

Virginia Land Snails

Megapallifera mutabilis (Hubricht, 1951)

Family: Philomycidae

Common name: Changeable Mantleslug

Identification

Length: 60-100 mm

Megapallifera mutabilis is a large slug with a mantle that covers the entire dorsal surface. The mantle is tan to tan-grey with irregular mottling of slightly darker brown spots. These spots usually coalesce to form two bands near the lateral edges of the mantle as well as spots or broken bands bordering the center of the mantle. The lateral and central bands are sometimes connected by poorly defined chevron shaped bands that run slightly forward from the center band to the lateral band. The mantle pattern is more variable and less clearly-defined than that of *Megapallifera wetherbyi*. Like other *Megapallifera* and *Pallifera* (and unlike *Philomycus*) there is no "dart" to aid reproduction.

Ecology

This slug is found in a wide variety of habitats - from upland forests to anthropogenic habitats - where they are often observed crawling on smooth-barked trees at night and during wet weather. These slugs aestivate under loose bark, and in moist depressions and holes in trees, where they often aggregate in groups of several individuals. This species probably feeds on the fungus, algae, and lichens found on wood and stones (Hubricht, 1985).

Megapallifera mutabilis is among the most arboreal of terrestrial mollusks. In the Northeast during damp weather this slug can be found feeding upon the thin film of algae high on tree trunks or snags, often out of reach (Hotopp, pers obs).

Distribution

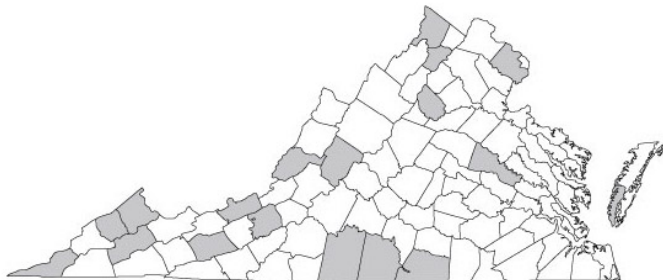
Megapallifera mutabilis is a widespread species that is found throughout eastern North America from Ontario to near the Gulf Coast west to eastern Texas. This species is found throughout Virginia from the coastal plain to the ridge and valley. However, because of the difficulty in identifying philomycid slugs, distribution records are widely scattered.

NatureServe Global Rank: G5

NatureServe State Rank: S4

John Slapcinsky, Ken Hotopp 10/2012

Range Map



Photo(s): *Megapallifera mutabilis* by Megan Paustian ©.

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