

The first record of *Aglaja tricolorata* (Opisthobranchia: Aglajidae) from the south coasts of Italy

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INTRODUCTION

Aglaja tricolorata (Renier, 1807) is a small sized nudibranch known from the Mediterranean Sea and the west coast of Africa. In Mediterranean it has been mostly reported from Adriatic Sea and French coast [1] with sporadic records from Iberian Peninsula [2] and Malta. The present record, in the protected area of "Capo Peloro Lagoon", represents the first finding in Sicily and the most southern one in the Italian Seas, except for the dated and not confirmed report of Philippi (1836) [3] as *Doridium meckelii* (Delle Chiaje, 1824).



METHODS

The area of Capo Peloro Lagoon and the nearby marine coastal waters have been examined by snorkeling to monitor the local nudibranch populations. Specimens have been photographed in situ, to document alive coloration and small scale habitat characteristics. Two individuals of *Aglaja tricolorata*, handily captured in Ganzirri channel, have been preserved in 95% ethanol to confirm the preliminary on field determination. Contextually, the main hydrological parameters have been recorded. The diagnosis is a minimum combination of characters that positively identify the collected specimens among species of the family Aglajidae in according to Renier, 1807.

RESULTS

The specimens showed an elongated, oval body, with posterior edge of headshield rounded, with a median crest. Parapodia large, partially enclosing notum. Posterior shield with processes developed from the posterior end. Shell internal, flattened, slightly calcified. Diaphragm reduced to thin sac enclosing viscera. The species has distinctive tentacular corners on the anterior parapodia and a thin posterior flagellum extending out from the ventral fold of the posterior shield. The animal is a dark translucent brown with opalescent white spots scattered all over the dorsal surface and the sides. On the ventral surface the background colour is much more translucent and the white spots larger. The identification of *Aglaja tricolorata* presents a confused history, since our knowledge based on Vayssiere [4] (1880 - as *Doridium membranaceum*) and reported by Pilsbry (1896) [5] and Pruvot-Fol (1954) [1] are not fully in accordance with some recent records.

CONCLUSION

This record testifies of a southward spreading of this species that might be human mediated, in accordance with the introduction of flora and fauna in the Faro Lake by mollusc trade and farming.



REFERENCES

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