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NOTOSPERMUS ANNULATUS (NEMERTEA: LINEIDAE), A NEW RECORD FOR BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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ABSTRACT

The first record of the ribbon worm *Notospermus annulatus* (Grube, 1840) in Bosnia and Herzegovina is presented. For a long time, it was regarded as a synonym of *Notospermus geniculatus* (Delle Chiaje, 1822), but based on recent molecular phylogenetic study its status as a separate species is proposed and followed in this paper. A single specimen was recorded on 2nd October 2021 in a small bay near Opuće Village on Klek Peninsula. This finding contributes to the understanding of the species' distribution in the Adriatic Sea and expands the knowledge of a scarcely known national marine fauna. This is also the first record of any Nemertea species in marine waters in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Key words: Adriatic Sea, Neum Bay, distribution, marine fauna, Mediterranean

NOTOSPERMUS ANNULATUS (NEMERTEA: LINEIDAE), UN NUOVO RITROVAMENTO PER LA BOSNIA ED ERZEGOVINA

SINTESI

L'articolo presenta il primo ritrovamento del verme a nastro *Notospermus annulatus* (Grube, 1840) in Bosnia ed Erzegovina. Per molto tempo è stato considerato un sinonimo di *Notospermus geniculatus* (Delle Chiaje, 1822), ma sulla base di un recente studio di filogenetica molecolare il suo status di specie separata viene proposto e seguito in questo articolo. Un singolo esemplare è stato trovato il 2 ottobre 2021 in una piccola baia vicino al villaggio di Opuće, nella penisola di Klek. Questo ritrovamento contribuisce alla comprensione della distribuzione della specie nel mare Adriatico e amplia la conoscenza di una fauna marina nazionale poco conosciuta. Si tratta inoltre del primo ritrovamento di una specie di Nemertea nelle acque marine della Bosnia ed Erzegovina.

Parole chiave: mare Adriatico, Baia di Neum, distribuzione, fauna marina, Mediterraneo

INTRODUCTION

Around 1300 species of nemerteans have been reported globally (Gibson, 1995; Sundberg & Gibson, 2008; Norenburg *et al.*, 2021). Most of them inhabit marine environment and rarely freshwater and terrestrial habitats, with majority of species living in benthic habitats. Benthic species are largely carnivorous predators feeding on different organisms, primary polychaetes and crustaceans, some are egg predators such as *Carcinonemertes* spp. (Kuris, 1993), while other rarely base their diet on recently dead organisms (McDermott & Roe, 1985; Thiel, 1998). Generally, the knowledge of biology, ecology and distribution of this group is limited, probably due to challenges in collection, identification and preservation of specimens (e.g. Junoy & Herrera-Bachiller, 2010; Fernández-Álvarez *et al.*, 2015).

Within lineid heteronemerteans identified as *Notospermus geniculatus* (Delle Chiaje, 1822) in the Mediterranean, three nominal species have been proposed: *Polia geniculata* Delle Chiaje, 1822; *Notospermus drepanensis* Huschke, 1830; and *Meckelia annulata* Grube, 1840 (Kajihara *et al.*, 2022). They were synonymized by several authors, including Riser (1991). However, based on the molecular phylogenetic study from Kajihara *et al.* (2022), at least two biological entities exist within *Notospermus* in the Mediterranean, and they can be distinguished based on the appearance of the white rings on the dorsal side of the body. The name *Notospermus annulatus* (Grube, 1840) was assigned to the one having the white rings dorsally

discontinuous, aside from the anterior-most one, as this was the species character in its original description and illustration by Grube (1840) (Kajihara *et al.*, 2022). The species was originally described as *Meckelia annulata* Grube, 1840 from Naples and Palermo, Italy (Grube, 1840).

Notospermus annulatus has flattened rather than rounded body. The color is dark green, with intermittent, not quite closed white ring lines lying at fairly equal distances (Grube, 1840).

There are limited data about the distribution of the species. Considering that was regarded as a synonym of *N. geniculatus* it was mostly reported under this name (e.g. Kvist *et al.*, 2014; Insacco *et al.*, 2021). Records of *N. annulatus* are known from Spain, France, Italy, Croatia (Senz, 1998; Kajihara *et al.*, 2022).

So far, studies on marine ribbon worms were never conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, so this record of *Notospermus annulatus* represents the first record of phylum Nemertea for the marine fauna of the country.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A single specimen of *N. annulatus* was found at mid-day of 2nd October 2021 during the short field study in a small bay at the outskirts of Opuće Village (Figs. 1 and 2). This small bay is located on Klek Peninsula, at the entrance to the Neum Bay that represents the major part of the sea territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Neum Bay is approximately 6 km long, 1.2 km wide and up to 30 m deep bay located in central part of Eastern Adriatic Sea coast, completely enclosed by

