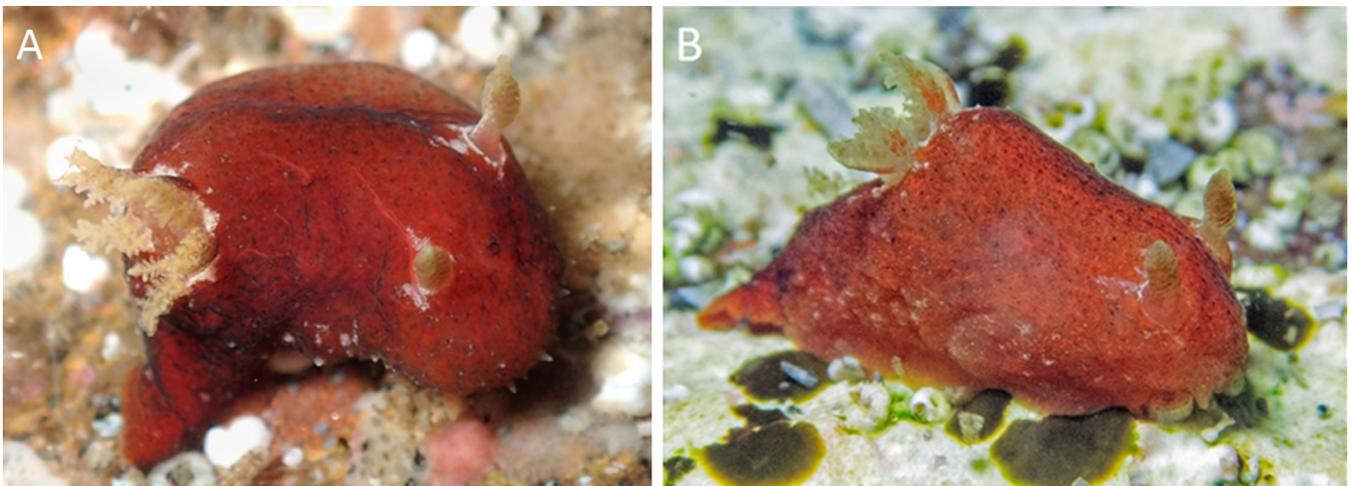


Fig 1. *Gymnodoris arnoldi*, Fingal Head, NSW, 10 March 2019.
(A) photo: Tom R. Davis; (B) photo: Steve D. A. Smith.



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Newsletter

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The deadline for articles for the next issue of the Newsletter is Friday 22 November, 2019.

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The importance of the animal: the case of *Laevilitorina (Macquariella) kingensis* (May, 1924) (Littorinidae)

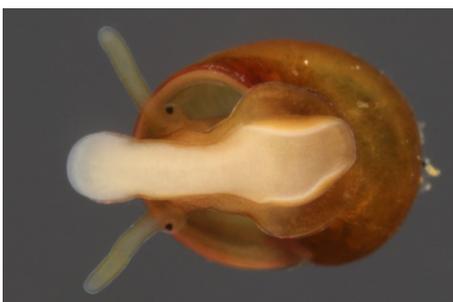
The old adage "Appearances can be deceptive" is very applicable to the mollusca. An example is the micromollusc *Laevilitorina kingensis* from south eastern Australia. May (1924) described it from dead-collected material and tentatively placed it in the genus *Natica* Scopoli, 1777 owing to its appearance. May & Macpherson (1958) listed it in another naticid genus — *Notocochlis* Powell, 1933. However, on description of the soft parts, Ponder (1976) showed it to be a littorinid and clearly not a naticid.

Similar placement problems have been experienced with many other micromolluscs, sometimes with huge surprises once the animal is known. Perhaps the most spectacular example of these is the heterobranch *Cornirostra pellucida* (Laseron, 1954) (Cornirostridae), where the plain shell is occupied by a very flamboyant animal (see Ponder, 1990).

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P. Vafiadis



At left: *Laevilitorina kingensis*. Shell length 1.6mm, sieved from lower littoral algae, Harmers Haven, Victoria, Thursday 15 March, 2012. Photos: P. Vafiadis.

