

Leathery Sea Squirt

Scan for more information



Species Description

Scientific name: *Styela clava*

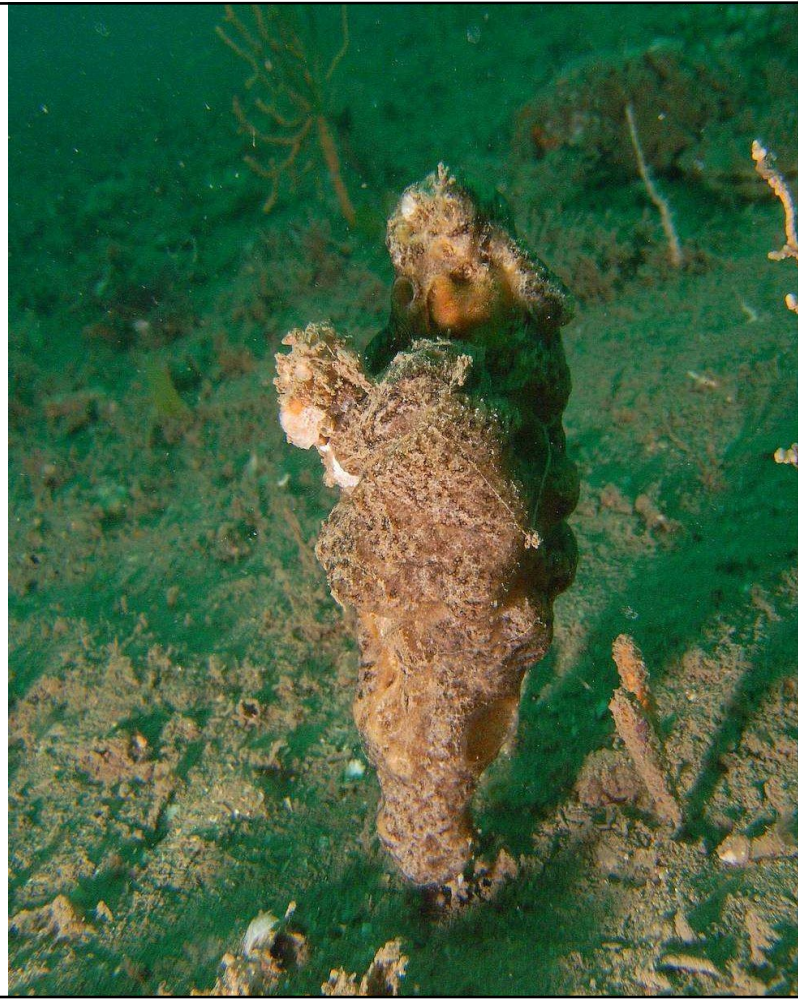
AKA: Club (or Clubbed) Tunicate, Asian Sea Squirt

