

nudibranch NEWS 2:6

Feature Creature

Thorunna speciosus
Rudman, 1990



Photo © Bill Rudman and used with permission.

Currently known only from Halifax Park, Port Stephens, NSW, Australia. Nothing is known about its distribution, feeding habits or spawn at this time.

References: Rudman, W.B., 1990 *The Chromodorididae (Opisthobranchia: Mollusca) of the Indo-West Pacific: further species of Glossodoris, Thorunna, and the Chromodoris aureomarginata colour group.*
Rudman, W. B., 1989 *pers comm*



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Editor's Notes...

More people are subscribing, largely due to interest in the nudibranch section of the Diveoz website. The gallery on this site has been increased to include **105 images**, with many more being currently compiled. If you have not already visited, have a look at <http://www.diveoz.com.au> and view what is on offer, not just the nudibranchs. Every effort is made to confirm correct identification for each species displayed. Experts are approached when doubt exists and **Erwin Koehler** kindly points out any questionable names he finds. Many of the images in the newsletters will be added to the nudibranch gallery where copyright is not infringed.

Steve Long has updated his Opisthobranch list server and added new features

Julie Marshall & Richard Willan's new book on **Heron Island Nudibranchs** has hit the shelves. See page 24 for the review. Another new release is **Dangerous Marine Creatures** by Neville Coleman, (reviewed below).

This month we have one of Australia's foremost nudibranch naturalists and photographers, **Neville Coleman**, as our guest book reviewer.

Dave Behrens will be back next month. Being a nudibranch expert and an author in this own right, Dave's contributions are a valuable and not to be missed part of nudibranch NEWS.



New Book

Dangerous Sea Creatures
Neville Coleman. 1999

Prevention is always better than the cure and by understanding the dangers one reduces the risk of injury. This 96 page paperback is a useful addition to the library of anyone who interacts with the ocean and its inhabitants. Being 24cm by 17cm it is easy to stow in your gear bag or carry in the car or boat.

The categories are: dangerous, venomous, poisonous and incidentals. First aid management is included. Each listing has a photograph, common name, scientific name, distribution, hazard, size, remarks, precautions and symbols for ease of use.

Like most of Neville's work, there is a strong environmental message and a desire to instill respect and appreciation for the other inhabitants of this small piece of rock we all call home.

Available direct from:

Neville Coleman

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Neville's website <http://www.nevillecoleman.com> is currently under construction.

Port Stephens

David and Leanne **Atkinson** have come up with more new sightings from "the bay". Port Stephens can turn up some rather interesting finds, as in certain conditions larvae are brought down the Australian east coast in warm currents from the tropical north. While conditions are favourable these tropical species thrive. Being blessed with probably the best and **safest** shore diving on the eastern seaboard, many divers have the opportunity to study a wide variety of nudibranchs.

► Figure 1. A map of the local dive sites, the Sewer pipe (Co-op), Fly Point and Halifax Park. Little Beach is between the latter two.

► Figure 2. David mentioned this beast resembles the undescribed **Jorunna sp**, sometimes seen locally. The gills at the back of the animal give its identity away as a dorid. Watch the Bill Rudman's Sea Slug Forum for further information.



▲ Figure 3. My old friend ***Discodoris sp.*** (green). David sent this image after reading last month's newsletter. The egg mass is yellowish and laid on the sponge upon which the animal feeds. The eggs are large and contained in a gelatous mass, indicating direct development. It would be interesting to know who else has seen this species and where. It would appear the sponge and its predator like areas of high water movement.



▲ Figure 4. ***Flabellina bicolor* (Kelaart, 1858)** Another tropical Indo - Pacific species extending its range into temperate waters. *F. bicolor* feeds on athecate hydroids and at present, nothing is known about its spawn. The recently rediscovered ***Flabellina macassarana*** is similar, although larger and lacks the opaque, white pigment on the body. The cerata have dark orange tips.

Mediterranean Nudibranchs

Platydorís argo

By Miquel Pontes

This dorid nudibranch reaches a maximum length of 10 cm. It has a flat, oval shaped body, which tends to adapt to the irregular surfaces it lives on.

The genus name *Platydorís* is derived from the Greek word "Platýs" that means "wide" and "Doris", a marine nymph of the Greek mythology. The species name "argo" refers to the white stains, typical of this species, that look like eyes. One of the mythological tales of the old Greece says that Argos was "the prince of Argos" or the "Argolid". He had one hundred eyes, of which fifty were open at any given time.

The *notum* or *dorsum* of this animal seems velvety because of the minute tubercles. It is coloured reddish brown with tiny white spots, which vary greatly in number from one specimen to another, giving the impression that the animal is lightly sprayed with white paint. The centre of the dorsum is often darker than the rest of the body. The underside of the body is coloured bright orange and the outer border is slightly undulated.

The rhinophores, used by most prosobranchs as sensory organs, are laminated, smooth in their base, coloured dark brown and can be retracted into a small sheath, presumably for protection. The *Platydorís argo* has 6 tripinnate plume gills, which are also retracted into the *notum* when the animal is disturbed.

