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SHELL REPAIR IN CERITHIUM LIVIDULUM: EVIDENCE OF UNSUCCESSFUL PREDATION BY CRABS

by

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The marine snail *Cerithium lividulum* Risso, 1826, is commonly encountered along the Mediterranean coast of Israel. It is especially abundant in the northern and central part, where it lives in shallow water up to a depth of 2m. It hides usually among algae which serve also as the snail's food (Barash & Danin 1992).

This well known Mediterranean species is better known as *Cerithium rupestre* or *rupestris* auct. (non Risso, 1926). According to Arnaud (1978), who studied Rosso's type material, true *C. rupestre* is quite different species, which should not be confused with *C. lividulum* (= *C. mediterraneum* Deshayes, 1843)

The National Mollusc Collection of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJ) contains numerous samples of *C. lividulum*. While incorporating their data the catalogue I noticed that a large proportion of the live collected material, showed repaired apertures. All these shells showed the same type of damage of damage: someone had clipped away the final part of the last whorl over a distance ranging from 5-10mm.

This type of damage is characteristic for crabs predation. In order to reach the snail's meat on which the crab intends to feast, it chips away the last part of the shell. However, according to the number of repaired shells (often 50% of the collected material for example in sample HUU 7438 collected by Prof. G Haas on 3 December 1935 north of Acco) these attempts of predation were not always successful. The reason why the crabs aborted their attempts to reach the body of the snail, is not clear. Maybe the snail becomes too thick at certain distance from the aperture or the crabs were disturbed in their work. The exact reason did not bother the snail, they crawled away for a new hide out and, according to the collected material, managed to repair their shell in a perfect manner.

References

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