Native to: North West Pacific

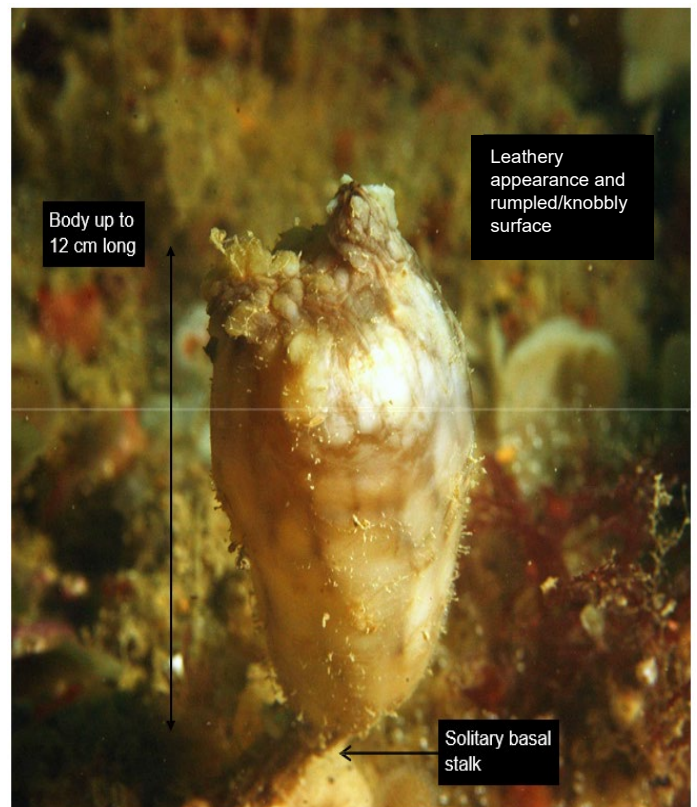
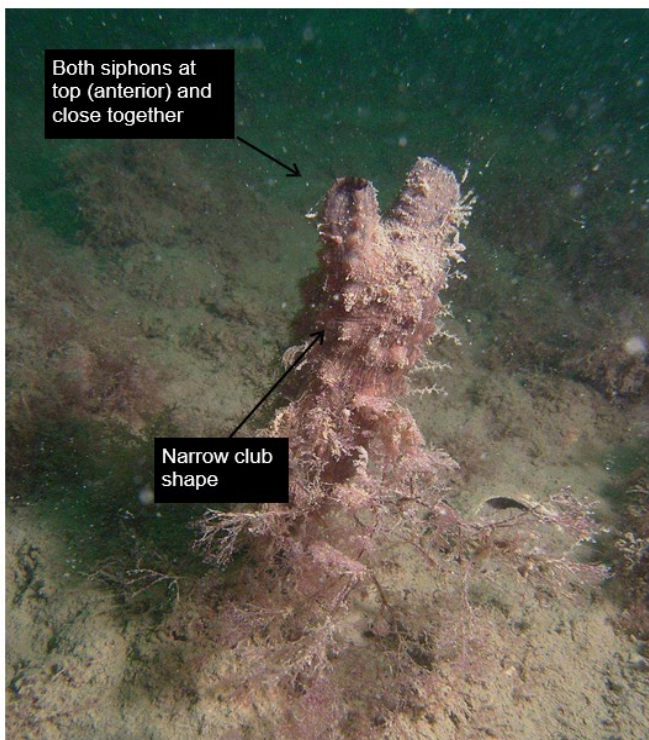
Habitat: Hard surfaces in shallow, sheltered water
Sea squirts are animals shaped like a stout bag with two openings (siphons). Leathery sea squirt is differentiated from other sea squirts in Northern Ireland by being solitary, with each individual having its own basal stalk.

The species was first reported in the wild in Ireland in 1971. It can be found on a number of locations around Northern Ireland. Likely introduced to Ireland with the Pacific oyster (*Crassostrea gigas*) or on leisure craft, as most locations in Ireland where it has been recorded to date have oyster cultures or/and a marina. Subsequent spread is likely by leisure craft, as larva in ballast water or adults attached to sheltered parts of the hull. Large populations can dominate and displace other species through competition for food and space. It is also a fouling pest on ship hulls and aquacultural infrastructure.

***Styela clava* is listed on Schedule 9 of The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 and as such, it is an offence to plant or otherwise allow this species to grow in 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

Readily identifiable throughout the year.

Distribution

Leathery sea squirts have been recorded around the coast of Ireland and the UK.

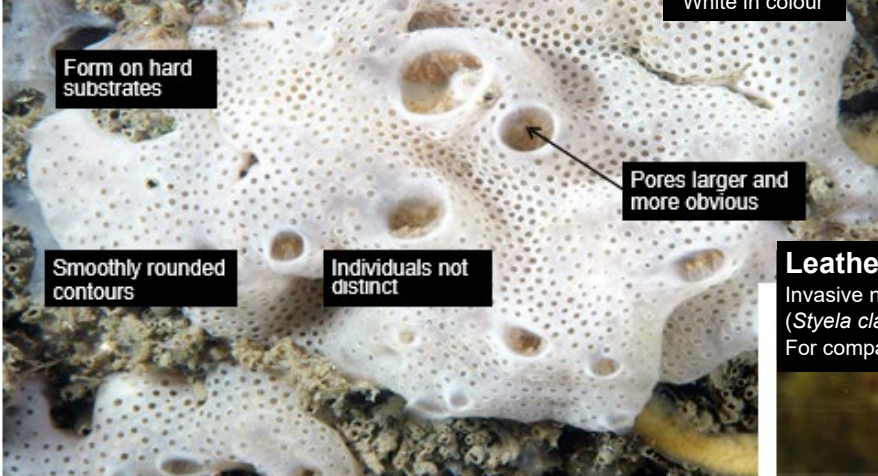
Source: NBN Gateway. Check website for current distribution.



