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FIRST RECORD OF THE GOLDEN CORAL SHRIMP, *STENOPUS SPINOSUS* RISSO, 1827, IN THE GULF OF VENICE

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ABSTRACT

*We present the first record of *Stenopus spinosus* Risso, 1827 for the Gulf of Venice based on several specimens we found during our inventories of Banjole Island off Rovinj and the marine protected area of the Brijuni National Park, Croatia.*

Key words: *Stenopus spinosus*, cave, crevice, upper infralittoral, Banjole, Brijuni National Park

PRIMA SEGNALAZIONE DEL GAMBERO MECCANICO, *STENOPUS SPINOSUS* RISSO, 1827, NEL GOLFO DI VENEZIA

SINTESI

*Gli autori presentano il primo ritrovamento di *Stenopus spinosus* Risso, 1827 per il Golfo di Venezia, basata su alcuni esemplari trovati durante gli inventari nelle acque dell'isola di Banjole al largo di Rovigno, e dell'area marina protetta del Parco Nazionale di Brioni, in Croazia.*

Parole chiave: *Stenopus spinosus*, grotta, crepaccio, infralitorale superiore, Banjole, Parco Nazionale di Brioni

INTRODUCTION

It is certainly a special pleasure to find *Stenopus spinosus* Risso, 1827, an impressive (up to 8 cm body length) and beautifully coloured Mediterranean ornamental shrimp for the first time in a sector of the Mediterranean, especially if this sector has been well-studied in the past. Correspondingly, we report here the first records of this species in the Gulf of Venice.

Antoine Risso used specimens found off Nice, France, collected from „régions coralligènes“ for his description of *S. spinosus*. Later on, this species was recorded in many regions in the Mediterranean Sea including the Adriatic (first record in Karlovac (1953), near Šibenik, and later Štević (1990), and Froglija (2010)) except for one sector, the Gulf of Venice (Northern Adriatic or sector 9 *sensu* Bianchi (2004) and Relini (2010), *i.e.* north of the line Conero (near Ancona) – Kap Kamenjak (southernmost cape of Istria).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

While scuba diving off the coast of the Brijuni archipelago at Javorika West and in the marine caves at Banjole island off Rovinj, we observed *Stenopus spinosus* in or in front of their shelters, *i.e.*, small crevices. Using underwater macrophotography, we documented the specimens, their specific colouration, and other features, *e.g.*, basal dentation and form of cutting edge of chela fingers of third pereopod. For identification, we used Noël (1992) and Goy (2010).

RESULTS

During our works on bioinventories of the marine protected area at Brijuni National Park, and at Banjole Isl. off Rovinj, we recorded specimens of *S. spinosus* at two localities:

1: Banjole Island, 45° 4'26.40"N, 13°36'39.71"E, depth: c. 12 m, deep end of cave; dive Ba21_10, 1 October 2021, afternoon (15:15), one specimen (underwater photo: Martin Heß; Fig. 1A); dives Ba22_1-7, 4 October 2022 - 7 October 2022, 11:00-21:00, two to five specimens of different size observed simultaneously (underwater photo: Martin Pfannkuchen; Fig. 1B). Also, we documented the species-specific shape of the right cheliped (Fig. 1B).

2: Veliki Brijuni Island, Uvala Javorika West, 44°54'6.32"N, 13°45'33.36"E, dive B22_2, 6 June 2022, short after midnight (0:10), depth:

c. 3 m; crevice with *Conger conger* in mixed rock and sediment ground (underwater photo: Roland Melzer; Fig. 1C).

DISCUSSION

S. spinosus has often been observed during its nocturnal activity peak, and its common association with the Conger eel suggests that it is a facultative cleaner shrimp like, *e.g.*, *Lysmata seticaudata* (Risso, 1816), albeit other feeding techniques are probable. In addition to rocky slopes and small crevices that provide shelter during the day, it is also a characteristic inhabitant of Mediterranean caves (Goy, 2010; Bianchi *et al.*, 2022).

To decide whether *S. spinosus* had been overlooked for decades in the northernmost part of the Adriatic due to rarity and/or clandestine nocturnal activity or whether this species is currently extending its distribution range northwards is a rather intricate affair. Various expert carcinologists have studied the Western Istrian coast and the Gulf of Venice, for decades, but in none of their publications, be it original data or reviews, *S. spinosus* is listed for this area, though it is a large and well-known species (*e.g.*, Pesta, 1918; Manning & Štević, 1982; Štević, 1990, 1995, 2002; Müller & Schubarth, 2007; Froglija, 2010). Thus, the idea that this species has recently colonized the northernmost sector of the Mediterranean has some credibility. However, due to its hidden lifestyle during the day and exclusively nocturnal activities in open space, some authors have rated *S. spinosus* as a „fake“ rare species (d'Udekem d'Acoz, 1997), since it turns out to be seen often during night dives, but not during the day. On the other hand, several authors of this paper have visited the Banjole caves since the early 1990s and did nightdives at the Brijuni Marine Protected Area since 2015, but had never seen *S. spinosus* at these localities before 2021 and 2022, respectively.

Our observations add to the list of previous new decapod records for the area (*Bathynectes longipes* (Meyer *et al.*, 2015), *Automate branchialis* (Ceseña *et al.*, 2017) and *Hippolyte prideauxiana* (Melzer *et al.*, 2019). These new records might indicate that by virtue of the northward directed surface currents along the eastern Adriatic sector (Orlić *et al.*, 1992) and increased temperature especially during winter (Raicich & Colucci, 2019), with Brijuni MPA as a putative stepping stone (Melzer *et al.*, 2016), rare species can arrive in and/or repopulate the Northern Adriatic at any time.

