

Estuarine Slug (*Onchidina australis*)

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Little study seems to have been completed on *Onchidina australis*. It is a marine pulmonate gastropod. "Marine" means its habitat is part of the saline affected tidal area. "Pulmonate" means it has lungs or organs resembling lungs and therefore obtains oxygen from air. "Gastropod" means it is a mollusc with a muscular flat "foot" and a head with eyes on stalks. Gastropods include such creatures as land and sea snails, whelks, limpets and slugs.

At the Maroochy Wetlands Sanctuary, the Estuarine Slug may be observed in the very damp mud of the mangrove area. Since it is an air-breather, feeding must take place when the tide recedes. It takes a keen eye to spot this camouflaged slug which grows to about 30 mm and has a leathery back. It shelters under fallen branches and rocks and emerges to graze the surface detritus, preferring decomposed plant matter such as Marine Couch, moving slowly on its single "foot". At times, it moves a little way up the pneumatophores of the Grey Mangrove, consuming the microalgae.

It is probable that Estuarine Slugs are prey to birds, crabs, eels, fish and possibly mammals.



Estuarine Slug grazing mangrove mud