
The Cirriped *Octolasmis lowei* (Darwin 1851)
in the Adriatic

Ciripedni račić *Octolasmis lowei* (Darwin 1851) u Jadranu

by

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In August 1962 the assistant zoologist Dr Zdravko Štević sent me for identification a small cirriped (Fig. 1) which he had taken on the gills of a spiny crab, *Maja squinado* (Latr.) caught in the neighbourhood of Rovinj in the northern Adriatic. In an accompanying letter Dr Štević informs me that the living specimens had a light pinkish colour.

To my astonishment the specimens belonged to *Octolasmis lowei* (Darwin 1851), a species which up to the present has not been mentioned from the Mediterranean. The nearest finding places hitherto stated are Madeira (Darwin 1851) and the coast of Mauretania (Broch 1924). The new find is thus of great interest in zoogeographical respect.

In his review of the general distribution of the cirripeds of the Indian Ocean Nilsson-Cantell (1938) under *Octolasmis lowei* writes »Indian Ocean; Malay Archipelago; Australia; Japan; Formosa; Atlantic Ocean.« Quite recently Newman (1960) has added Western Pacific and Hawaii.

As above mentioned Darwin (1851) described the species from some specimens which had been collected at Madeira, which thus is the type locality. His specimens were »attached to a rare Brachyurous Crab« and he says that the new cirriped species is »Very rare«. Dr. Th. Monod collected a rich material of the species from the gill chambers of a single great spiny crab (*Maja*) (Broch 1924). According to literature the species seems to have escaped notice in Atlantic waters, until it now turns up in the northern Adriatic in the gill chambers of the spiny crab, *Maja squinado*, a species which is very common along the Adriatic coasts and which is much used as food and accordingly also plays a role in the Dalmatian fishery. This last find raises several interesting questions.

We shall not here dwell upon the question concerning the frequency of the *Octolasmis* species, which according to the more recent literature seems

to be comparatively frequent in tropical waters, although of scattered occurrence. This of course may be due to its special living place, viz. in gill chambers of larger crabs. These gill chambers are only seldom attended to by fish-mongers or fishermen. But on the other hand we cannot look away from being near the border of the geographical habitat of the cirriped. Evidently *Octolasmis lowei* is a tropical and subtropical species, and according to our present knowledge the Mediterranean is one of its border territories.

Examination of the literature implies that *Octolasmis lowei* is not especially particular in choosing its host, having been found in gill-chambers of several different species of larger brachyurans, e.g. also in species of the genus *Neptunus* (Hiro 1930). This impedes our judgment, whether *Octolasmis lowei* has entered the Mediterranean from east by way of the Suez-Canal, or from the Atlantic side through the Strait of Gibraltar.

In tropical waters *Octolasmis* and related cirripeds are rather frequently found in the gill-chambers of greater brachyurans and crayfishes, but it is questionable whether it from a physiological point of view is correct or defensible to characterize them as parasites. We must indeed altogether admit that our knowledge of the relations between the cirriped and its host is very meagre, to say the least of it. However, nothing seems to point in the direction that *Octolasmis* lives at the expense of the crab.

The spiny crab or sea-spider, *Maja squinado* is of so great value in the Yugoslav coastal fisheries that its relations to *Octolasmis* deserves a thorough study which can ascertain the frequency of its »parasite« and the influence of the latter on the crab, its physiology and quality.

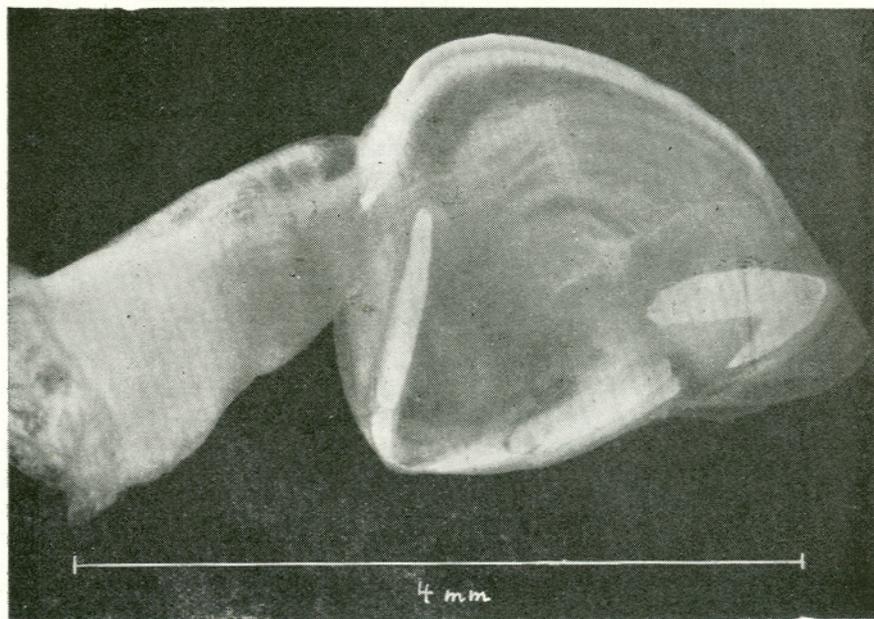


Fig. 1. *Octolasmis lowei* (D a r w i n), one of the specimens from the northern Adriatic. (x10) (P. Øynes phot.)

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Kratak sadržaj

Po prvi put je u Mediteranu zabilježeno prisustvo ciripednog račića *Octolasmis lowei* (Darwin, 1851). Taj je račić nađen na škrigama raka *Maja squinado* (Latr.)

Lokalitet nalaza je blizina Rovinja.