



Specimens of the Australian terrestrial planarian *Australopacifica graminicola* (Steel, 1900) in England and Wales

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Two highly distinctive land planarians (Fig 1A) were found in woodland in Penryn, Cornwall, United Kingdom on 13 March 2024 by TL and FNH, and subsequently more nearby, six in total (OS Grid references SW781341 & SW780340). They are creamy-pink with numerous random pink-red spots more concentrated along the dorsal mid-line. Preserved specimens are about 8mm long, probably 12–15mm long when extended; width 1mm, round, slightly oval in section. Sparse eyes anteriorly and laterally in a single row.

Jones (2025) provisionally named them as *Australopacifica* sp. “Penryn 2024”, *Australopacifica* Ogren & Kawakatsu, 1991 being a collective genus for incompletely described species.

Similar specimens (Fig 1B) were found in woodland in South Wales (ST06169762) on 18 & 27 October 2025 by CO and LO. 4–5mm long at rest, 8–10mm extended, 1mm wide.

An online search by CO found the website <https://canberra.naturemapr.org/species/1396>. This shows photographs of similar specimens found in the vicinity of Canberra, ACT, Australia, named as *Australopacifica graminicola* (Steel, 1900).

Steel’s (1900) description is as follows (at that time, most land planarian species with multiple eyes were placed in the genus *Geoplana* Stimpson, 1857):

Geoplana graminicola, sp. nov. General colour of dorsal surface red-brown. The whole surface covered with specklings of a darker red-brown which tend to collect into an irregular median band, most distinct towards the posterior end. In some specimens the specklings are very thinly distributed, making the dorsal surface much paler than usual, and in a few they are so densely packed as to impart a uniform dark brown tint. Ventral surface pale, with no markings except near the anterior tip, where there are a few specklings similar to those on dorsal surface. Eyes few but conspicuous. In a single row round the anterior tip and for a short distance down the sides, spaced some-what widely apart. No side grouping. Length when crawling 13 to 18mm. by less than 1mm in width.

In a spirit preserved specimen which is 16mm. in length, the peripharyngeal aperture [mouth] is 9mm. from the anterior end and the genital opening 12.5mm. Hab.—Petersham, near Sydney; common in my garden living amongst grass. I got this elegant little planarian feeding on dead slugs which I had casually left under a damp sack lying on grass in the shade of my house. By keeping up this mode of trapping them I secured specimens during the greater part of the year, but they are most abundant in the summer months. During October and November, 1889, on a very limited area of ground, some five or six square yards, I captured under sacks over 200 individuals.

I have not met with this species anywhere else, but if, as is certainly the case in my garden, it burrows amongst the roots of grass, it might readily be overlooked.

Specimens from the Petersham site are deposited in the Australian Museum, Sydney (biocache.ala.org.au) and the Natural History Museum, London (NHMUK 1902.6.7.12–16). Canberra specimens are also in the Australian Museum (deposited in 2021 and 2023).

Winsor (1991) placed *G. graminicola*, and another un-named congeneric species (see Winsor (1979)), in *Artioposthia* Graff, 1896, containing species with at least a pair of accessory organs in addition to the penis, but gives no anatomical details. Winsor proposed four groups within the genus and placed *graminicola* in Group 4, defined as: ‘Body small,

elongate, cylindrical to sub-cylindrical; cutaneous longitudinal muscles weak, more developed ventrally than dorsally; parenchymal musculature weak, largely confined to a ventral plate’.

Further specimens and online records of similar unidentified specimens have been found as follows (UK unless otherwise stated):

Undated; “Unidentified Location Moorina, TAS” (Tasmania) (Walker 2017).

2 February 2020; Middleton by Wirksworth, Derbyshire (SK27415518); coll. Kay Dinsdale; one specimen collected from moss in a disused quarry; https://irecord.org.uk/record-details?occurrence_id=30101460.

7 March 2023; Penryn, Cornwall (SW77183511); coll. Fenton Doggett; <https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/150716888>.

25 January 2025; Seaton, Cornwall (SX30065449); coll. Debbie Symons. Several feeding on an earthworm alongside *Parakontikia ventrolineata* and *Australopacifica atrata*; https://irecord.org.uk/record-details?occurrence_id=40078348.

3 February 2026 (Fig 1C); woodland near Port Isaac, North Cornwall (SW98948068); coll. FNH and TL.

13 February 2026; two specimens under small rocks in a wooded area (mostly ornamental) about 1km from the Penryn site (SW77063460); coll. FNH.



FIGURE 1. *Australopacifica graminicola*: A, two specimens from Penryn, Cornwall; B, a specimen from South Wales (5 mm scale barline); C, a specimen from Port Isaac, Cornwall. A & C by FNH and TL, B by CO and LO.

Photographs of specimens show slight differences in the depth of colour between the specimens from Penryn and one from South Wales (photographic conditions and lighting were not identical), but Steel comments that some specimens are paler and some are darker.

The distinctive colouration of the Cornwall, South Wales and Canberra specimens conforms to Steel’s description. Consequently, we have little doubt that the UK specimens are *Australopacifica graminicola* (Steel, 1900). Ideally an integrated anatomical and molecular comparison of specimens from the UK and Australia is needed to confirm the identification and will allow placement of this species in an anatomically defined genus.

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