

Congregation of hairy sea hares at Changi Point

Subjects: Hairy sea hare, *Bursatella leachii* (Mollusca: Gastropoda: Aplysiidae).

Subjects identified by: Contributor.

Location, date and time: Johor Strait, Changi Point beach; 13 February 2016; 0820 hrs.

Habitat: Estuarine. Silty sea-shore and seagrass meadow, at low tide.

Observers: Contributor, with Dayna Cheah, Lu Zhong Ke & Josh Lim.

Observation: A congregation of over 20 hairy sea hares was observed within a small area (under 5m²) of very shallow water. Some were semi-buried within the sediment while others were clumped together (Fig. 1). In response to disturbance inadvertently caused by the observers, several individuals released purple ink into the water as a defence mechanism. Close up images of several individuals are shown in Fig. 2.

Remarks: *Bursatella leachii* is widely distributed in the Indo-Pacific region where it inhabits shallow water environments with soft substrates and feeds on cyanobacteria (Gosliner et al., 2015: 102). It seems to appear on Singapore shores only intermittently and in large numbers (Tan, 2008). The individuals in the featured observation may be gathering in preparation for mating.



Fig. 1: Hairy sea hares congregating at Changi Point. Some have released purple ink in response to disturbance caused by the observers. Photograph by Tan How Yong Jonathan

References:

Gosliner, T. M., A. Valdés & D. W. Behrens, 2015. *Nudibranch & Sea Slug Identification. Indo-Pacific*. New World Publications, Jacksonville, Florida, USA. 408 pp.

Tan, R., 2008. *Wild Factsheets: hairy sea hare*.

<http://www.wildsingapore.com/wildfacts/mollusca/slugs/anaspidae/bursatella.htm>. Updated in September 2012. Accessed on 26 February 2016.



Figure 2: Dorso-lateral views of four individuals of hairy sea hare. Photographs by Tan Yong How Jonathan

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