First observations of the polycerid nudibranch *Gymnodoris arnoldi* (Burn, 1957) in New South Wales, Australia (continued from page 1)

Specimens, including the holotype (Museum Victoria (MV) F.18609 & F.18610), were first collected from Torquay, Victoria, in the 1950s with more recent samples collected at Point Danger by Bob Burn in 2008 (MV F.196409). It has also been observed inside Port Phillip Bay at Portsea Pier where it was collected by Neville Coleman (MV F.30782) and photographed by John Chuk (Rudman, 2001; Burn, 2015, p. 164).

During the 20th Nelson Bay Sea Slug Census we snorkelled and SCUBA dived at Fingal Head, NSW (32° 44'53.35"S, 152°10'22.24"E [WGS84]) on 10 March 2019 and found two individual *Gymnodoris arnoldi*. One specimen was found under a rock at 5 metres (Fig. 1A), and another under a large boulder amongst gastropods, including *Mitrella tayloriana* (Reeve, 1859), small trochids, spirorbid polychaetes and its putative host, *B. magellanica* (Fig 1B). These observations extend the known range of this species 890 km north from central Victoria into the warm-temperate waters of New South Wales (Fig. 2).

The southern shore of Port Stephens around Nelson

Bay and the ocean coast around Fingal Head are frequently searched during Sea Slug Census events (Smith & Davis, 2019), and yet observations that add to the growing list of sea slug species in the region continue to be made (Nimbs et al, 2016; Nimbs & Smith, 2017, 2018). The observation of novel taxa in relatively well-known areas provides empirical support for the need for continued long-term survey efforts. Few of the novel spatial records of sea slugs that we have published previously represent an equator-ward range extension. Whilst we note that some pole-ward range extensions may be driven by ocean-warming (e.g. Nimbs & Smith, 2018), we acknowledge that the spatio-temporal patchiness of sea slugs may mean that some important observations are the product of sustained search effort in a concentrated area by experienced observers. This seems to be an example of the latter and provides added incentive for citizen scientists to participate in Sea Slug Census events, both at Nelson Bay (next event in September 2019) and at other locations along Australia's east coast.

(References—see next page).

