

Kontikia flatworms

Species Description

Scientific name: *Kontikia ventrolineata* and *Kontikia andersoni*

Native to: Australia and/or New Zealand

Habitat: Gardens, nurseries, garden centres, parks, pasture and on wasteland

Small terrestrial flatworms, oval or cylindrical in cross-section. *Kontikia andersoni* is pale brown with three rows of darker brown spots along its body length with the middle row narrower than either of the side rows. It has relatively large eyes along the edge of the upper surface. *Kontikia ventrolineata* has very dark, almost black base colour with two narrow, pale grey lines on the upper surface running down the length of the body close to the mid-line, and four dark lines on the under-surface. There are many eyes along the edge of its upper surface but these are difficult to see because of dark body colour.

K. ventrolineata is thought to have been introduced in 1840. No known introduction date is known for *K. andersoni*. During the day they are found sheltering on the soil surface in damp places, such as under plastic or other sheeting, rocks, flat stones and plant containers. Their origin is unknown but likely to be Australia or New Zealand where they are found in urban and horticultural land, garden centres and similar commercial places. *Kontikia ventrolineata* feeds on any small invertebrates that it can catch, including snails and possibly slugs.

Kontikia ventrolineata is listed under Schedule 9 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 with respect to England and Wales. As such, it is an offence to release or allow the escape of this species into the wild.

For details of legislation go to www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation.



Kontikia andersoni

Key ID Features

Kontikia andersoni Non-native



Kontikia ventrolineata Non-native



Identification throughout the year

Flatworms remain similar in appearance throughout the year.

Field Signs

Eggs and juveniles are small, black and are very difficult to see amongst soil particles.

Similar Species

There are two native land flatworms (*Microplana terrestris* and *Microplana scharffi*) that are similar in size and colouration to *Kontikia ventrolineata*. However, both of these have two eyes near to the head end but both lack the longitudinal pale grey lines on the upper surface.

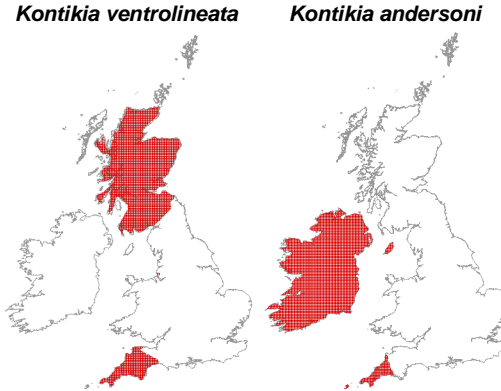
New Zealand flatworm

Non-native
(*Arthurdendyus triangulatus*)



Distribution

Kontikia ventrolineata is known from Devon and Cornwall, Liverpool, Scotland and Guernsey and thought to be increasing in numbers. *Kontikia andersoni* is known from Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, the Isle of Man, Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.



Source: Various

Australian flatworm

Non-native
(*Australoplana sanguinea*)



Orange or pinkish orange in colour

References and further reading:

Jones, H D (2005) British land flatworms. *British Wildlife*, 16, 189-194

Jones, H D (19958) The African and European land planarian faunas, with an identification guide for field workers in Europe. *Pedobiologia*, 42, 477-489

Upper surface is uniform dark grey-black or brown colour

Cylindrical body blunt at head end

A land flatworm

Native
(*Microplana terrestris*)

Two tiny eyes near to head end

Up to about 20 mm long and 1-2 mm wide

Under surface is pale

No longitudinal lines running down length of body

Round in cross-section

A land flatworm

Native
(*Microplana scharffi*)

Smooth when extended, but slightly flattened and creased when contracted

20 - 50 mm long; 1 - 2 mm wide

Yellow in colour when unfed, pinkish after eating earthworms and yellow-grey after eating slugs