

Bidarki Story Introduction (Part 1)

A small, black **chiton** has a number of names. Its scientific name is *Katherina tunicata*, with the first name, or genus, in honor of a woman scientist, Lady Katherine Douglas. In 1815, she sent the first bidarki samples to England.



Also in honor of Lady Katherine, a common name for the small **mollusk** is the **katy chiton**. More recently, the tough, black, leathery covering on its back has earned it the common name black leather chiton. The animal is 1.5-3 inches long. Like all chitons, it has a muscular foot on the underside of its body and a shell that consists of eight white, overlapping butterfly-shaped plates. The tough, rubbery covering, called the girdle, is around the upper edge of the plates and may even completely cover the white plates. Chitons feed by using a hard, file-like rasping **radula** that extends out of the mouth on the underside of the animal to scrape algae and other small organisms off rocks in the intertidal zone. When disturbed, they can cling tightly to the rock and become very hard to remove. But when they are exposed by the low tide and dry out, they fall off the rock and become easy pickings for birds and other predators. In 2003 Anne Salomon, a scientist at the University of Washington, went to Port Graham to study katy chitons.

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