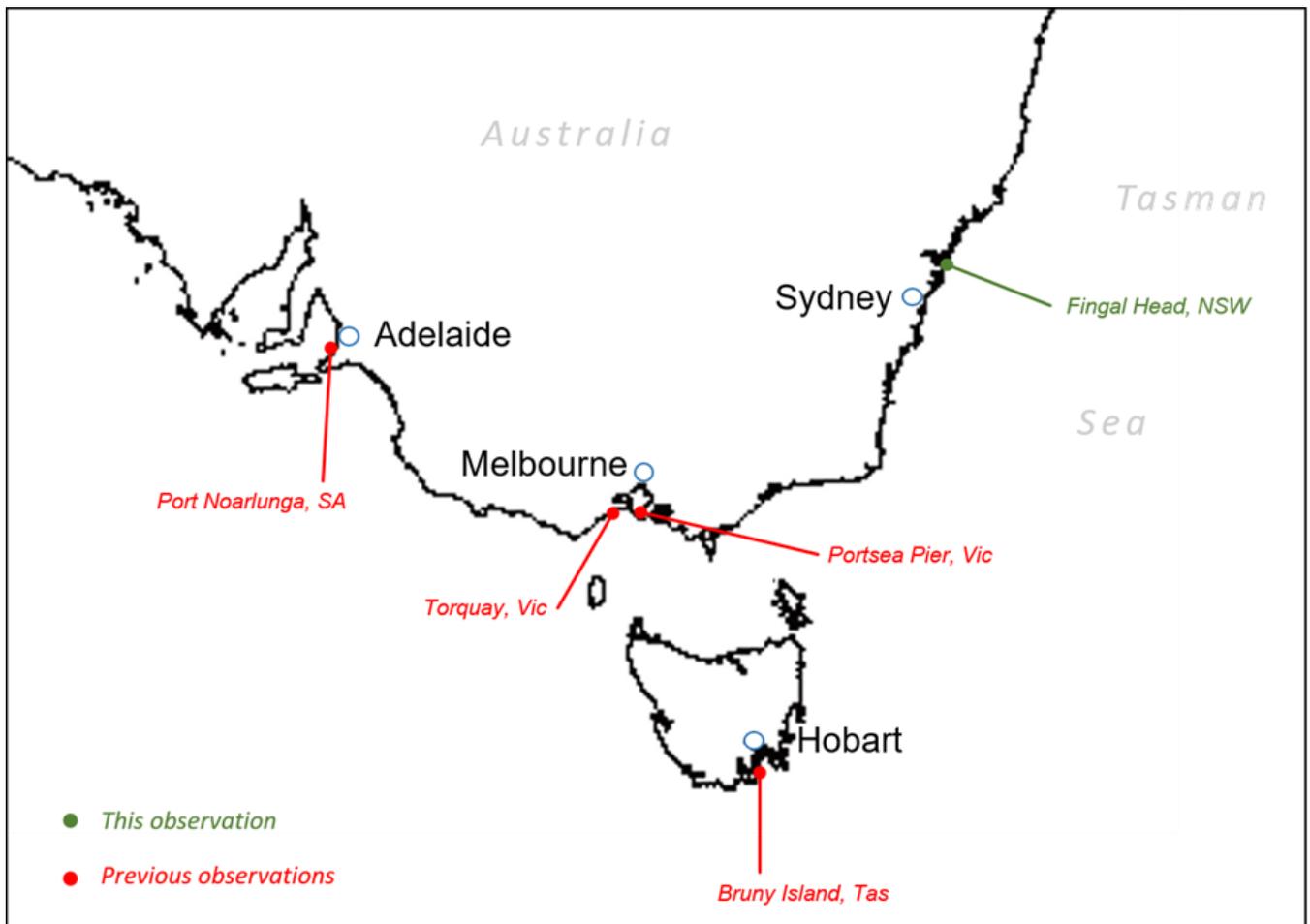


Fig 2. *Gymnodoris arnoldi* map of current and historic observations.

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***Polycera capensis* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1824): two new reports from Victoria**

Robert Burn, Malacological Society of Australasia

Some years ago, the occurrence of this strikingly beautiful nudibranch was noted in eastern Victorian waters (Burn, 2008; 2015). A single specimen had been observed and photographed subtidally at Beware Reef, off Cape Conran. Two more recent reports are listed here.

On 13 May 2019, a specimen was photographed by John Rudge at the Metung Yacht Club Marina, Gippsland Lakes (Figure 1). The specimen had only the right-hand yellow branchial appendage, the tip showing between two of the black gills. A white stub to the right of the gills indicates the position of the missing right-hand branchial appendage.

On 26 and 29 January 2017, Heide Harron photographed *P. capensis* at Blairgowrie Marina, south-eastern Port Phillip Bay (Figure 2, next page). Her suite of images includes shots of at least three specimens, two with black stripes as usually seen in animals from central and southern New South Wales (Rudnam, 1998–2007) and one with wider black stripes especially behind the level of the gills. Several images include the wavy-edged spiral ribbon of minute white eggs typical of the species (Rudman, 1998–2007). For mating to have occurred suggests the presence of many more animals than those photographed. This report extends the



Fig. 1. *Polycera capensis* at Metung, Gippsland Lakes, Victoria, 13 May 2019. Photo: John Rudge.

range of *P. capensis* about 400 kilometres westward of Cape Conran, well into the central part of the Victorian coastline.

Polycera capensis is the fourteenth species of the genus to be reported from Victoria and the Bass Strait area (Burn, 2006; 2008). It is easily separated from its local congeners by much larger size (to 70mm crawling length), white body with black stripes, yellow stripe on



**Fig. 2. *Polycera capensis*, Blairgowrie Pier, Port Phillip Bay, Victoria, 26 January, 2017.
Photo: Heide Harron.**

the tail, six yellow velar tentacles across the head and single yellow branchial appendage each side of the gills. Images of the Beware Reef specimen and six of the other local species can be found in Burn (2015).

These reports of *Polycera capensis* from the Victorian coastline would suggest that sea temperature continues to rise sufficiently to allow sporadic westward range extensions, but hardly enough for viable populations to form. Time alone will tell.

Acknowledgements:

I thank Kade Mills and Nicole Mertens, Reef Watch Co-ordinator, for drawing my attention to these finds. John Rudge, Kina Diving @ Metung Yacht Club Marina, and Heidi Harron, Sub-Aqua Group of Victoria are thanked for allowing use of their images.

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A look back into MSA history: who was the late John Arnold?

Platon Vafiadis, Malacological Society of Australasia

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The lead article in this newsletter issue by Nimbs, Davis and Smith on *Gymnodoris arnoldi* (Burn, 1957) prompted a search of the MSA archives to learn more of the person after whom this species was named.

