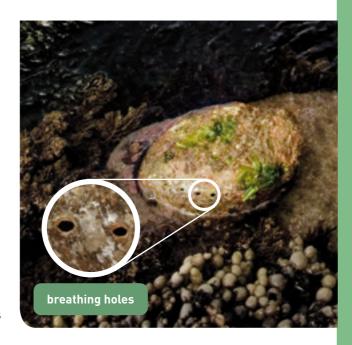
# Palla: The Sensitive Snail

Pāua are ancient sea snails that haven't evolved since the time of the dinosaurs. Their blood and respiratory systems are very basic, and they breathe and reproduce through the row of small holes that runs along their shell.

Because pāua were once found in large numbers, people think the supply of this shellfish will last forever - but unfortunately, this isn't the case. They may be simple organisms, but pāua are easily stressed and injured. If threatened, their only form of defence is to clamp down, and it can take them several days to recover. During this time, movement is restricted, which makes feeding difficult and increases their vulnerability to predators.

The circulation system of a pāua is unique because its blood doesn't clot. This means it can bleed to death from the smallest cut. If a pāua does become injured, it tries to stop the bleeding by contracting the muscle around the wound. It requires a lot of energy to replace lost blood, increasing the stress on the shellfish even further.

It's obviously best for a pāua to avoid injuries altogether, so treat each one with



extreme care. This is especially important when taking pāua that may turn out to be undersized. Throwing the small ones back isn't enough. A pāua needs to be carefully handled if it's to survive back in the water. So, how can you make sure that this sensitive species has a chance? There are a few simple rules to follow:

# 1. Use a measuring gauge.

It's illegal to take black-footed pāua (the most common species found in New Zealand) that measure less than 125 mm, so always make sure you know the exact length before you take one. It's best to make your own measuring gauge so that you can check every time. And if you're not sure - leave it.

# 2. Always use the right kind of tool.

A thin plastic spatula that has no sharp edges is best. The spatula should be longer than the paua and have a solid handle. This allows better leverage and grip.

### 3. Perfect your technique.

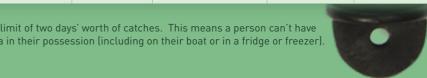
Slide the tip of your spatula underneath the paua as smoothly and quickly as possible. Make sure the tool is well underneath the foot of the paua and flat against the rock, otherwise you may damage the shellfish. If your first attempt is unsuccessful, leave it. Once a pāua clamps down, it's unlikely you'll get it off.

## 4. Treat undersized pāua with extreme care.

If you do make a mistake and take a small pāua, it can be saved – as long as you treat it carefully. Return the pāua straight away, holding it against a rock until it clamps down. Never throw a paua back into the water. It may land upside down and will either be eaten by a predator or die of shock.

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Common Name	Scientific Name	Size (grows up to)	Legal Size (for gathering)	Habitat	Predators
Black-footed pāua	Haliotis iris	180 mm	125 mm (ten only per day)*	Subtidal rocky coastlines at 1–15 m deep	Starfish, fish, crabs, octopuses, crayfish
Yellow-footed pāua	Haliotis australis	110 mm	80 mm (ten only per day)*		
White-footed pāua	Haliotis virginea	80 mm	Not commonly available		

<sup>\*</sup> With an accumulation limit of two days' worth of catches. This means a person can't have more than twenty pāua in their possession (including on their boat or in a fridge or freezer).





125 mm

# **Pāua: The Sensitive Snail**

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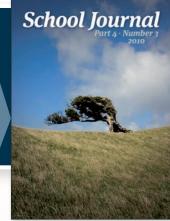
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