

mediterranean

miquel pontes

Opisthobranchs

Limacia clavigera

Müller, 1776

Described by Müller back in 1776, this is a small species, reaching 2 cm in length. Generally coloured white to light blue, it is characteristic for the tips of the foot, rhinophores, gills and other appendixes of the body to be coloured bright orange, yellow or red.

The dorsum has a large number of appendixes: 8 pinnate frontal tentacles, 5 to 7 lateral claviform appendixes and many dorsal verrucose extensions. The laminated rhinophores can be retracted into small sheaths when the animal is disturbed. The 3-4 bipinnate gills are located before the anus.

The former name *Triopa claviger* (Johnston 1843) is now a synonym of the actual denomination, *Limacia clavigera*.

The word *limacia* comes from latin "*limax*" which means slug. The words *clavigera* and *claviger* derive from the latin term "*clava*", that means club or stick, and the also latin term "*gerere*" means to bring, so "*clavigera*" means "*which brings clubs or sticks*". A "*clava*" is a roughly carved stick, about 1 metre long, which grows in diameter from the grip to the opposite side, which is round. Mythology takes us to **Hercules**, who brought a club like that and because of this weapon he is often referred as "claviger". *Triopa*, from the former denomination of this nudibranch, is the name of the son of Poseidon (Neptune) and Cenacea.

The *Limacia clavigera* is mainly observed in summer and it feeds on bryozoans of the species *Callopora dumerili*, *Cryptosula pallasiana*, *Electra pilosa*, *Membranipora membranacea* and *Porella concinna*.

This nudibranch is typical on rocky bottoms with little light and little water movement. It is commonly found under the rocks, on or near bryozoan colonies. Also found in seagrass meadows, where bryozoans are found.

It is distributed along the Mediterranean, where it is uncommon, and along the European Atlantic coast, including the English Channel and the North Sea, where it is common. There are sighting reports from as far as Norway and Faeroe Islands and down to South Africa.



Visit these web sites for more information:

Medslugs (http://www.medslugs.de/E/North_Sea/Limacia_clavigera.htm)

Nudibranchs of the British Islands (<http://www.pictonb.freeserve.co.uk/nudibranchs/limcla.html>)

Underwater guide, Madeira, Canary Islands and Azores (<http://siolibrary.ucsd.edu/slugsite/wirtz/wirtz2.htm>)

Underwater Life Gallery (<http://www.gla.ac.uk/~gbza62/nbranch2.html>)

Norwegian Marine Fauna (http://www.asterisk.no/~emil/nudibranchia/limacia_clavigera.htm)

Nudibranch on the Coast of Central Norway (http://www.ntnu.no/~vmzotbak/nudibranchia/polyceridae/limacia_clavigera.htm)

The Slug Site (http://slugsite.tierranet.com/wirtz98/p_5_1.htm)

M@re Nostrum (<http://marenostrum.org>)