

MIENIS, H.K.:

A new record of Melanoides tuberculata from Malta -

A Melanoides tuberculata uj elđfordulása Máltán

ABSTRACT: The presence of Melanoides tuberculata in Maltese waters has been confirmed after 120 years! The problem whether the species is autochthonous or introduced is discussed.

In 1868 ISSEL recorded the freshwater gastropod Melanoides tuberculata /MÜLLER, 1774/, /Fam. Thiaridae/ for the first time from the Central Mediterranean island Malta. He had encountered it in a streamlet together with Hydrobia musaensis /FRAUENFELD, 1855/, a rather unlikely identification, since the latter: Semisalsa musaensis, seems to be confined to Sinai, Egypt /TCHERNOV, 1971/ and Jordan /SCHÜTT, 1983/.

In spite of several follow-up studies of the land and freshwater molluscs of Malta /FEILDEN, 1879; BECHER, 1884; PONSOMBY, 1885; SOOS, 1933/, no additional records of Melanoides have ever turned up, although ISSEL's Hydrobiid species turned up in myriads in a stream near Grand Harbour /BECHER, 1884, as Paludina melitensis/. So the occurrence of Melanoides tuberculata on Malta remained rather doubtful.

Recently, however, I received several interesting shipments of land and freshwater molluscs from Malta and among them was also a sample of Melanoides tuberculata. HENRY J. THAKE had collected the specimens in brackish water near reeds in the Salina, October 1986 /HUJ 36545/2/.

The question is how we have to interpret this new record, which seems to confirm the 120 year old record by ISSEL.

In my opinion the recent find of Melanoides tuberculata in Maltese waters can be explained at least in two ways:

- a./ It has always been a part of the local freshwater fauna. However, if true, it is very difficult to explain why it has always been overlooked by other students of the Maltese fauna since ISSEL's record in 1868. Especially if we take in consideration the fact that populations of M. tuberculata consist always of thousands and thousands of extremely prolific specimens. Even after the population becomes extinct, their remains, i.e., the shells, are still easily collected over long periods.
- b./ It has been /re/introduced recently. This explanation seems to me much more likely. Melanoides tuberculata is a well-known, almost cosmopolitan

aquarium snail. When populations are becoming too dense, aquarium owners have often the bad habit in releasing their superfluous material /fishes, water-plants, snails/ in nearby ponds, streams, etc. In this way populations of M. tuberculata have recently turned up among others in Florida and Texas /CIENCH, 1969/, Spain /GASULL, 1975/, Austria /MILDER, 1973/, and Turkey /BILGIN, 1973/.

From both the faunistic and medical point of view such liberations have to be condemned. In Austria, for example, introduced molluscs are endangering the existence of several endemic species /REISCHÜTZ - SEIDL jun., 1982/, while in Turkey, M. tuberculata is feared for its reputation as being an intermediate host of Paragonimiasis, a fluke which can cause a dangerous lung disease in human beings /BILGIN, 1973/.

Whether M. tuberculata is a rediscovered autochthonous species or a recent introduction, it will be interesting to know whether we have to wait another 120 years for the next record of this species from Malta.

I am grateful to Mr. HENRY J. THAKE /Zejtun, Malta/ for sending the interesting material.

ÖSSZEFOGLALÁS

A Melanoides tuberculata előfordulását a máltai vizeken 120 év elteltével sikerült megerősíteni. A cikk megvizsgálja, hogy ez a faj bennszülöttnek vagy inkább behurcoltnak tekintendő-e.

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HENK K. LIENIS

Mollusc Collection,
Zoological Museum,
Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Jerusalem
Israel