

Conchylia

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A New Species of *Morum* from the Western Indian Ocean (Gastropoda: Harpidae)

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With 12 figures on Plate 1

Keywords

Gastropoda, Harpidae, *Morum*, new species, Nazareth Bank, western Indian Ocean, protoconch, planktonic development.

Abstract

Morum inermis n. sp. from the Nazareth Bank, western Indian Ocean, differs from its congeners by the absence of notable tubercles, scales, or spines on the body whorl. The mode of development of the genus is discussed.

Kurzfassung

Morum inermis n. sp. von der Nazareth Bank, westlicher Indischer Ozean, unterscheidet sich von anderen Arten der Gattung durch das Fehlen von Tuberkeln, Schuppen oder Stacheln auf dem letzten Umgang. Der Entwicklungszyklus der Gattung wird diskutiert.

Introduction

The Nazareth Bank is a part of the Mascarene Ridge in the western Indian Ocean, approximately 1,000 km east of Madagascar and 280 km south of the Saya de Malha Bank. In the southwest area, the Cargados Carajos Shoal, better known as St. Brandon, forms the only rise above sea level. The Bank has an average depth of 200 m and extends over more than 10,000 square kilometres. The malacofauna of the Nazareth Bank is almost unknown. A small amount of shells dredged on the Nazareth Bank in the 1980ies was recently discovered in an old collection. Among these is a new species of *Morum* which is described in the following.

Morum (Oniscidia) inermis n. sp.

Material

Holotype: 45.3 mm, coll. Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris No. MNHN 26652; Paratype: 46.5 mm coll. FELIX LORENZ.

Description

The shell is of medium size for the genus and appears light in weight. The general shape is oval, with a tall spire (apical angle 80°). The last whorl is somewhat inflated. The protoconch is pointed, 0.9 mm tall and 1.4 mm wide, with 3.5 glossy, smooth, gradually growing whorls and a discontinuity line (Plate 1 Fig. 11, arrow) after which the cancellated teleoconch whorls are visible, indicating planktonic development.

There are 5.5 slightly inflated post-nuclear whorls with axial and spiral ridges of equal strength. In the later whorls, the spiral ridges gradually become weaker and the axial ridges less regularly spaced and indistinct: there are 14 axial cords on the first whorl, 17 on the second, 18 on the third, and 15 on the fourth whorl. The shoulder of the fourth whorl appears somewhat angular due to a slight frilling of some of its axial cords, which is visible under magnification and constitutes the only trace of a scale-like structure on the shell.

On the body whorl, there are 15 weak spiral cords and nine axial ridges, which are still prominent and evenly spaced basally, whereas, on the dorsal part of the body whorl they are reduced to barely elevated ridges discernible only by their coloration. The entire body whorl is covered with fine, distinct, and straight axial lamellae of 0.2 mm width (Plate 1 Fig. 12). There is no indication of spines on the shoulder of the body whorl.

The aperture is narrow, tapering posteriorly. The anal canal is narrow and shallow. The siphonal canal is long and wide, constricted by a terminal

labral ridge. The parietal shield is moderately wide, reaching just across the middle of the basal part of the last whorl. Along its outer half, the callus of the parietal shield is glossy and does not fully conceal the sculpture of the body whorl. In the anterior third, it tapers and its outer margin detaches, forming a thin, narrow ridge. Along this area, the parietal shield shows numerous rounded tubercles. At the border of the aperture at the posterior half there are prominent ridges with numerous branches that extend into the shell. Towards the siphonal canal the ridges are replaced by short, prominent denticles which are not joined with the denticles of the inner fossular ridge.

The labrum is narrow, declivous towards the canals, somewhat thickened midway. There are 12 prominent teeth. A smaller intermittent tooth is present in the anterior half. The outer edge of the labrum forms a sharply angulated ridge that also borders the canals.

The ground color is pale cream, the callousities and the protoconch are plain white. There are four pale-brown, transverse bands. The first of them is interrupted, well visible on the sutural ramp, and reduced to darker dashes on the shoulders of earlier whorls. The mid-dorsal bands are weaker and not interrupted. The fourth band above the canal is faint. The paler zones have the width of three spiral cords, the middorsal bands are two cords wide. There are elongate darker dashes and spots on the weak axial ridges of the body whorl. The outer part of the labrum shows numerous fine brown spots which condense in the areas where the banding meets the outer margin.

Distribution

The two specimens known of *Morum inermis* n. sp. were collected by a commercial fishing boat on the Nazareth Bank, Mauritius outlying territories, in the 1980ies. Details on the habitat and the collecting method are unrecorded, but supposedly the shells were found "in very deep water".

Etymology

The name *inermis* (Latin: unarmed) refers to the lack of tubercles, spines, and scales that usually characterize the shells of the genus *Morum*.

Discussion

Morum inermis n. sp. is characterized by the lack of notable scales or spiny processes, in combination with strongly reduced spiral and axial cords on the slender shell with a tall spire. It superficially resembles *Morum vicdani* EMERSON, 1995 in coloration. Several specimens of that species were found alongside *M. inermis* n. sp. *Morum vicdani* has much stronger axial cords, which are forming a scale where they cross the well-developed spiral cords. The shoulder of *M. vicdani* is more angular and the parietal shield wider than in *M. inermis* n. sp. *Morum grande* A. ADAMS, 1853 has a wider parietal shield and stronger sculpturing of the shell, consisting of prominent frilled spiral cords. These are also found in *Morum amabile* SHIKAMA, 1973 and *Morum clatratum* BOUCHET, 2002, which is the most similar to *M. inermis* n. sp. in general shape. It is a larger (approximately 60 mm) species from deep water off the Marquesas Islands. The shape is rather similar to *M. inermis*, but the dorsal sculpture is denser than in most other species of *Morum*, with a great number of axial and spiral ribs that form a net-like sculpture. In all superficially similar species, the dorsal sculpturing is considerably stronger, consisting of ridges, grooves, and spines, either with axial or spiral dominance, all of which are lacking in *M. inermis* n. sp.

