

CYPRAEA GRACILIS: AN INTERESTING ADDITION TO THE MOLLUSC FAUNA  
OF THE MEDITERRANEAN COAST OF ISRAEL

by

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Recently Blöcher (1983) reported the find of a single, dead, but very fresh specimen of Cypraea gracilis Gaskoin, 1849 on the south coast of Turkey. This record was received by most cowry collectors with some reservation. It was not the identification which was questioned. The photographs of Blöcher's specimen (which appeared among others in Hawaiian Shell News, Xenophora and La Conchiglia) show that we are indeed dealing with the Indo-Pacific Cypraea gracilis. The mere fact how to interpret the find of a single specimen, led to some reservation.

In the past other Indo-Pacific cowries have been recorded from the Mediterranean: Cypraea moneta Linnaeus, 1758, Cypraea caurica Linnaeus, 1758, Cypraea pantherina Lightfoot, 1786 and Cypraea erosa Linnaeus, 1758, to name only a few, however, of these only Cypraea caurica seems to have established itself in the Mediterranean Sea. So what about Cypraea gracilis? Do we have to consider it a well established immigrant from the Red Sea, or is it only an occasional migrant to the Mediterranean Sea?

We do not have to wait long for an answer, because only this summer more than twenty specimens of Cypraea gracilis have been found on the Mediterranean coast of Israel. The following finds from our coast are known to us:

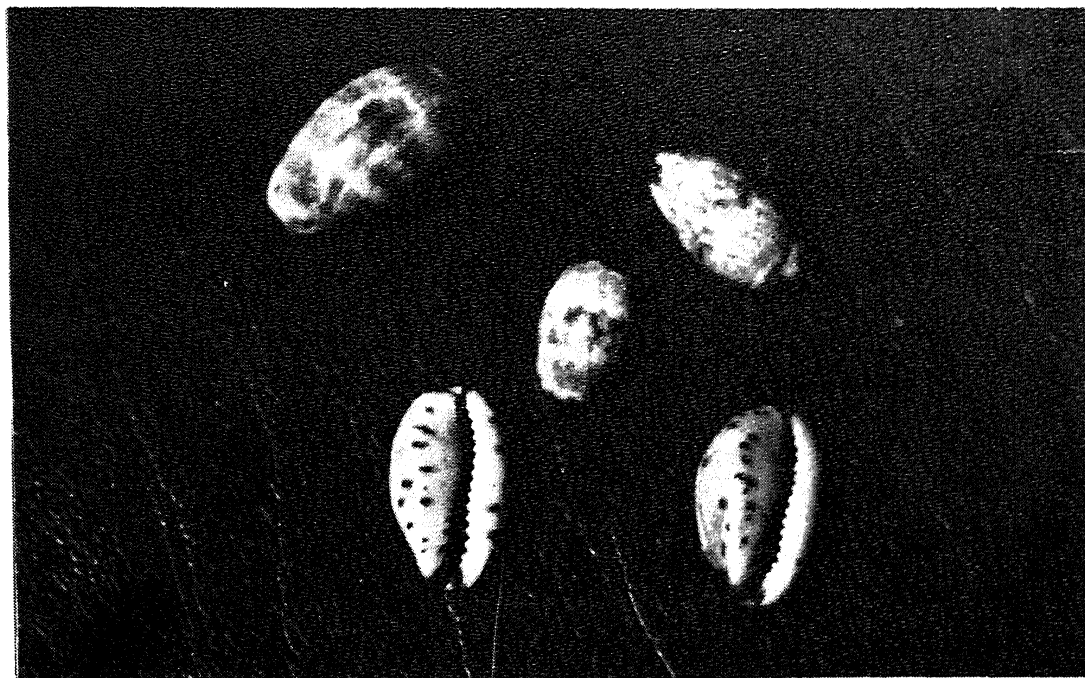
- a. Hadera, one living specimen, 1981 (coll. Tel Aviv University);
- b. Palmahim, one empty shell, leg. B. Singer, May-June 1983 (coll. B.Singer);
- c. Nahariya, one empty shell, leg. B. Singer, 2 June 1983 (coll. P.S.Tsuriel);
- d. Akhziv, four empty shells, leg. B. Singer, 2 June 1983 (coll. B.Singer);

- e. Palmahim, two empty shells, leg. B. Singer, middle of June 1983 (coll. B. Singer - one; coll. Hebrew University of Jerusalem - one);
- f. Bustan Hagalil, three empty shells, leg. Z. Lewy, first half of August 1983 (coll. Z. Lewy);
- g. Palmahim, three empty shells, leg. B. Singer, 2 September 1983 (coll. B. Singer);
- h. Palmahim, four empty shells, leg. E. Heiman, summer 1983 (coll. E. Heiman);
- i. south of Shiqmona, five empty shells, leg. B. Singer, 29 September 1983 (coll. B. Singer);
- j. Palmahim, one empty shell, leg. H.K. Mienis, 18 October 1983 (coll. Hebrew University of Jerusalem).

Another specimen was offered for sale by a local fisherman to one of the members of the Israel Malacological Society. This offer was refused because the accompanying locality data were questioned by the prospective buyer at that time. There exists at least still one other shell of Cypraea gracilis which has been found alive along our Mediterranean coast. It is figured in full colour in the recently published 4th volume: Aquatic life, of the illustrated encyclopedia "Plants and animals of the land of Israel" as Erosaria spurca (sic!). So far we failed in locating the whereabouts of this specimen, so we can not tell where and when it has been found.

Most of the shells were found in holes of rocks in very shallow water (0-1 m depth). This corresponds with Blöcher's find in Turkey and what is known about its habitat in the Indo-Pacific (Burgess, 1970). Also in its original area of distribution: the Indo-Pacific, it lives on or under rocks in very shallow water. In this aspect it occupies a niche in the Mediterranean which is not inhabited by any of the autochthonous species. This might be the reason why it has been collected in the last months in relatively large numbers.

From our data it is clear that Cypraea gracilis may be placed on the list of Indo-Pacific species living today in the Mediterranean Sea. It is therefore the sixth species of the genus Cypraea now known to live in the Mediterranean, the others being Cypraea spurca Linnaeus, 1758, Cypraea pyrum Gmelin, 1791, Cypraea lurida Linnaeus, 1758, Cypraea achatidea Sowerby, 1837 and Cypraea caurica Linnaeus, 1758.



Cypraea gracilis Gaskoin, 1849 -- five Mediterranean specimens from the Singer collection

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 Burgess, C.M., 1970. The living cowries. 389 pp. New York/London.  
 Fishelson, L. (Ed.), 1983. Aquatic life. Plants & Animals Land Israel, 4: 342 pp. Tel Aviv. (In Hebrew)

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NAQUETIA ANNANDALEI (PRESTON, 1910) (MURICIDAE)

This Muricid species has been long known as Murex trigonulus (Lamarck, 1822), however, since this is not the M. trigonulus described by Lamarck six years earlier in 1816, we can not use that name.

For a long time Naquetia annandalei has been a very rare species, seldom seen in collections. Now, that its range of distribution has been located in the N.W. Indian Ocean: from India via the Red Sea to East Africa, it is becoming less scarce.

Today most species are coming from the Gulf of Aqaba, where it is found at a depth of  $\pm$  20 m. The figured specimen is from Elat and has a height of 79.8 mm (HUJ collection).

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