



Unusual Sightings

Prophysaon coeruleum Cockerell, the Blue-grey Taildropper Slug

The genus *Prophysaon* is composed of nine recognized species of slugs native to the West Coast from Alaska, south to northern California, with some disjunct populations in the Rocky Mountains. All are thought to feed on fungi (mycelia or fruitbodies,

or both). Most are drably colored with one exception, the stunning blue-grey taildropper, *Prophysaon coeruleum*. This enigmatic little slug (which ranges in color from pale grey to electric smurf blue, and all of about 3 cm long or less) is quite rare and poorly known

(it was first discovered on Vancouver Island, where these were photographed, only in 2002). Indeed it is on the Red List of endangered species in British Columbia. *Prophysaon coeruleum* is also notable for dropping its tail when grabbed by a predator. The blue-grey taildropper

is considered beneficial to fungi; studies have shown that 90% of its droppings contain fungal spores, including spores of mycorrhizal species.

Editor's Note: I have wanted to see this amazing species for years and wish to thank Kevin Trim for leading me right to them in 2014!