Macpherson (undated 1) notes that John Kissick Arnold (1895-1955), born in Glenferrie, Victoria in 1895, was a Methodist Minister and a foundation member of the Malacological Club of Victoria (MCV) (founded on 23 October, 1952—see Vafiadis, 2016), which he also served as a committee member and as the club's first field-trip organiser from 1953 to 1954.

At the November 1954 Annual General Meeting of the MCV, the Rev. Arnold was elected as its President (author not specified, 1955b). The 1954 Second Annual Report summarises the year's activities but unfortunately does not list the outcomes of the election of the new office-bearers (MVC, 1954a), but minutes of this meeting are separately available and provide this information (MCV, 1954b). His tenure as President was before the MCV became the Malacological Society of Australia in

1956, the inaugural president of which was Mr. Denzil Hartley — see MSA Turns 60, week 36, available at http://www.malsocaus.org/?page_id=933.

He seems to have been a champion of the minute molluscan fauna. In the MCV Newsletter of 29 November 1954, the summary of the October 1954 meeting (which was a Members' Night) includes the following: "From the Rev. Arnold we learn how to "Shell by night—at home"; "The enthusiasm and perhaps even the interest of many collectors is in direct ratio to the size of the shell. The larger the shell, the greater their interest; conversely, the smaller the shell, the less their interest. And so the smallest shells are scarcely known." Mr. Arnold goes on to tell us the steps necessary to reduce a dozen pounds of shell sand to millions of wee shells, etc. As proof that this could be done, he had on display a most beautiful box of dozens of small bottles, each bearing different species. After the tedious job of sorting, Mr. Arnold states, "During the coming month, I hope to catch up on my sleep!" (author not specified, 1954).

Together with J. H. Macpherson, the Rev. Arnold wrote “The *Murex* or rock shells”, which was the fifth in a series of special MCV publications (Arnold & Macpherson, 1953).

The archival material suggests that his untimely death in 1955 may have followed a short illness, but the precise date and the cause are nowhere mentioned. His obituary appears in the August 29, 1955 newsletter and reads, “It is with deep regret that we record the death of our President the Rev. John K. Arnold. He has been an enthusiastic shell collector for many years and was a foundation member of the club, on whose committee he served with devotion, never missing a meeting or an excursion except through stress of other duties. He was field organiser for the first two years of the Club’s life and it was mainly due to his drive and friendliness that excursions were so well attended. He was elected President at the last Annual Meeting and here again he showed his friendliness and organising ability. Mr. Arnold specialised in small shells and his care and diligence in the sorting of shell sand has produced a number of rare species including a perfect specimen of *Edentellina* (sic) *typica* Gatliff and Gabriel, which he presented to the National Museum.” (author not specified, 1955b).

The same newsletter reports on the monthly meetings of May, June and July of 1955 — the Rev. Arnold was present at the May meeting, but was an apology for the June and July meetings (author not specified, 1955b). This places the date of his death as somewhere between 1 July and 29 August 1955. That it was the result of an unexpected illness is suggested by a note in the MCV newsletter of 30 May 1955 which states, “Our Chairman, Mr. Arnold, has been busily engaged in moving from Kew to Moonee Ponds where he takes up his duties as Minister of the Methodist Church.” (author not specified, 1955a).

Macpherson (undated 1) also re-iterates the above-given obituary and notes that “His wife Hilda gave his shell collection to the Mal Soc Club to be sold to raise funds for the club.” Macpherson (undated 2) holds a briefer entry and adds no further information. Additionally, the archival material unfortunately holds no photographs of him.

When Robert Burn (1957) described *Nembrotha arnoldi* nearly 62 years ago in the first issue of the *Journal of the Malacological Society of Australia*, he dedicated it thus: “This species is named in honour of the late Rev. John K. Arnold — a very good friend and capable teacher, who showed me how and where in conchological collecting” (Burn, 1957: 16). On recent questioning of Robert Burn about the Rev. Arnold, his memories are largely centred on the field trips that the latter organised. Then in his teens, Robert would catch the train

from Geelong to Melbourne where he would be picked up to accompany the Rev. Arnold and other members to the site of fieldwork, and at the end of the excursion dropped off again at the station for the train ride back home.

