

Blue-grey Taildropper HABITAT MONITORING GUIDE



This endangered slug lives in Douglas-fir forest and Garry Oak meadows. This guide will help residents & land managers to identify suitable habitats and monitor for slugs.



Canada

Please report observations to Habitat Acquisition Trust: hatmail@hat.bc.ca
HAT acknowledges funding from the Government of Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program



Tiny slug on corrugated cardboard cover object

Cover objects placed in leaf litter near rotten stumps or logs at edge of forest & meadows

Securing cover object with wood skewer

Monitoring for Blue-grey Taildroppers



The *Blue-grey Taildropper* is an endangered forest slug native to Vancouver Island and lives nowhere else in Canada. Like some lizards, taildroppers can detach the end of their tail if seized by a predator and re-grow the tail in a few months. It is one of four native species of taildroppers on the island (see Identification Guide). While other taildroppers are common, the Blue-grey Taildropper is rare: twelve Canadian sites have been documented and they are all on southern Vancouver Island.

You are unlikely to find Blue-grey Taildroppers in your garden. While introduced slugs are typically garden pests, Blue-grey Taildroppers prefer natural woodland and forest habitats. On Vancouver Island, they seem to prefer moist older forest with small openings like Garry oak meadows. Within these habitats they are attracted to moist depressions and swales where they will not dry out. They also like to eat fungi so inspecting mushrooms for little blue slugs is a good way to find them. You may find tiny juveniles (<1cm) from May to October, but the larger adults (2-3 cm long) are usually found in autumn before the first heavy frosts.

You can help protect Blue-grey Taildroppers and their threatened habitats by reporting observations. By confirming your report, HAT can help this species and the ecosystems that support many other species at risk. If you think you may have seen a Blue-grey Taildropper, please report your observation to HAT.

REPORT OBSERVATIONS

- Write down the date and location where you saw the slug.
- Photograph the top and also the *slug's right side* (shows breathing pore).
- Avoid getting too close for a sharp image.
- Photograph a nearby landmark if you are unfamiliar with the location.
- Send the information and photos to HAT (hatmail@hat.bc.ca 250 995 2428).
- Reports from private property are treated as strictly confidential information.



If your property contains suitable habitat, consider joining our Blue-grey Taildropper monitoring program. HAT surveys suitable habitats in the region to locate new sites, and we encourage volunteer landowners to monitor for Taildroppers. HAT biologists will assess the habitat suitability of your land through a free and confidential visit. We will place 30x30 cm pieces of layered cardboard in the most suitable locations. When thoroughly soaked by rain, these "cover objects" attract slugs like naturally fallen bark and provide an easy way for you to monitor for them without damaging their habitat. Other ways to protect their habitat follow below.

GUIDELINES FOR HABITAT PROTECTION

- Maintain natural areas on your property by defining narrow access trails that protect ground cover.
- Control or eliminate invasive plants like Broom and Daphne that reduce habitat quality by out-competing the native vegetation. Avoid disturbing soil, leaf litter, or native plants by clipping stems just below the soil surface. Focus on newly colonized areas where native plants can be saved.
- Retain stumps, snags, logs & bark on the forest floor that provide crucial habitat for the Blue-grey Taildropper, birds, amphibians, and small mammals. Rotten wood is ideal, but consider leaving large pieces of newly fallen trees to provide future homes. Keep twig & leaf litter to build and protect soil.
- Maintain natural meadows & forest openings. Young conifers can shade out Garry Oak & Arbutus woodland edges that Blue-grey Taildroppers rely on. Consult with a biologist on whether girdling or removal is appropriate on your land.

More resources online:

- [Land Snails of British Columbia. Royal British Columbia Museum handbook](#)
- [COSEWIC Status Report on the Blue-grey Taildropper Slug](#)
- [Blue-grey Taildropper Identification Guide](#)

