

# Australian Flatworm

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## Species Description

**Scientific name:** *Australoplana sanguinea*

**Native to:** Australia

**Habitat:** Gardens, nurseries, garden centres, parks, moor-land, wasteland, pasture and arable land.

A small terrestrial flatworm between 20-80 mm in length and 2-5 mm wide. Having a flattened or oval cross-section, orange or pinkish-orange in colour, with a pink head end and two pale grey narrow lines running down the length of the body close to the mid-line. The head end has numerous discrete tiny eyes.

Australian Flatworms have been reported in Northern Ireland but records are considered to be quite low.

Australian flatworms prey on earthworms, posing a potential threat to native earthworm populations. Further spread could have an impact on wildlife species dependent on earthworms (e.g. badgers, moles) and could have a localised deleterious effect on soil structure.

**As Australian flatworms are not ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland, under the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order (Northern Ireland) 2019 it is an offence to release or allow this species to escape into the wild.**



## Key ID Features



Report any sightings via; CEDaR Online Recording - <https://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI>, iRecord app or Invasive Species Northern Ireland website - <http://invasivespeciesni.co.uk/report-sighting>



# Identification throughout the year

Flatworms remain similar in appearance throughout the year.

## Field Signs

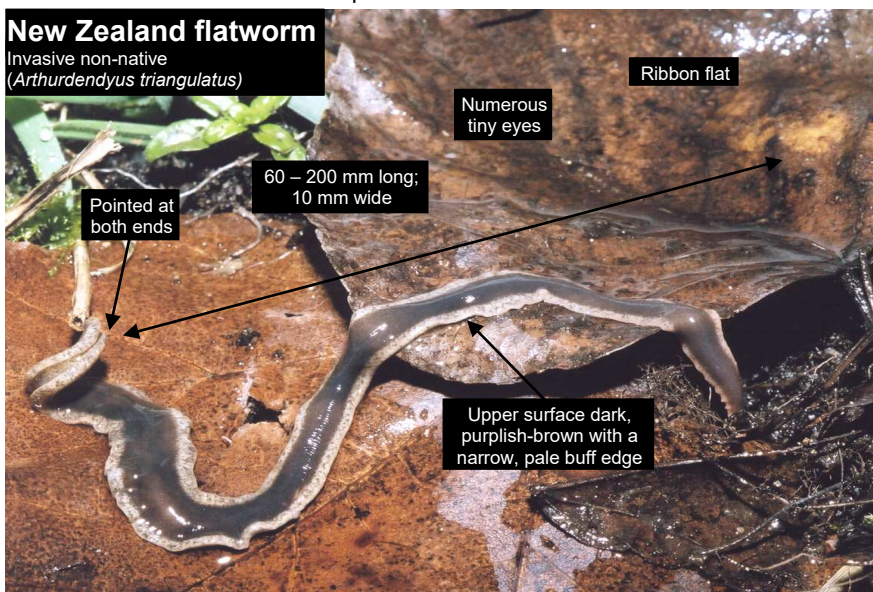
Shiny black egg capsules similar in appearance to a blackcurrant can rarely be found in the soil surface in damp places, such as under plastic or other sheeting, rocks, flat stones and plant containers.

## Similar Species

There are two native land flatworms (*Microplana terrestris* and *Microplana scharffi*) that can be similar in size to *Australoplana sanguinea*. However, both of these lack the dorsal stripe and are darker in colour.

### New Zealand flatworm

Invasive non-native  
(*Arthurdendyus triangulatus*)



Upper surface is uniform dark grey-black or brown colour

Cylindrical body blunt at head end

**A land flatworm**  
Native  
(*Microplana terrestris*)

Up to about 2 cm long and 1-2 mm wide

Two tiny eyes near to head end

Under surface is pale

Round in cross-section

**A land flatworm**  
Native  
(*Microplana terrestris*)

No longitudinal lines running down length of body

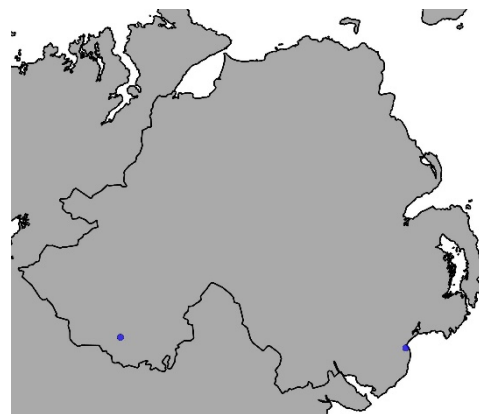
Smooth when extended, but slightly flattened and creased when contracted

Yellow in colour when unfed, pinkish after eating earthworms and yellow-grey after eating slugs

2 – 5 cm long; 1 – 2 mm wide

## Distribution

Very few records in Northern Ireland.



Source NBN atlas Northern Ireland - <https://northernireland-species.nbnatlas.org/species/NHMSYS0020744893>

Check website for current distribution

### Kontikia andersoni

Invasive non-native



## References and further reading:

"Invasive alien species in northern Ireland"

<http://www.habitas.org.uk/invasive/species.asp?item=50004>

Jones, H D (2005) British land flatworms. *British Wildlife*, 16, 189-194

Jones, H D (1995) The African and European land planarian faunas, with an identification guide for field workers in Europe. *Pedobiologia*, 42, 477- 489

Photos from: Archie Murchie, Dr. Roy Anderson

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