GUIDE TO MARINE INVADERS
IN THE GULF OF MAINE

Synidotea laevidorsalis
Asian isopod

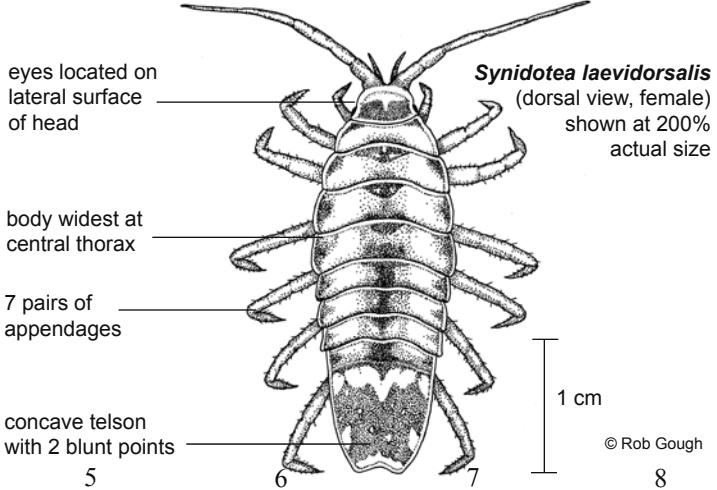
Potential Invader

SERTC / SCDNR

Left: Dorsal view of female
Above: Dorsal view of male

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

- Small, flattened (from top to bottom), crustacean (Isopoda)
- Body color mottled tan to brown
- Body elongated, widest in middle (thorax), with females slightly wider than males
- Blunt, concave tail (telson)
- Can grow to 1.2 in (3 cm) in length



Synidotea laevidorsalis
(dorsal view, female)
shown at 200%
actual size

HABITAT PREFERENCE

- Found in shallow, subtidal waters attached to docks, pilings, ropes, and other submerged structures
- Prefers calm, protected waters; brackish water to full seawater
- Often clings to algae and hydroids

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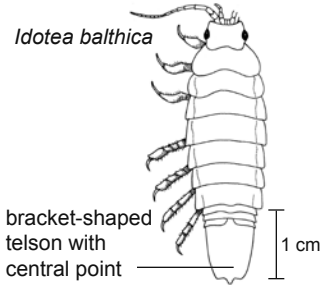
INVASION STATUS & ECOLOGICAL CONCERNS

Synidotea laevidorsalis is native to the Western Pacific Ocean and has been introduced to Europe, South America, Australia, and the United States, including San Francisco Bay, South Carolina, and the Delaware Bayshore of New Jersey. A marine isopod, *S. laevidorsalis* must be submerged in water to breathe. *S. laevidorsalis* grows to about 3 cm in length and can be found on docks and pilings among seaweed and hydroids. This isopod is classified as an omnivorous scavenger, eating both dead and living material, particularly hydroids. The camouflage pattern on its body allows it to blend in with its environment, and the tiny claws on each leg help it cling to surfaces. It swims between thick vegetation by flapping its paddle-shaped, lateral appendages.

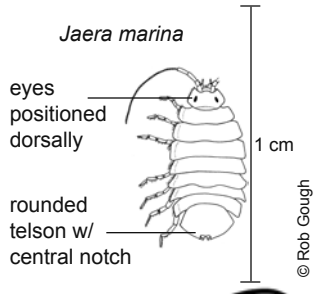
Scientists are still researching the effects that this species may have on new environments. However, in some of these new locations, *S. laevidorsalis* is now the most abundant invertebrate and may be outcompeting similar scavengers for food and space.

SIMILAR SPECIES

***Idotea* sp.**
This common genus of marine isopod includes species that may be mistaken for *Synidotea laevidorsalis*, particularly the ubiquitous ***Idotea balthica*** which occupies the same habitat type. However, *I. balthica* grows a bit larger (up to 4 cm) and has a telson that is bracket-shaped with a central point.



Jaera marina
Although this marine isopod also shares some characteristics with *S. laevidorsalis*, it is significantly smaller (grows to .5 cm). In addition, differences can be observed in the general body shape (*J. marina* not as elongated), shape of the telson (rounded with a small, posterior notch in the center), and position of eyes on the head (dorsally vs. laterally).



This identification card is one of a series produced by Salem Sound Coastwatch (www.salemsound.org) highlighting introduced species that pose a threat to the marine environments of Massachusetts and the Gulf of Maine. The original development of these cards was funded by the MA EOEEA Office of Coastal Zone Management with funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. For additional species information or to report sightings, please visit www.mass.gov/czm/invasives/monitor/reporting.htm.

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