

# PYURA

## *PYURA STOLONIFERA PRAEPUTIALIS*

**The threat:** This species forms dense populations or mats and has been found growing on rocks in a number of locations in the far north of New Zealand. Its impact in the New Zealand environment is not yet known. There is, however, concern that should it spread, it could displace important native New Zealand species, including green-lipped mussels. There are also concerns Pyura could be inadvertently spread to marine farms outside the far north region.

### What is Pyura?

Pyura (known in its native Australia as Cunjevoi) is a marine animal called an ascidian (a type of sea squirt). In Australia, it is found over a wide geographic area from southern Queensland to Western Australia and Tasmania. It has become established in one area of Chile, where it has become the dominant organism of the lower rocky shores there. In New Zealand, individual Pyura live in dense colonies or groups which form a mat over rocks and are often highly visible at low tide. Pyura has been found either attached to the rocks or on other hard surfaces such as mussels.



Pyura individuals, each with two water siphons, clustered

Photo courtesy of Bruce Hayward

### What does it look like?

Pyura adults are comprised of a sack-like body, with a brown, or reddish-brown, leathery skin. There is sometimes sand and shell material incorporated into the outer skin, and other sea life such as sea lettuce can grow on and around the individuals. Each individual has two siphons or holes for inhaling and exhaling water. Adults grow up to 15 cm or more in height and around 3 – 5 cms in diameter, although a wide range of sizes have been found in Northland. Young Pyura have been observed growing on the larger adults.



Pyura growing on and amongst sea lettuce

Photo courtesy of Kimberly Seaward



Pyura on rocky shore in Northland

Photo courtesy of Peter Wilkins

### Where would I find it?

Pyura can be found on rocky shores and in the shallows. In New Zealand populations have been identified in a number of Northland locations including an oyster farm in Parengarenga Harbour.

There are other species of Pyura and stalked sea squirts that are native to New Zealand – e.g. *Pyura pachydermatina* – which is found in subtidal areas with cooler temperate waters and is known as “sea tulip”. It looks quite different to the introduced Australian Pyura.

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## How does Pyura spread?

Pests such as Pyura can be spread from location to location on fouled boat hulls. As this sea squirt has been found growing on wild mussels; and on farmed oysters in the Parengarenga Harbour as well, it is also possible that Pyura can be spread by discarding mussel and oyster shells into the sea.

## What can I do to stop it spreading?

Please ensure you keep your moored boat's hull clean and your antifoul coating in good condition. If possible, dispose of mussel and oyster shells on land.

## What do I do if I think I've found it?

If you believe you have seen Pyura in any other location to those mentioned overleaf, please advise MAF Biosecurity New Zealand on **0800 80 99 66**.



Photo courtesy of Bruce Hayward

Pyura on the rocks at Twilight Beach. Organisms squirt water when compressed.

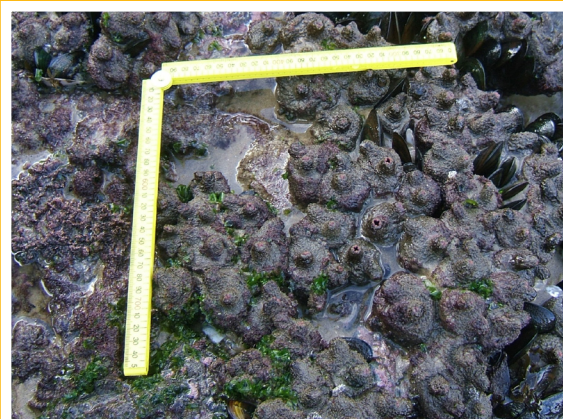


Photo courtesy of Bruce Hayward

The ruler gives an indication of the size of Pyura found at Twilight Beach in Northland.



Photo courtesy of Peter Wilkins

Pyura growing amongst mussels

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