



SOLITARY ISLANDS  
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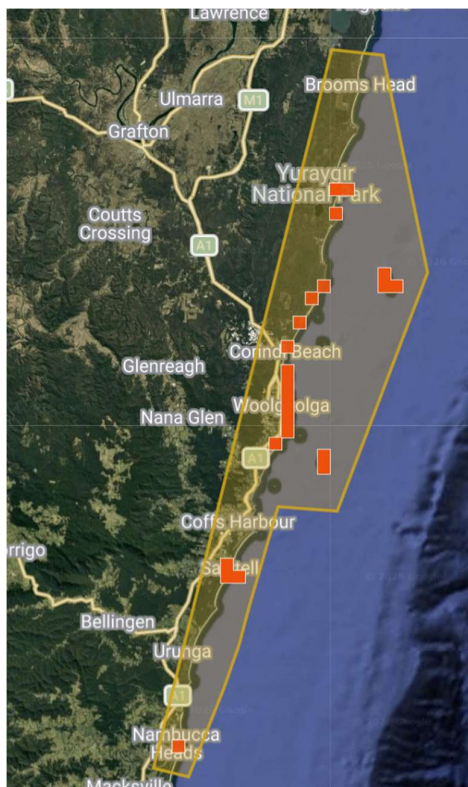
## The 8<sup>th</sup> Coffs Coast Sea Slug Census (16-26 Jan 2026) – a brief wrap-up (information summarised from [8th Coffs Coast SSC January 2026 · iNaturalist](#))

Congratulations to the 26 observers (and their field assistants!) who submitted 848 observations of sea slug species during the recent CCSSC (top 10 observers shown below). Despite the fact that conditions were quite challenging over much of the survey period, we were able to find 126 discrete species, only 10 species below last year’s efforts. This figure differs from the 113 species suggested by iNaturalist as I’ve been through all records and counted the clearly different morphotypes/species contained within some of the more difficult genera (esp. *Elysia* and *Gymnodoris*). By far the majority of observations came from rockpools which is a testament to the amazing, accessible and diverse habitats we have along the coast of the Solitary Islands Marine Park.

### Top 10 observers for the 2026 CCSSC

Rank	User	Observations	Species
1	kchris1	148	42
2	profmollusc	138	44
3	rickdicksonbattye	95	28
4	lillianclementine	79	33
5	divercraig	69	27
6	scubajames	43	14
7	nicklambert	42	18
8	brettouzell	37	16
9	ullie	27	15
10	nathan_fripp	27	17

We covered a lot of the coast in our excursions with observations ranging from Minnie Water in the north to Nambucca. The majority of observations (by far!) centred around Sandy Beach and especially Low Reef/Witches which provides extensive, sheltered and varied habitat for sea slugs. The only islands visited this year were South and North Solitary islands.

