

CYPRAEA LENTIGINOSA: AN OTHER ODD RECORD OF AN EXOTIC COWRY
FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN COAST OF ISRAEL^x

by

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During a recent meeting of the study group of the Israel Malacological Society, one of the participants: Daniel Korkos, showed a Cowry shell from the collection of Shalom Geva, which had been collected last summer by an amateur diver in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Tel Aviv at a depth of 20 metres. The specimen was unlike the four species so far recorded as living along the Mediterranean coast of Israel: Cypraea lurida Linnaeus, 1758, Cypraea spurca Linnaeus, 1758, Cypraea pyrum Gmelin, 1791 and Cypraea gracilis Gaskoin, 1849. The latter is a Lessepsian migrant, collected for the first time in the Eastern Mediterranean in 1981. Today it seems well established at least along the coast of Israel and Turkey (Mienis & Singer, 1983).

The mystery shell may be described as follows: a medium sized, oval shell (29.2 x 17.3 mm), heavily marked with irregular brown spots and flecks over a diffused middorsal brownish band; towards and on the pale crème base the spots become darker; the anterior terminal is marked by a slender darkbrownish band; labial callus well developed; there are 18 labial and 16 columellar teeth.

The shell looks fresh but was collected dead. The dorsal-labial side shows two intriguing star-shaped boreholes. They might be the work of an Octopus rather than that of a Naticid or Muricid predator.

A comparison of the mystery shell with material in the Cypraea collection of the Hebrew University revealed its identity with Cypraea lentiginosa Gray, 1825. This uncommon species from the northwestern part of the Indian Ocean has been divided recently into three subspecies.

^x Notes from the I.M.S. study group meetings, 6.

taxon	distribution
<u>Cypraea lentiginosa lentiginosa</u> Gray, 1825	Persian Gulf - 200 miles south of Bombay
<u>Cypraea lentiginosa dancaia</u> Jonklaas & Nicolay, 1977	Southern Red Sea
<u>Cypraea lentiginosa buhariensis</u> Jonklaas & Nicolay, 1977	extreme south of the Indian peninsula.

According to the shell characters the specimen from Tel Aviv belongs surprisingly to the nominate form: lentiginosa s. str.

The find of Cypraea lentiginosa lentiginosa off Tel Aviv can therefore not be registered as an other case of Lessepsian migration. In this case we are obviously dealing with a hitchhiker, which in one way or another managed to reach the Eastern Mediterranean by means of interoceanic seatriansport.

This is not the first account of a find of an exotic Cowry on the Mediterranean coast of Israel. As already mentioned above Cypraea gracilis has to be considered a well established Lessepsian migrant in the Eastern Mediterranean (Mienis, 1983b). However, in the past still several other extra-Mediterranean species have been recorded in the form of single specimens from the coast of Israel:

species	locality	reference
<u>Cypraea moneta</u> Linnaeus, 1758	Acco	Haas, 1948: 143
<u>Cypraea spurca acicularis</u> Gmelin, 1791	Haifa	Mienis, 1983a: 528 Mienis, 1984a: 25
<u>Cypraea turdus</u> Lamarck, 1822	Dor	Barash & Danin, 1986: 121

Although I tend to consider the find of Cypraea lentiginosa as a one time event, there exists always a possibility that more than one specimen reached the Eastern Mediterranean. In that case this introduction might have triggered the establishment of a viable population as has happened in the case of Strombus decorus persicus Swainson, 1821, another species from the Persian Gulf. The latter species is now well established in the Eastern Mediterranean (Mienis, 1984b).

Samenvatting: Cypraea lentiginosa Gray, 1825 is hier voor het eerst van het oostelijk deel van de Middellandse Zee gerapporteerd. Een enkel, goed geconserveerd, maar dood exemplaar werd in de zomer van 1990 aangetroffen op een diepte van 20 meter ter hoogte van Tel Aviv, Israël. Het gaat hier om een exemplaar behorende tot de nominaat vorm, waarvan de verspreiding beperkt is tot de Perzische Golf en de westkust van India. Het exemplaar heeft de Middellandse Zee waarschijnlijk bereikt door middel van interoceanisch zeetransport.

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