The MSA archives have quite a few field trip lists compiled by Rev. Arnold, some of them signed—an example is reproduced on page 7 (Figure 1). One letter from him to J. H. Macpherson dated December 30 1953 discusses field trip planning for the year 1954 (and one locality is land-based rather than marine); that this was printed on Church letterhead was not out of step with a notion of the natural world comprising a Theophany. This letter is reproduced on page 8 (Figure 2), although out of respect, the leading letterhead has not been reproduced.

Well done to Robert Burn for recognising the valuable contributions of this interesting man to both the MCV and posthumously to the MSA.

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Malacological Club of Victoria.
Mollusca taken alive at Mornington.
April 18 1953.

CREPISCODA: Ischrochiton lineolatus.
Ischrodarsia novaehollandae.
Acanthochiton pilsbryi.

GASTROSCODA: Montfortula conoida. A
Emarginula hedleyi. B
Cellana tramoserica. A B H
Patelloida alticostata. H
Patelloida submarmorata. A.
Chiazocma flammea. A B H
Clanculus plebjus. A
Austrocochlea concamerata. A H
Fractarmilla concamerata. B
Austrocochlea obtusa. A H
Subnivalia undulata. H
Melaraphe unifasciata. A B H
Bembicium melanostoma. B H
Bembicium nanum. A
Sabia Australis. H
Ratisfusus reticulata. B
Lasiella virosa. A
Zemitrella semiconvexica. A
Cominella alveolata. B
Cominella lineolata. A B H
Siphonaria diemersi. A

PELECYSCODA: Electroma georgiana. A B H
Mytilus planulatus. A B H
Katelysia scalarina. H

A. Rev. J.K. Arnold.
B. Mr. Robert Burn.
H. Mr. Charles Haan.

John Arnold.

Figure 1: Typed and signed field list by Rev. John Arnold, of living molluscs seen at Mornington, Port Phillip Bay, Victoria on 18 April, 1953.

KEW..... December 30 1953

Dear Miss Macpherson,

What a disappointing lots of tides await us during the year. I only hope that the members do not blame me for them as they facetiously blame me for any inclemencies of the weather.

I have checked over carefully the table we drew up the other day and think some variation as indicated in the following list will on the whole be better. I have brought the San Remo trip forward so as to meet a morning tide, but only to March so that we may have the lower level of water. Although the December tide will for us be the best of the year, yet I know that the members would prefer not to have to make the long trip home from San Remo after dark, and such are the local vagaries of the tide at Torquay that on December 11 th. all rock shelf shelling will be over by 7 p.m.

Field Days. 1954.

Date.	Place.	Low Water.	Level.
✓ February 13	Sorrento Back Beach.	12 36 p.m.	7 in.
✓ March 13	San Remo.	11 36 a.m.	4 "
✓ April 10	Shoreham.	10 32 a.m.	4 "
May 7	Rosebud.	11 55 a.m.	5 "
June 5	Altona.	12 13 p.m.	7 "
October 16	Sherbrooke Forest.		
December 11	Torquay.	5 55 p.m.	3 "

May I wish you the compliments of the season? May 1954 be for you a year of satisfaction and gladness.

Yours sincerely,

Figure 2: Letter from Rev. John Arnold to J. H. Macpherson, December 30th, 1953.

Correspondence

Editor's note: The following email, from author Elisabeth Tova Bailey on 21 June 2019, is reproduced here for the information of the wider membership. We wish her continuing success. Bruce Livett is also well.

Dear MSA, Bruce Livett reviewed my book, *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating*, for your March 2011 newsletter. So I wanted to let MSA know that I have just completed a short film adaptation of my book of the same title. That film will launch in Perth, Australia at the Revelation Perth International Film Festival. There will be three screening dates, July 11, 12, and 14th. The film is 15 minutes long and has glorious footage of a *Neohelix albolabris*. The film tells the

story of how I observed a snail that lived at my bedside. I e-mailed Bruce to let him know but have not had a reply so I hope that he is okay and I thought I should contact MSA directly. The website for the film has the film trailer you can view at: wildsnailfilm.org

Please feel free to let your membership know about the film adaptation, screening dates, and website. I'll attach the film poster here as well in case you'd like to use that (reproduced at right—Ed.). My memoir is still available, from which the film is adapted. It is published in Australia by Text Publishing.

With all best wishes, Elisabeth Tova Bailey.

(see also: <http://www.elisabethtova.com.au/>)