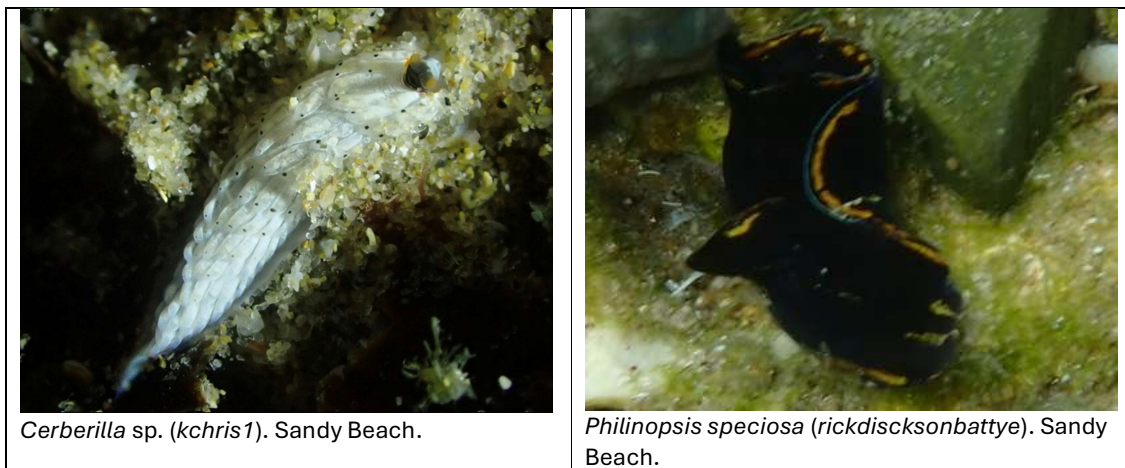


**Distribution of observations made during the 2026 CCSSC**

The five most common species were *Hydatina physis* (52 obs.), *Dendrodoris nigra* (39), *Doriprismatica atromarginata* (39), *Elysia coodgensis* (38) and *Aplysia argus* (35). At the other end of the scale, 39 species were observed only once.

Although this was the eighth SSC on the Coffs Coast, 14 of the 126 species were recorded for the first time in the local SSC program (noting that some of these have been found outside the SSCs). I've included images of the most interesting "firsts" below along with the iNat handle for the observer(s).

The absolute standout for the program was *Ardeadoris scottjohnsoni* found by *divercraig* and *ullie* at North Solitary Island. **This is the FIRST record of this species in Australia!** This find adds to the growing list of species with their first Australian record in our region (also see the final note, below).



*Cerberilla* sp. (*kchris1*). Sandy Beach.

*Phillinopsis speciosa* (*rickdiscksonbattye*). Sandy Beach.



*Tubulophilinopsis lineolata* (profmollusc, rickdicksonbattye, lilly\_sydenham). Sandy Beach.



*Ardeadoris scottjohnsoni* (divercraig, ullie). North Sol. Is.



*Verconia norba* (brettouzel, divercraig, ullie). North Sol. Is.



*Carminodoris* sp. (nathan\_fripp). South Sol. Is.



*Discodorid* sp. (profmollusc). Mullaway Headland.



*Phidiana bourailli* (lillianclementine). Emerald Beach.



*Okenia echinata* (profmollusc). Sandy Beach.



*Gymnodoris* sp. (profmollusc). Red Rock.

As always, while making the observations and posting them is the main (and most fun!) activity for the program, I'd like to give huge thanks to those that helped identify the different species. Once again, we were fortunate to have great input from two of iNaturalist's sea slug curators, *hsini\_lin* and *vie*, as well as other contributors who did not participate in the SSC.

### Top 10 identifiers for the 2026 CCSSC

Rank	User	Identifications
1	 <i>hsini_lin</i>	438
2	 <i>profmollusc</i>	233
3	 <i>kchris1</i>	166
4	 <i>lynsh</i>	130
5	 <i>vie</i>	78
6	 <i>adrian2370</i>	47
7	 <i>lillianclementine</i>	14
8	 <i>traceyhowley</i>	13
9	 <i>drmattnimbs</i>	12
10	 <i>nicklambert</i>	11

Keep an eye on the iNaturalist project page as some observations have yet to be identified. It is often the case that identifications become available for these species either when they are described, or when experts in specific taxonomic groups view the observations.

And a final word to keep you out there slugging – there are some **amazing and rare species to be found at the moment**. This period is often when we see more tropical species in the region and, from my snorkel at Low Reef two days ago (04/02/26), I not only noticed a lot of juvenile tropical fish (which suggests recent influence of the East Australian Current) but also came across one of my favourite sea slugs, *Sagaminopteron psychedelicum*, which is rare on the Coffs Coast. Nathan Fripp also found a new species for the region (and Australia!), *Hallaxa hileenae*, on a dive to North Solitary Island just after the CCSSC (31/01/26). So, keep getting out there to see what you can find 😊



Thanks again for your participation! See you in the water soon I hope.

Steve Smith (profmollusc)