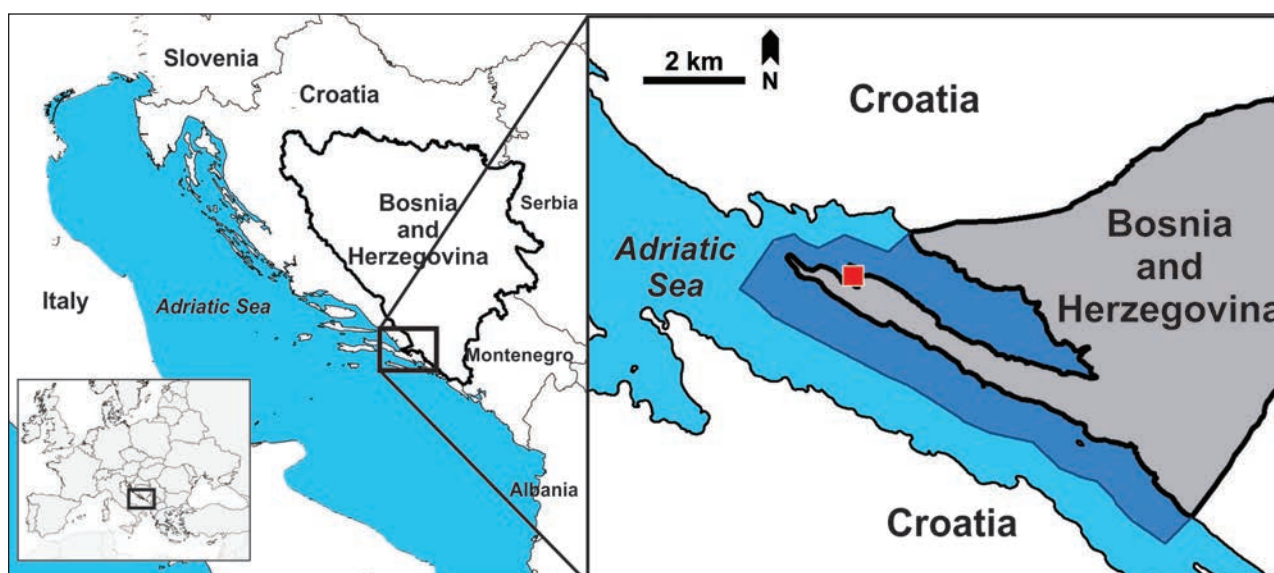


Fig. 1: The study area and the location (square mark) where *Notospermus annulatus* (Grube, 1840) was recorded.
Sl. 1: Zemljovid obravnavanega območja z lokaliteto najdbe (kvadrata) primerka vrste *Notospermus annulatus* (Grube, 1840).



Fig. 2: The finding location and the habitat of *Notospermus annulatus* (Grube, 1840) in the Opuće Bay (Photo: D. Kulijer).
Sl. 2: Najdišče in habitat vrste *Notospermus annulatus* (Grube, 1840) v zalivu Opuće (Foto: D. Kulijer).



Fig. 3: *Notospermus annulatus* (Grube, 1840) from Opuće (photo: D. Kulijer).
Sl. 3: *Notospermus annulatus* (Grube, 1840) iz lokalitete Opuće (Foto: D. Kulijer).



Fig. 4: *Notospermus annulatus* (Grube, 1840) from Opuće (scale = 5 cm) (Photo: D. Kulijer).

Sl. 4: *Notospermus annulatus* (Grube, 1840) iz lokalitete Opuće (merilo = 5 cm) (Foto: D. Kulijer).

the Croatian waters. It is characterized by muddy and sandy bottom with rocky intertidal zone. The specimen was collected by hand, photographed and preserved in 96% ethanol. It is deposited in the invertebrate collection of National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina (inventory code: INVA 000196). Species identification and status is based on Grube (1840) and Kajihara *et al.* (2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A single specimen of *Notospermus annulatus* (Figs. 3 and 4) was found at the depth of approximately 30 cm, on sandy/gravel bottom, under the stone in lower shore intertidal zone, which is a similar habitat to the one reported by Gibson (1995) and Lipej *et al.* (2017) for *N. geniculatus*. The specimen was 93 cm long and

approximately 1 cm wide. The coloration varied from dark olive green, blue to dark brown with light rings along the body (Figs. 3 and 4). Rhynchodeum was observed, while caudal cirrus was absent.

Despite the low number of published records, *N. annulatus* is probably more common and widespread in the Mediterranean, and this probably applies to the Adriatic Sea as well. According to Tarman (1961) and Lelo (2012) only one species of the phylum Nemertea, *Prostoma hercegovinense* Tarman, 1961, is known from Bosnia and Herzegovina so *N. annulatus* is only the second species of this phylum known for the country and the first in marine waters. This finding expands the knowledge of the species distribution in the Adriatic Sea and represents valuable contribution to the knowledge of the national marine fauna.

NOTOSPERMUS ANNULATUS (NEMERTEA: LINEIDAE), PRVI ZAPIS O POJAVLJANJU ZA BOSNO IN HERCEGOVINO

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POVZETEK

Avtorji predstavljajo prvi zapis o pojavljanju vrste nitkarja Notospermus annulatus (Grube, 1840) v Bosni in Hercegovini. Dolgo časa je veljal za sinonim vrste Notospermus geniculatus (Delle Chiaje, 1822), vendar je na podlagi nedavnih molekularnih filogenetskih raziskav predlagan njen status kot samostojne vrste, kar so avtorji v prispevku upoštevali. Primerek te vrste je bil najden 2. oktobra 2021 v majhnem zalivu pri Opučah na polotoku Klek. Ta najdba prispeva k razumevanju razširjenosti vrste v Jadranskem morju in izpopolnjuje poznavanje slabo poznane morske favne na nacionalnem nivoju. To je prvi zapis o pojavljanju kateregakoli nitkarja v morskih vodah Bosne in Hercegovine.

Ključne besede: Jadransko morje, Neumski zaliv, razširjenost, morska favna, Sredozemlje

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