

Large-egged polychaete marine worm

Boccardiella magniovata

Endangered mud worm

Photos of this species wanted. Send to
info@endangeredspecies.org.nz

Coastal peppergrass. Simon Walls, DOC

Quickfacts

Inhabits slightly salty muds in a few harbours and estuaries.

Lost from at least one location following reclamation of the area for new land.

Possibly occurs in other places, but needs careful searching.

A very particular home

The large-egged polychaete worm *Boccardiella magniovata* inhabits a particular habitat - inter-tidal soft muddy sand shores that are stabilised by plant roots (such as sea rush *Juncus kraussii* subsp. *australiensis*) and where water salinity is low (water is nearly fresh), such as the mouths of rivers and in the upper areas of estuaries. It was originally discovered at the mouth of the Hutt River, but despite it being present at densities of 1000 worms per square metre, it hasn't been recently seen there. It has also been recorded in Duck Creek estuary (Pauatahanui Inlet), in Okura Estuary, the upper Waitemata Harbour and in the Town Basin of Whangarei Harbour in the North Island and Greenpark Sands in Lake Ellesmere in the South Island, but it is not abundant at any of these remaining sites.

It is a member of the Spionidae mudworm family, grows to 16 mm in length, and is identified by its large orange eggs and the curved hairs on setiger five (the fifth bristle-bearing body segment) being mixed with thinner straight hairs and with a prominent blood vessel under the skin. It creates a vertical U-shaped mucus-lined burrow in the mud.

TE KAUPAPA TIAKI KARAREHE,
TIPU MŌREAREA O AOTEAROA



The main threat to this species is altering its estuarine habitat through land reclamation and pollution associated with increasing urbanisation.

What next?

Being so small and inconspicuous, it is difficult to know where *Boccardiella* is found. Further searches may discover large populations in places where freshwater meets salt sea over a muddy sand shore. In the interim, and as a precaution, the sites where *Boccardiella* remains need to be protected from changes to the shore line or in water quality.

More information

Website: Guide to New Zealand shore polychaetes. [Link](#)

Map: NABIS - Annual distribution of large-egged boccardiella. [Link](#)

Scientific article: Systematics and biology of polydorid species (Polychaeta: Spionidae) from Wellington Harbour. By G.B. Read. Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand, Vol. 5, pages 395-419, 1975. [PDF](#)

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