Few details are known of this species' biology. It is reported to feed on the bryozoan *Retepora (Sertella) cellulosa*, where it is commonly found and very difficult to spot on because of the nudibranch's homochromic coloration.

The *Platydorís argo* lives on *Posidonia oceanica* meadows and on dark, rocky bottoms and coralligenous walls, down to 40m deep. These coralligenous walls incorrectly derive their name, (incorrectly, as coralligenous means "generator of coral"), from the red Mediterranean coral (*Corallium rubrum*), because they hold certain characteristics which often allow that species of coral to grow, ie. well oxygenated waters, hardly any turbulence, little light and constant salinity.

The *Platydorís argo* is mainly observed in Spring and Summer, when it can be often found mating and laying egg strings, which consist on an orange band laid in spiral. Certain authors consider it is a common species while others consider it is rare. We find that it is frequent but not abundant.



The aeolid, *Favorinus brachialis* (Rathke, 1806) reportedly feeds on *P. argo* eggs.



Book Review– Neville Coleman

Nudibranchs of Heron Island, Great Barrier Reef
Julie Marshall and Richard Willan

My first duty, my love of the subject matter and my respect for professional scientists whose purposeful studies and associated grants produced such a monumental contribution to our knowledge of nudibranchs is to say, thank you to them both.

However, the very nature of "critical examination" is that it is based on sound and recognisable characteristics. In this respect, I hope to reflect a meaningful understanding to the readers and interested colleagues regarding what I see as the book's pros and cons within the limitations of my own fields of expertise and experience .

I have read the entire book and used it extensively to update and revise the *Australasian Marine Photographic Index* opisthobranchs.

Presentation: The overall presentation is excellent. The book is written by scientists and a certain amount of expertise and knowledge is assumed which, under the circumstances, is entirely understandable.

Size: 224cm x 304cm large format (258 pages)

Cover: High quality hard cover, solid feel, constructed to last, have long life and withstand constant usage, as reference guides should.

Binding: The binding is very good. Case bound, stitched and glued extremely good quality.

Paper: The selection of good quality matt art paper with enough thickness to allow easy reading and reference without the type on the next page being to distracting. Paper produces a reasonably good acceptance to colour reproduction, especially catering to black backgrounds without excessive fill-in.

Type: Type is excellent, large easily readable with simple layouts and all headings are highlighted in bold to make for easy referencing.

Layout: Simple two column layout is easy to use.

Colour Reproduction: With such a large selection of high profile subjects with many difficult shapes, sizes, colours and designs and large numbers of minute species displayed mainly from dorsal aspects (above) the overall reproduction is pretty good.

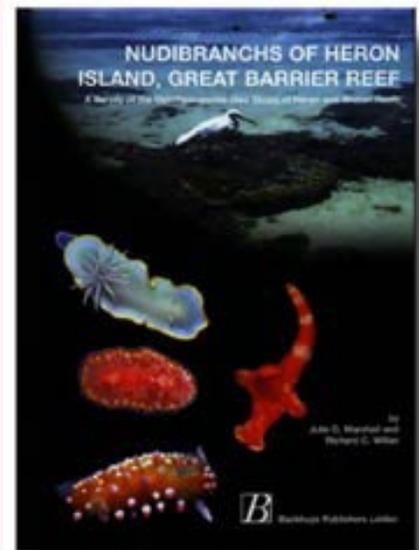
Photographic Content: With around 280 on subject matter ranging in size from a few millimetres to 20cm in length and 25mm in height colour plates, the overall photographic content is successful.

Using the Book: The "How to use the book" section is concise, well laid out and although sites have been illustrated on pages 9 and 11, more pictures could have been used to fill the gaping half page blanks.

Cross-referencing: Using an old fashioned cost-cutting approach to illustrated reference books has distracted from the simplicity of its usage. With minimal amount of extra type setting and some forethought, a page number cross reference back to the descriptions and a family name might have been included.

Content: It's brilliant and the information is the easiest I have ever worked with. Each species has a Family name, Scientific name, Habitat, Abundance, Depth Range, Size, Geographical Distribution, Occurrence Site, Synonyms and References.

Bibliography: Fourteen pages of references and the most extensive I have seen and makes the work of professional scientist or dedicated amateur much simpler.



Checklist: A complete checklist of the Great Barrier Reef species is presented with reference to those in the study over the eighteen year period. Easy to use and simple to understand.

Index: Family, genus and species name index is listed with page numbers given wherever names are mentioned with the description page number presented in bold.

Conclusion: This book is a must for every professional and serious amateur and apart from the few drawbacks here and there the overall work is outstanding. The cost of \$AUS95 (\$US60) appears expensive but this is the price after three rather large donations were made to the publisher to allow the publication to proceed. The book is designed for the advancement of knowledge on a less than "popular" subject and I think the authors have achieved their goal.

Neville Coleman has been involved in the publication and printing industry since he was 15 years old.

He has published 49 books on his great love – the ocean and its inhabitants – and contributed to many other publications.

Neville is one of Australia's leading and most published marine naturalists and photographers .