

# How to find and photograph slugs and snails for identification



Dr Kevin Bonham, expert in Australian land snails and Honorary Curator at the Tasmania Museum and Art Gallery, has given us some tips on finding and photographing snails and slugs. Follow his advice to give your observations the best chance of being identified on the iNaturalist platform. This information is also available in [video](#) format where you'll meet Dr Bonham and our very own Dr Kate Garrock.

## First things first

- The best time to find snails and slugs is at night, just after rain.
- You don't have to find live animals – snails can be identified from shells.
- Wear gloves to avoid being bitten by other creatures, and to keep your hands clean.
- Think before you turn over rocks as it can disturb species. Check that you have permission to do this in your area – it is not allowed in conservation reserves and some council areas.

## Finding them

- Look under rocks, logs and leaf litter. To allow potentially dangerous animals to escape away from you, grab the edge of the rock that is furthest away from you and pull the rock towards you. Ensure you place rocks and logs down gently in the same position and place where you found them.
- Look on moss and lichen growing on tree trunks, and under bark around the base of trees.
- Look under plant pots, bricks and rubbish.
- Prise up the edge of mats of vegetation along paths.
- Collect a bag of leaf litter to look through later under a microscope.

## Photographing them

- Take photos of snails from three angles – this is especially helpful for flattish shells.

1. From the top looking down



2. From side-on looking into the opening of the shell



3. From upside down



- Ensure you get the top of the shell in focus as it may have sculpture that is useful for identification.
- Photograph slugs from different angles too, particularly from the side that has the breathing hole, and include a well-focused shot of their tail.
- Encourage snails and slugs to move, so their tentacles come out. The tentacle colour can also help with identification.
- Put a ruler beside the snail/slug to show the size.
- If you haven't got a ruler, use something else such as a coin or your hand to show the scale.
- Take a few photos of the habitat where you found them.



## Adding observations to iNaturalist

- When adding snail/slug observations to iNaturalist, if you don't know the family/genus/species name, identify them as "gastropods", which will alert the relevant specialists to your observation.