

First Record of Ragged Sea Hare *Bursatella leachii* Blainville, 1817 (Opisthobranchia: Euopisthobranchia: Aplysiidae) on Katigiorgis, Eastern Coast of Central Greece

Taklis Chris¹

¹Biodiversity GR, Organization for Observation and Preservation of Biodiversity, Greece

Corresponding Author: Chris Taklis, ctaklis[at]gmail.com

Abstract: Specimens of *Bursatella leachii* Blainville, 1817 were photographed from Katigiorgis, eastern coast of central Greece at depths of up to 4 m and the maximum number of this species was recorded at a depth of 2 m (39°10'20.3"N 23°20'36.4"E) on a sandy soil bed. A thorough research survey on the species revealed this study to be the first report of its occurrence from this region. The present investigation describes a review on the occurrence and morphological features of this specimen.

Keywords: Ragged Sea Hare, *Bursatella leachii*, new records, Katigiorgis, Aegean, Greece

1. Introduction

The ragged sea hare, *Bursatella leachii* (DeBlainville, 1817), a marine benthic opisthobranch gastropod mollusc (Voss, 1980; CIESM, 2002) belonging to the family Aplysiidae and the order Anaspide and its size is a medium to large-sized (usually from 5 to 10 cm, up to 15 cm). It can be found worldwide in warm temperate to tropical marine environments because it is a circumtropical species (Rudman, 1998).

According to CIESM exotic atlas, mode of introduction is either by ships from the tropical Atlantic or via the Suez Canal (i.e. Lessepsian), and in the Mediterranean, *B. leachii* is very common from the eastern Mediterranean Sea to the Italian coasts in the western Basin, only known from an area between Taranto Sea, Sicily, Naples, Sardinia, Malta and Tunisia (CIESM, 2002; Zakhama-Sraieb et al., 2009; Gravili et al., 2010).

The species have already been recorded in Chania, Kriti (Antonios Daskos & Argyro Zenetos, 2007), Chios isl., Lesvos (Barash and Danin 1986) and in Thermaikos and Chalkidiki (Koutsoubas 1992).

2. Materials and Methods

While carrying out a systematic free diving survey on marine species in Katigiorgis, I noticed the presence of the sea hare

Bursatella leachii.

The specimens were observed approximately at the beach of Katigiorgis, which most of the *B. leachii* observed at (39°10'20.3"N 23°20'36.4"E) in a sandy substrate.



Figure 1: Morphological characteristics

They were identified based on the presence of their characteristic taxonomic features (Figure 1).

They weren't harmed in any way and two specimens which held by hand released immediately after a few seconds.

For photographic documentation, a Nikon Coolpix W300 16.0 megapixel camera was used.

3. Results

Based on the specific taxonomic features of this mollusc, it was identified as *Bursatella leachii* (Figure 1).

Systematic

Phylum MOLLUSCA

Class GASTROPODA

Clad EUOPISTHOBRANCHIA

Super-family APLYSIOMORPHA

Genus *Bursatella*

Bursatella leachii Blainville, 1817

The samples were found on sandy bottoms. With the length to be from 3cm the small ones up to 14cm the big ones (Figure 2) and the depth of the specimens were recorded at depths of about 0.40cm up to 4m. Dense concentrations, as high as 1-3/m² and in groups (Figure 3), were also observed.



Figure 2: The biggest length of *B. leachii* i found



Figure 3: Probably mating

4. Species Description

The body of *Bursatella leachii* is brownish-green with white-ish spots throughout the body. The body is compact and rounded.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to João Pedro Silva for providing validation of the specimen through inaturalist.

References

- [1] CIESM, (2002). CIESM Atlas of Exotic Molluscs in the Mediterranean (Available at <http://www.ciesm.org/atlas>)
- [2] Daskos, Antonios & Zenetos, Argyro. (2007). Additions to the knowledge of alien Opisthobranchia of Greece. *Aquatic Invasions*. 2. 258-260. 10.3391/ai.2007.2.3.10