Tardigrades of Israel with description of four new species

GIOVANNI PILATO, OSCAR LISI & MARIA GRAZIA BINDA
Department of Animal Biology “Marcello La Greca”, University of Catania, Via Androne 81, 95124 Catania. E-mail: pilato@unict.it

Abstract

Only few species of tardigrades have been recorded from Israel. In this paper we report an additional 20 species, 18 of which are new records for that geographical area; four (Bryodelphax meronensis sp. nov., Macrobiotus dimentmani sp. nov., Pseudobiotus hirsutellus sp. nov. and Mixibius schnurae sp. nov.) are new to science. Bryodelphax meronensis sp. nov. differs from similar species (B. alzirae, B. tatrensis and B. mateusi) in details of the cuticular ornamentation and the absence of papilla on the hind legs. It also differs from B. alzirae by the presence of 12 lateral intersegmental platelets, instead of 6. It differs from B. atlantis in details of the plate ornamentation, lack of eyes, and shorter internal buccal cirri. Macrobiotus dimentmani sp. nov. differs from M. diffusus with more slender claws, the external claws slightly longer, and in characteristics of the eggs (the apical portion of the conical processes is subdivided into two to six long, flexible terminal points that are not very thin filaments; each process has a ring of basal dots, the egg shell has an obvious granulation). Mixibius schnurae sp. nov. differs from all other known species within the genus by characteristics of the cuticular ornamentation; in addition it differs from M. ornatus and M. sutirae in having the stylet supports inserted on the buccal tube in a more cephalic position; and from M. ninguidus in having longer buccal tube and shorter second placoid. Pseudobiotus hirsutellus sp. nov. differs from P. vladimiri in the presence of eye spots; cuticular spine-shaped processes present on the central portion of the body as well as the anterior and posterior portions; wider buccal tube; longer placoids; longer claws that are without accessory points; and the absence of oval papillae on the first three pairs of legs. The new species differs from P. spinifer in having less numerous and smaller spine-shaped cuticular processes; wider buccal tube; longer placoids; and the absence of oval papilla on the first three pairs of legs.

Key words: Tardigrada, Bryodelphax meronensis sp. nov., Macrobiotus dimentmani sp. nov., Pseudobiotus hirsutellus sp. nov., Mixibius schnurae sp. nov.

Introduction

The tardigradological fauna of Israel is almost unknown. Only 14 species were recorded from Palestine (mainly what is today Israel, but also sites in Jordan) by Rahm (1936) two of which, Macrobiotus terrae sanctae and Diphascon enmautinum were considered new to science. However, the descriptions of both these species were incomplete and they can no longer be identified with any certainty. For example, Rahm (1936) wrote about Macrobiotus terrae sanctae, “Krallen wie Hypsibius dujardini” [Claws as Hypsibius dujardini] and the drawing seems to indicate claws of Hypsiibiidae, not Macrobiotidae. Ramazzotti (1972) hypothesized that Diphascon enmautinum was a synonym of D. spitzbergense Richters 1903, and Ramazzotti & Maucci (1983) considered the species a nomen dubium and it was therefore excluded. Those species that we consider were present in Palestine are: Pseudochiniscus suillus (Ehrenberg, 1853), Echiniscus blumi Richters, 1903, Echiniscus testudo (Doyère, 1840), Murrayon hastatus (Murray, 1907), Macrobiotus hufelandi Schultz, 1834, Paramacrobiotus richtersi (Murray, 1911) (Macrobiotus schützii Greef, as reported by Rahm (1936) but later synonymised), Macrobiotus echinogenitus Richters, 1904, Macrobiotus occidentalis Murray, 1910, Hypsibius scabropygus Cuénot, 1929, Ramazzottius oberhaeuseri (Doyère, 1840), Diphascon alpinum Murray, 1906 and Milnesium tardigradum Doyère, 1840.

Our colleagues Chanan Dimentman and Heather Schnur (University of Jerusalem) requested we study a collection of tardigrades from Israel and sent us a number of moss samples and specimens collected from freshwater habitats.