Among the species of *Morum* from the Indian Ocean, there are mainly species with a protoconch that indicates planktonic development: *M. inermis* n. sp., *M. ninomiyai* EMERSON, 1986, *M. praeclarum* MELVILL, 1919, *M. vicdani* EMERSON, 1995 (after BOUCHET 2002). Only one species has a paucispiral protoconch of an intracapsular developer: the recently discovered *Morum lorenzi* D. MONSECOUR, 2011 from Cargados Carajos Shoal. It is also the only species of *Morum* in the Indian Ocean that occurs in shallow water, an interesting parallel to *Morum oniscus* (LINNAEUS 1767) and close allies in the Caribbean, which have a similar nodulose shell, a shallow water habitat, and the same mode of development as *M. lorenzi*.

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Plate 1 (on opposite p. 5)

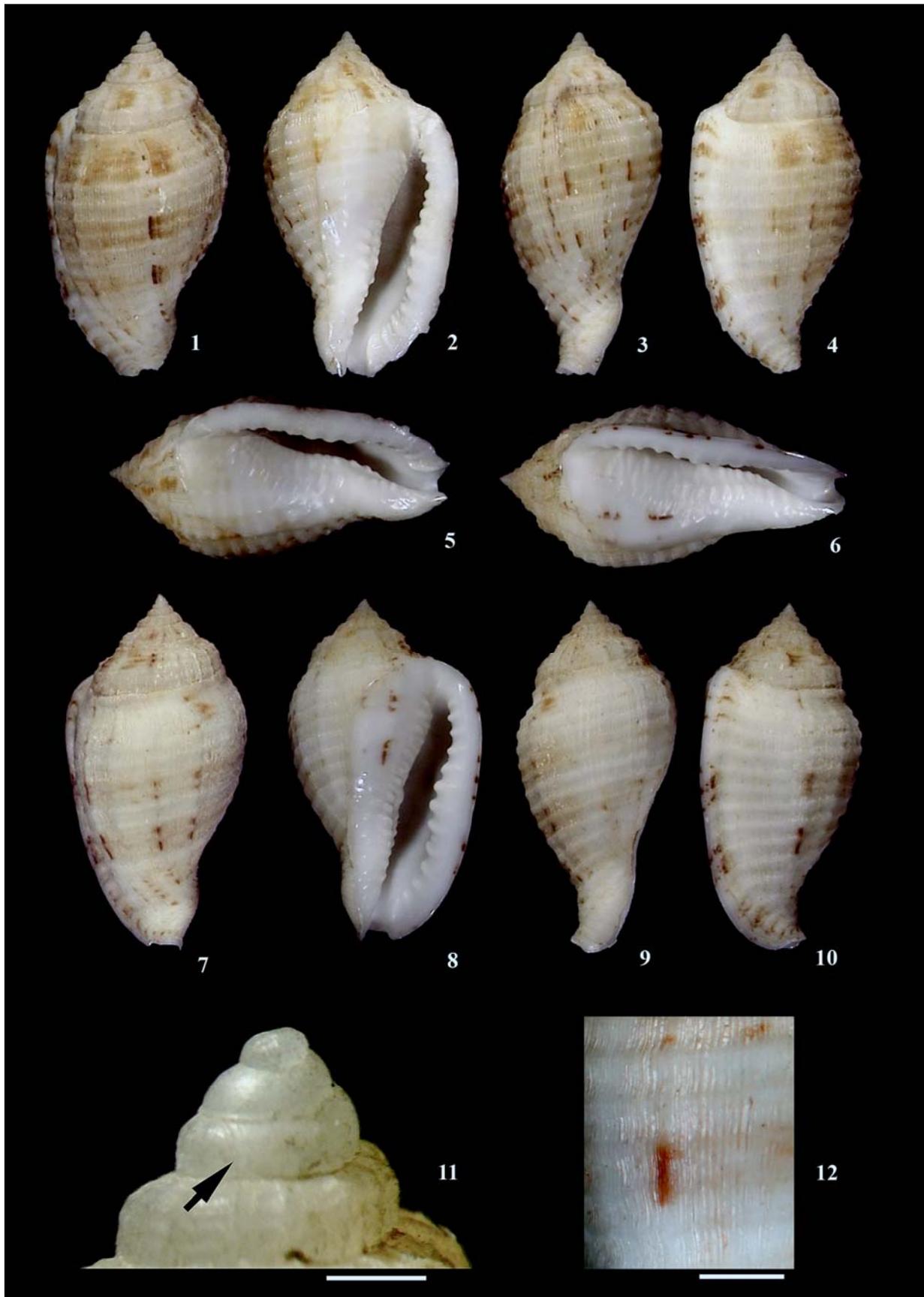
Figs. 1-5: *Morum (Oniscidia) inermis* n. sp. Holotype 45.3 mm.

Figs. 6-10: *Morum (Oniscidia) inermis* n. sp. Paratype 46.5 mm.

Fig. 11: *Morum (Oniscidia) inermis* n. sp. detail of protoconch. Arrow points at discontinuity line distinguishing between protoconch and teleoconch (scale = 1 mm).

Fig. 12: *Morum (Oniscidia) inermis* n. sp. detail of axial lamellae (scale = 5 mm).

Plate 1



Explication on opposite p. 4