



“Microturbellarian” flatworms (Platyhelminthes) from freshwater pools: New species and records from Israel

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Abstract

Few papers have been published on “Turbellaria” in Israel, and of those, most concern “Turbellaria” from marine environments. In the present study, 22 freshwater species from Israel are reported. Ten of these species are new to Israel, and two are new to science. A detailed description of two species new to science from the family Typhloplanidae is given (*Castrada multispina* sp. nov. and *Castradella biacantha* sp. nov.). Typhloplanidae (Order Rhabdocoela) is the best represented family in this study with 16 species, compared to only 4 species from the family Dalyelliidae (Order Rhabdocoela) and the 2 *Stenostomum*-species. The faunal composition of the “microturbellarians” of Israel proved to be very similar to that of lentic environments in Europe, with the exception of the newly described species currently known only from Israel.

Keywords: Platyhelminthes, “Microturbellaria”, Israel

Introduction

“Turbellaria” are important predators of invertebrate lentic communities (Young, 1973; Kolasa & Mead, 1981; Blaustein & Dumont, 1990; Blaustein, 1990; Brendock *et al.*, 2002; Trochine *et al.*, 2006) and can be important natural or introduced predators of mosquito larvae (Case and Washino, 1979; Blaustein, 1990). In Israel, the turbellarian taxonomy in general is poorly documented. While some taxonomic information exists concerning the free-living Platyhelminthes (“Turbellaria”) of marine environments in Israel (Bromley & Benazzi, 1991; Litvaitis *et al.*, 1994; Curini-Galletti, 1997; Martens & Curini-Galletti, 1999; Ogunlana *et al.*, 2005), little is known about the turbellarian biota in general. Recently, Eitam *et al.* (2004), assessing factors predicting the species richness of microturbellarian flatworms in 52 rock pools on a mountain in the Galilee of Northern Israel, reported 19 taxa with various levels of taxonomic discrimination.

In the present study, 22 species identified from the 52 rock pool samples of Eitam *et al.* (2004) plus four additional pools at other locations in Israel are documented, including illustrations of 9 species. Of the newly reported species, one is identified only at the genus level, 10 are recorded in Israel for the first time, and 2 are new to science. We provide brief ecological and distribution data for each species, including temporal distributions for two of the most abundant species, *Gieysztoria cuspidata* and *Castrada viridis*.