Similar Species

Other colony-forming sea squirts

Native
(*Lissoclinum perforatum*)



White in colour

Form on hard substrates

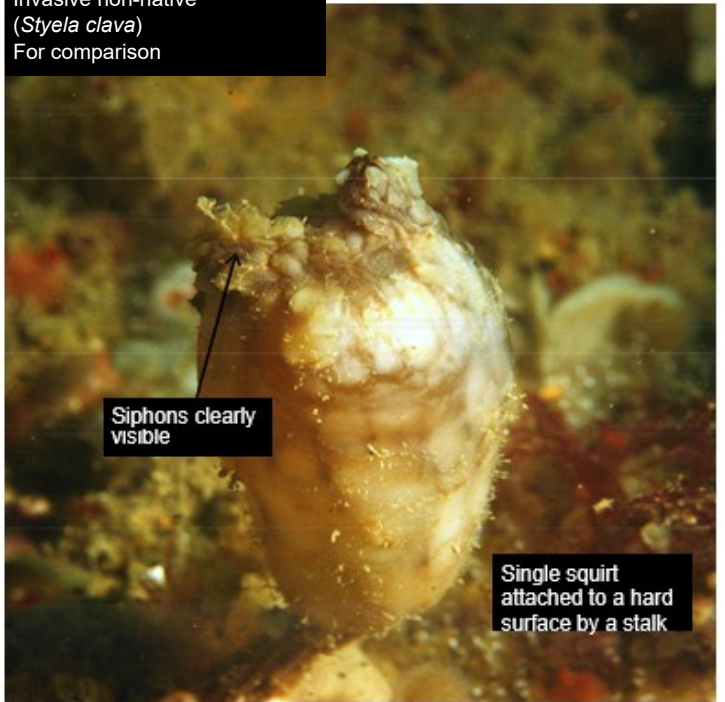
Pores larger and more obvious

Smoothly rounded contours

Individuals not distinct

Leathery sea squirts

Invasive non-native
(*Styela clava*)
For comparison



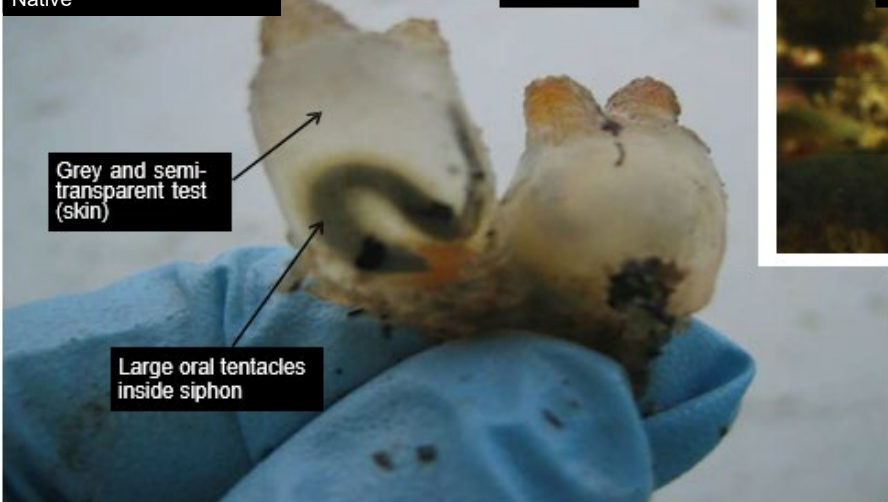
Siphons clearly visible

Single squirt attached to a hard surface by a stalk

Ascidella aspersa

Native

Body 5-10 cm long



Grey and semi-transparent test (skin)

Large oral tentacles inside siphon

References and further reading:

MarLIN (undated). "Identification Guide for Selected Marine Non-native Species".

www.marlin.ac.uk

Morton, O. & Picton, B.E. 2009. Encyclopaedia of Marine life of Britain and Ireland

www.habitas.org.uk/

Photos from: Kevin Linnane, Steve Trehwella.

Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.

Adapted for Northern Ireland Environment Agency 2020