

Alabaster Nudibranch



Scientific name: *Dirona albolineata*

Other names: Frosted Nudibranch, White-streaked, White-lined, or Chalk-lined Dirona

Etymology: The scientific name comes from the noticeable white lines on the nudibranch's body.

Phylogeny: *Phylum* Mollusks → *Class* Gastropods → *Order* Nudibranchs → *Family* Dironidae

Size: Length ranges from 1.5 – 7 inches, but is most commonly found at about 3 inches long

Description: The alabaster nudibranch, although most commonly a pale translucent white, can also be yellowish, orange or even pink in color with opaque white stripes on the cerata (fleshy projections off the back). A purple color phase of this animal has often been found in northern waters, particularly in Washington State.

Habitat: Found often in low intertidal zones of rocky shores and docks. Rarely seen in mudflats.

Diet: Alabaster nudibranchs are known to dine on sponges, hydroids, sea squirts, crustaceans, sea anemones, bryozoans and snails. The Alabaster eats snails by cracking their shells with its jaws, and eating the soft flesh inside.

Range: Alaska to California

Conservation Issues:

- ☆ Parasites, thought to be copepods, can get inside the nudibranch and deposit egg capsules, which can be seen hanging off of the sea slug. For an unclear reason, this often kills the host nudibranch.
- ☆ Pollution, un-monitored collection, and careless steps of tidepool enthusiasts can put any intertidal animal at risk. So please watch and learn, but don't touch these beautiful animals when you see them at the beach!

Fun Facts:

- ☆ To escape predation, this nudibranch is known to release one of its large flat cerata to distract a predator while the nudibranch crawls away. Chemical defenses are also thought to exist, but there is not enough evidence to prove this.
- ☆ Each egg mass of the alabaster nudibranch contains approximately 350,000 eggs!