

First record of the *Aplysiopsis elegans* (Deshayes 1853) (Gastropoda Opisthobranchia: Saccoglossa) in the Adriatic Sea

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A specimen of Aplysiopsis elegans (Deshayes, 1853) was found by snorkeling on a beach in Rovinj (Istria, Croatia) on a belt of the red algae Halopteris scoparia in the shallow rocky coast. This species was previously recorded only at few localities in northern western Mediterranean and at the Canary Archipelago.

Key words: first record, *Aplysiopsis elegans*, Adriatic Sea

INTRODUCTION

During the last decade the knowledge on the opisthobranch fauna in the Adriatic Sea improved substantially. The main reason laid probably in the vivid coloration of sea slugs which attract underwater photographers and other interested divers. The same is true also for the northern Adriatic sea where many new sea-slugs for the area were found recently. Among them there are also some species, still considered as very rare or less known, such as *Cumanotus beaumonti* (TURK, 2005) and *Pis-einotocus sphaerifera* (MAVRIČ & LIPEJ, 2012), and also some alien species, such as *Halgerda* cf. *wileyi* (TURK, 2000) and *Polycera hedgpethi* (GIACOBBE & DE MATTEO, 2013).

During an occasional snorkelling many small opisthobranchs were found on algal belt. Among others a tiny opisthobranch was found on a red algae *Halopteris scoparia*. After a detailed inspection, the specimen was determined as

Aplysiopsis elegans (DESHAYES, 1853), which appeared to be not yet confirmed in the Adriatic Sea.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The specimen of *A. elegans* was found on 2. September 2014 in Rovinj (45° 3' 53.96"N, 13° 38' 19.21"E) (Fig. 1) on a belt of the red algae *Halopteris scoparia* in the rocky intertidal zone (> 1 m depth). The specimen was measured alive and photographed (Fig. 2) under the stereomicroscope Olympus SZX16. Afterwards, the nudibranch was identified with the help of the keys for nudibranch determination such as PRUVOT-FOL (1954) and SCHMEKEL & PORTMANN (1982). Specialized internet web sites such as www.seaslugforum were helpful as well. The taxonomy and nomenclature are in accordance with the World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS; www.marinespecies.org). Subsequently the specimen was fixed in 70% alcohol

solution and deposited in the collection of the Marine biology station (MBS) of the National Institute of Biology.

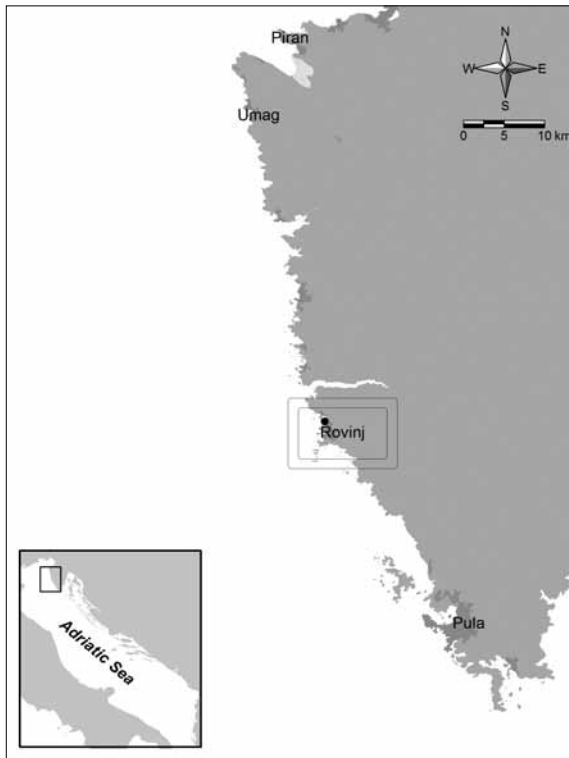


Fig. 1. Map of the Istrian peninsula (Northern Adriatic Sea) with the location (Rovinj), where the specimen of *A. elegans* was found

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The specimen measured approximately 6 mm in total length (Fig. 2). It was determined according different diagnostic features such as the colour pattern and the bands on the head. The spindle shaped cerata have typical strait brown stripes. Rhinophora are short, folded and splitted. The black eyes spots are behind rhinophora and in front of the first cerata. Other characters agree well with the species description of TRINCHESE (1877-1879) and SCHMEKEL & PORTMANN (1982).

Aplysiopsis elegans was recorded only in few occasions in east Atlantic Ocean and the western Mediterranean Sea. One among first records of this species after its description was reported for the Gulf of Genova by TRINCHESE (1877-1879). The species was later reported for Banyuls (southern France) by PRUVOT-FOL (1954), Bal-



Fig. 2. Specimen of *A. elegans* found in waters off Rovinj (Istria, Croatia) (Photo: B. Mavrič)

earic Islands (BALLESTEROS & TEMPLADO, 1996) and Qajjenza (Malta) (SAMMUT & PERRONE, 1998, SAMMUT, 2012). The species was also found on Islas Canarias by ORTEA *et al.* (1998). Up to date, this species was not reported in the Adriatic Sea (www.seaslugforum).

In our case the sea slug was found on the red algae *Halopteris scoparia*. The specimen recorded from Malta was found beached on red algae (SAMMUT & PERRONE, 1998), as well, although authors mentioned that it was found usually on *Cladophora* sp. and *Cystoseira* sp. They also reported spawns in March, May and October. The typical habitat seems to be the shallow rocky areas which from the bionomic point of view fit in the biocoenosis of photophilic algae. ORTEA *et al.* (1998) reported a record of a 12 mm long specimen, found in intertidal belt at Punta del Hidalgo, Tenerife (Islas Canarias) on 1st October 1996.

The inspection of a turf vegetation and similar peculiar habitat types also in areas of an intense maritime traffic could be helpful in finding other opisthobranchs not yet recorded in the studied area, as well as non indigenous species, which are known to colonize impoverished ecosystems. In fact, the finding of the rare and less

known *P. sphaerifera* occurred in a similar habitat type in the harbour of Koper (MAVRIČ & LIPEJ, 2012). We assume that the list of the sacoglossan species, inhabiting the northern Adriatic Sea could be enlarged in the near future.

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**Prvi nalaz *Aplysiopsis elegans* (Deshayes 1853)
(Gastropoda Opisthobranchia: Saccoglossa)
u Jadranskom moru**

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SAŽETAK

Primjerak *Aplysiopsis elegans* (Deshayes, 1853) je pronađen tijekom ronjenja na plaži u Rovinju (Istra, Hrvatska) u pojasu crvene alge *Halopteris scoparia* na plitkoj stjenovitoj obali.

Prethodni nalazi ove vrste su zabilježeni na samo nekoliko lokaliteta u sjeverno-zapadnom Sredozemlju i Arhipelagu Kanarskog otočja.

Ključne riječi: prvi nalaz, *Aplysiopsis elegans*, Jadransko more