

# FIRST RECORD OF CECILIOIDES TUMULORUM FROM ISRAEL

## (GASTROPODA, FERUSSACIIDAE)

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Abstract: The subterranean snail *Cecilioides tumulorum* (Bourguignat, 1856), Fam. Ferussaciidae, is here reported from nest cleanings of an unidentified Harvest ant species near moshav Newe Ativ, Mount Hermon, Israel. It constitutes the first record of this species from Israel. We follow Forcart (Mss.) in considering *Cecilioides judaica* (Mousson, 1861) and *Ferussacia (Pegea) kervillei* (Germain, 1911) as independent species and not as junior synonyms of *Cecilioides tumulorum sensu* Schütt (2010).

Key words: Mollusca, Gastropoda, Ferussaciidae, *Cecilioides tumulorum*, distribution, Israel.

On 15 December 2011 some fieldwork was carried out on the Israeli side of Mount Hermon. The main purpose was to locate and photograph some living specimens of new species of land snails which had been found on Mount Hermon in the past. Although we failed to realize our plans, we did not return with empty hands.

Among the ruins of the Nimrod Fortress we were able to collect eight species which had not been recorded before from that Nature Reserve and National Park (Mienis, Rittner & Vaisman, 2012).

In the wake of the success with finding interesting micro-gastropods in ant nest cleanings (Vaisman & Mienis, 2011) we collected part of the refuse ejected from the nest of an unidentified Harvest ant species (Messor species) in the Newe Ativ Park on the outskirts of moshav Newe Ativ. This material was screened for the presence of empty shells by Svetlana Vaisman.

The results looked in the beginning rather disappointing: most of the snails consisted of adult specimens of common species like *Euchondrus septemdentatus* (Roth, 1839), *Monacha syriaca* (Ehrenberg, 1831) and *Xeropicta vestalis joppensis* (Schmidt, 1855), while only single shells or fragments of three subterranean species belonging to the family Ferussaciidae were present. Two of these specimens belonged to the common species *Calaxis hierosolymarum* (Roth, 1855) and *Cecilioides acicula* (Müller, 1774), but the third one was a real surprise and turned out to be a perfect specimen of *Cecilioides tumulorum* (Bourguignat, 1856). The latter species had never been recorded before from Israel in general and from Mount Hermon in particular. It is here described in more detail.



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## Description of the specimen of *Cecilioides tumulorum* from Newe Ativ

*Cecilioides tumulorum* (Bourguignat, 1856) – Fig. 1

The needle-shaped shell is composed of 6 slightly convex whorls. The first whorl consists of the blunt protoconch; the following teleoconch whorls are increasing regularly in width; the body whorl covers about 60% of the total height. The suture is shallow and bordered by a thin opaque line. The vitreous empty shell is partly of a pale milky white colour. Height of the shell: 5 mm.

## Remarks

The shell from Newe Ativ resembles in detail the two shells of *Cecilioides tumulorum* figured by Falkner (1990: 169, Figs. 3-4). It differs from the shell of *Cecilioides acicula* found in the same sample by its relatively much wider body whorl.

According to Schütt (2010) *Cecilioides tumulorum* is known from the Greek mainland, the Aegean Islands, Rhodes, Cyprus and Turkey however he refers also to records in the literature from Lebanon, Israel, Saudi-Arabia, Yemen and Oman. These additional records are most probably based on misinterpretations of the identities of *Glandina tumulorum* var. *judaica* Mousson, 1861 and *Caecilioides kervillei* Germain, 1911, which were both placed by Schütt in the synonymy of *Cecilioides tumulorum*.

According to the unpublished manuscript by Forcart (1981) on the terrestrial gastropods of Palestine *Glandina tumulorum* var. *judaica* has to be considered a full species: *Cecilioides judaica*, known from Israel and Mersin in Turkey. Likewise also *Caecilioides kervillei* is an independent species and should be classified as *Ferussacia (Pegea) kervillei*, restricted in its distribution to Israel and Lebanon.

According to the figures given by Schütt (2010: 296) he was probably dealing with a composite species. His drawing of *Cecilioides tumulorum* is more characteristic for this species than the photograph, which might represent a specimen belonging to *Cecilioides judaica*. Also the picture in Neubert (1998: Fig. 144) identified as *Cecilioides* aff. *tumulorum* from Yemen, is quite unlike the original figure in Bourguignat (1856: Plt. 18, Figs. 16-17) or those in Falkner (1990).

The find of *Cecilioides tumulorum* near Newe Ativ coincides with that of several other Palearctic species like *Carychium minimum* Müller, 1774, *Lauria cylindracea* (da Costa, 1778), *Orcullella sirianocoriensis libanotica* (Tristram, 1865), *Pyramidula pusilla* (Vallot, 1801) and *Oxychilus (Hiramia) camelinus* (Bourguignat, 1852) for which Mount Hermon and its surroundings (Banyas and Dan) constitutes the most southern locality in the Levant.

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