

Orange Sheath Tunicate

Species Description

Scientific name: *Botrylloides violaceus*

AKA: Red sheath tunicate

Native to: North-west Pacific

Habitat: Coastal areas with submerged structures for attachment

Tunicates are immobile tube-like invertebrates with a siphon at either end of the body through which seawater is filtered for food. This species of tunicate forms colonies, which may be bright orange or red and covered in a firm jelly.

In the USA, this species can be a prolific fouler of piers, coastal boulders and docks. It may have been introduced to the UK through a variety of aquatic pathways including ship ballast water and aquaculture.

It has been discovered at a small number of sites including Milford Haven and along the coast of southern England.

For details of legislation go to www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation.



Key ID Features



Identification throughout the year

Sea squirts do not vary in colour, texture or structure through the year.

Distribution

This species has been found at a small number of sites including south Wales and the coast of southern England.

Source: Various



Similar Species

Didemnum vexillum
Non-native

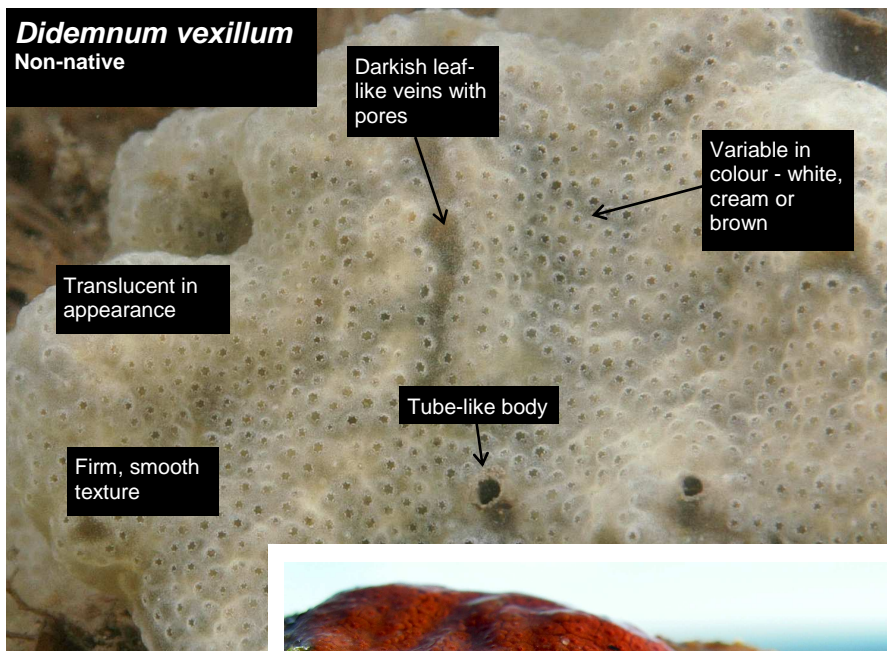
Darkish leaf-like veins with pores

Variable in colour - white, cream or brown

Translucent in appearance

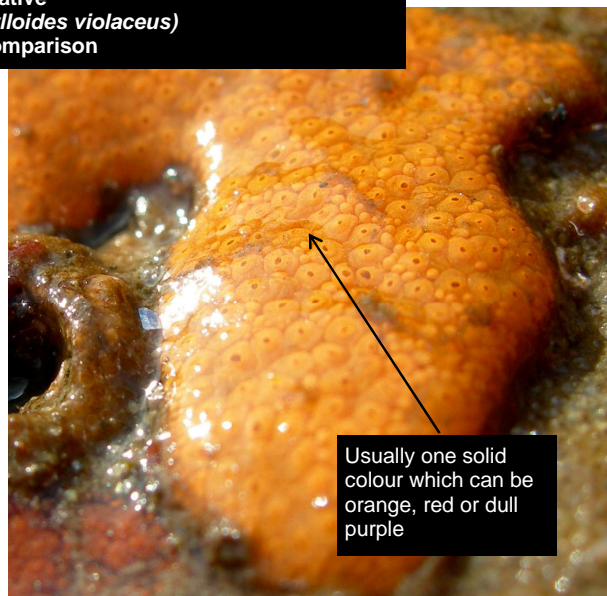
Tube-like body

Firm, smooth texture



Orange Sheath Tunicate
Non-native
(*Botrylloides violaceus*)
For comparison

Forms firm gelatinous covering



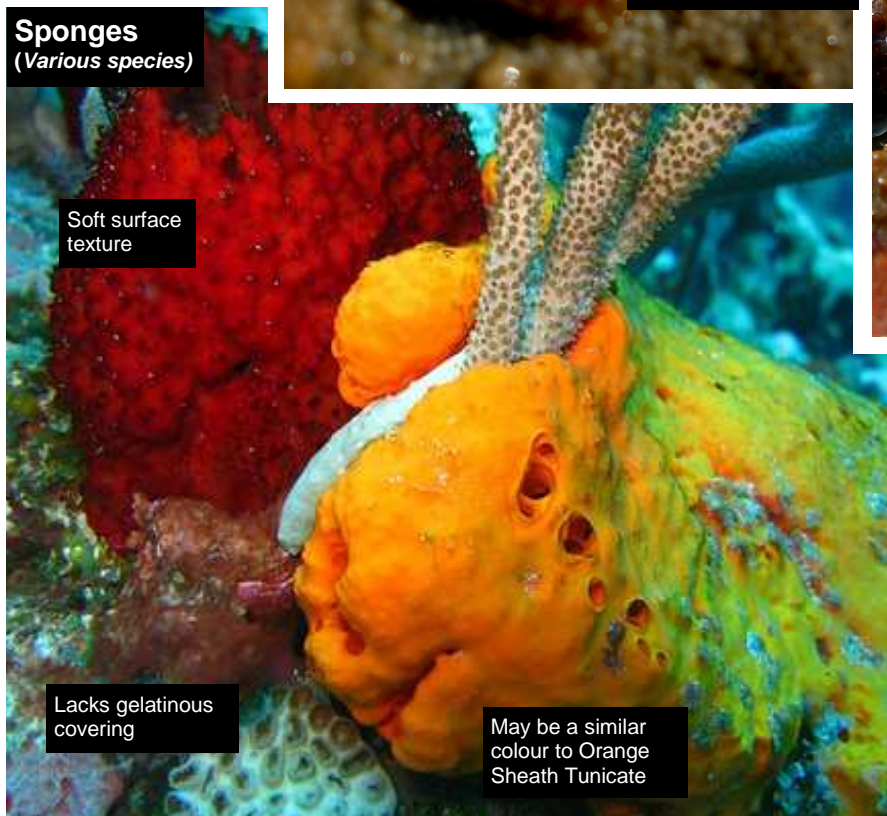
Usually one solid colour which can be orange, red or dull purple

Sponges
(Various species)

Soft surface texture

Lacks gelatinous covering

May be a similar colour to Orange Sheath Tunicate



References and further reading:

Anon (undated) "Botrylloides violaceus: orange or red sheath tunicate" Office of Coastal Zone Management, USA

"The Official Website of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts" http://www.mass.gov/czm/invasives/docs/invaders/b_violaceus.pdf