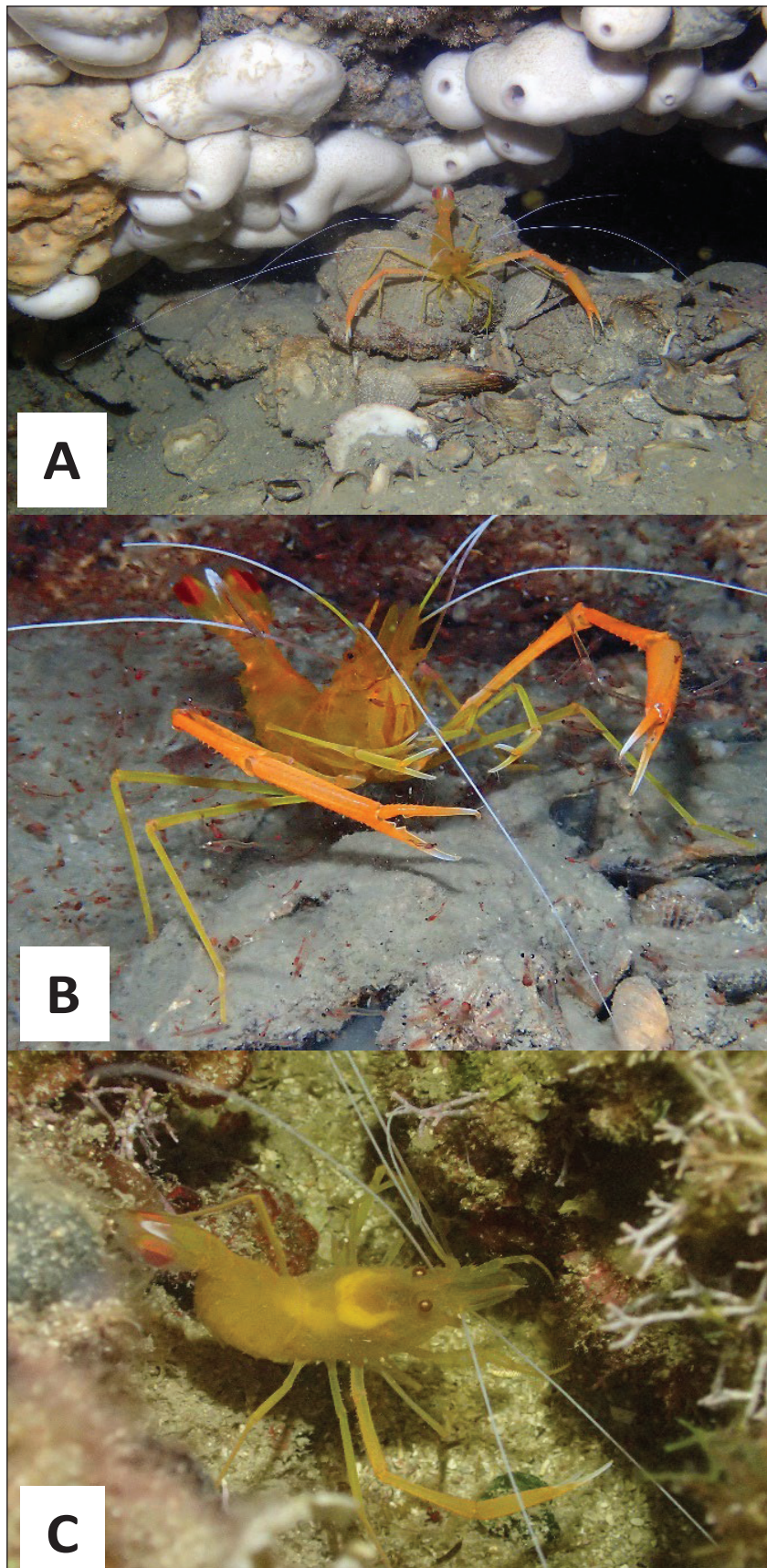


Fig. 1: *Stenopus spinosus* in the Gulf of Venice. A, B Banjole cave, C Uvala Javorika West. Note specific spinulation of fingers of third pereopod (B) and length of antennae exceeding three times the body length (not fully visible here). All specimens showed the specific colour features of this species, namely the „golden“ colour of the body, the specific brown, red and white marks on uropods and telson, and white antennal flagella.

Sl. 1: *Stenopus spinosus* v Beneškem zalivu. A, B Jama Banjole, C Uvala zahodna Javorika. Vidna je posebna trnavost izrastkov na tretjem pereopodu (B) in dolžina tipalke, ki je daljša od trikratne dolžine telesa (tu ni v celoti vidna). Vsi primerki kažejo značilen „zlati“ barvni vzorec telesa, rdeče in bele pege na uropodih in telzonu

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PRVI ZAPIS O POJAVLJANJU KORALNE KOZICE, *STENOPUS SPINOSUS* RISSO, 1827, V BENEŠKEM ZALIVU

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POVZETEK

Avtorji poročajo o prvem zapisu o pojavljanju vrste Stenopus spinosus Risso, 1827 v Beneškem zalivu, ki temelji na več primerkih, ulovljenih v okviru inventarizacije otoka Banjole pri Rovinju in morskega zavarovanega območja Nacionalni park Brijuni (Hrvaška).

Ključne Besede: *Stenopus spinosus*, jama, špranje, zgornji infralitoral, Banjole, Nacionalni Park Brijuni

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