

# Iberian Three-banded Slug

## Seilcheag Trì-stiallach Ibèireach



*The Iberian Three-banded Slug defends itself by producing copious amounts of slime if attacked.*

The Iberian Three-banded Slug has been recorded in around 50 x 10km squares in Scotland. It is likely that it has been brought into Scotland as long as there have been imports of plants and food from the Iberian Peninsula. It was often found in greenhouses but the first Scottish record in the “wild” was at Edinburgh University in 2000 and it is now established around Edinburgh, Glasgow and the Borders with a handful of records beyond the Great Glen. There is indirect evidence that climatic amelioration has allowed it to survive winters in recent years and its pattern of occurrence suggests the movement of plants between gardens and garden centres.

Like most slugs, it is often overlooked. Scots Gaelic doesn't seem to have any species names for slugs and the term “seilcheag” refers to both slugs and snails without discrimination. All slugs are regarded as pestilential by the public, especially when they make their way into gardens, but this one seems relatively benign, living on algae etc. found in compost bins. It will eat green plants if there aren't alternatives sources of decaying, organic matter available. There is no evidence, yet, of it causing any impact on other species.

The timing and distribution of how this little creature has spread across the UK has been remarkably similar to larger and more noticeable species such as the Little Egret. This is probably an indication of how effective they both are as environmental indicators and depicts the pattern of milder winters allowing more southerly species to establish. However, the maps show that these slugs have far fewer records despite the fact they massively “outweigh” the Little Egrets in both biomass and numbers. That says something about species recording in this country.

With warmer winters and recent increases in growing home produce -especially in more organic ways- it seems likely that this species will flourish here in the future.