

# Mediterranean

## miquel pontes

# nudibranchs

### *Janolus cristatus*

Described in 1841 by Delle Chiaje, the *Janolus cristatus* is a medium sized nudibranch, growing up to 8 cm long. Its gender name *Janolus* is devoted to the two headed Greek god *Jano*.

Formerly known as *Antiopella cristata*, this *arminacean* has a very characteristic shape. The body colour ranges from translucent orange to bluish white. A single or double white line, sometimes discontinuous, can be found in the middle of the dorsum.

The dorsal appendixes, known as *cerata*, are translucent with white to iridescent blue tips. The observer can see a prolongation of the digestive gland inside the *cerata* that looks like a dark blue filament that branches near the coloured tip. These tips have no stinging *cnidosacs* inside, a trait that clearly differentiates this gender from the aeolids.

*Cerata* are considerably thicker in the *Janolus cristatus* than in the average nudibranch, and protrude from the limit among the foot and the dorsum, giving the overall appearance of a compact crown.

The rhinophores, sensory organs on the top of the head, are not retractile and are thicker at the base, showing many oblique to perpendicular grooves called *lamellae*. On the base of the rhinophores the diver can see a cauliflower-shaped sensitive organ known as 'crest', a trait that gives this species the name *cristatus* "with a crest".

The *Janolus cristatus* is not a common finding despite of its size. It can be confused with a similar species called *Janolus hyalinus* (Alder & Hancock, 1854) but this one is smaller, up to 10mm, and has no white lines on the dorsum. The diver can distinguish this nudibranch of the average *aeolid* thanks to its thick *cerata* and the cauliflower-shaped crest among the rhinophores.

It lives on dark rocky bottoms, at depths ranging from 5 to 15 meters, and feeds on bryozoan colonies of the gender *Bugula* and *Cellaria*. Some authors cite this species only on the western Mediterranean, but it has also been reported in Turkey and Atlantic Ocean. Adults and egg masses can be spotted easier in Summer.



#### Further information:

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- Calvín, Juan Carlos. El Ecosistema Marino Mediterráneo, 1995.

#### Internet:

- NORSK MARIN FAUNA: [http://www.asterisk.no/~emil/nudibranchia/janolus\\_cristatus.htm](http://www.asterisk.no/~emil/nudibranchia/janolus_cristatus.htm)
- NUDIBRANCHS OF THE BRITISH ISLES: <http://www.pictonb.freemove.co.uk/nudibranchs/jancri.html>
- THE SEA SLUG FORUM: <http://www.austmus.gov.au/seaslugs/janocris.htm>
- M@RE NOSTRUM: <http://marenostrum.org/opisthobranchios/janolus>
- MEDSLUGS: [http://medslugs.de/E/Mediterranean/Janolus\\_cristatus.htm](http://medslugs.de/E/Mediterranean/Janolus_cristatus.htm)



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