

***Murchieona minuscula* (Rosa, 1906), a newly recorded earthworm from Israel, and distribution of the genera *Dendrobaena* and *Bimastos* in Israel (Oligochaeta, Lumbricidae)**

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Abstract. The distribution of *Murchieona minuscula*, *Bimastos syriacus*, *B. jordanis*, *Dendrobaena byblica*, *D. kervillei*, *D. orientalis*, *D. semitica*, *D. veneta*, and *D. negevis* in Israel is described and discussed in relation with the annual precipitation. The occurrence in Israel of *Murchieona minuscula*, previously known only from the Balkans and the Italian peninsula, is reported. To avoid a possible confusion between *M. minuscula* and *M. muldali* (Omodeo, 1956), their taxonomic relationship is discussed as well as their distribution. Taxonomic problems are also discussed in *Dendrobaena veneta kervillei* (Michaelsen, 1910), which is upgraded to *D. kervillei* (Michaelsen, 1910).

Kurzfassung. Die Verbreitung der Regenwurmart *Murchieona minuscula*, *Bimastos syriacus*, *B. jordanis*, *Dendrobaena byblica*, *D. kervillei*, *D. orientalis*, *D. semitica*, *D. veneta* und *D. negevis* in Israel wird beschrieben und ihre Beziehungen zur jährlichen Niederschlagshöhe diskutiert. Die Art *M. minuscula*, die bisher nur in Italien, Kroatien und Griechenland gesammelt wurde, ist jetzt auch in Israel entdeckt worden. Ihre Beziehungen zu *M. muldali* (Omodeo, 1956) werden im Hinblick auf die artliche Abgrenzung und die Verbreitung diskutiert. Die Unterart *Dendrobaena veneta kervillei* (Michaelsen, 1910) wurde aufgrund der abweichenden Lage des Gürtels und der Pubertätsstreifen zur Art erhoben.

Key words. Earthworms, distribution, taxonomy, systematics, Middle East.

Introduction

Earthworm occurrence and distribution in Israel have been studied for a long time (ČERNOSVITOV 1940, 1942, MICHAELSEN 1901, 1910, 1926, OMODEO 1956, ROSA 1893a, 1893b, ZICSI 1985), but regular earthworm surveys were not conducted until the mid-1990s when an intensive investigation of the earthworm fauna of Israel was launched (CSUZDI & PAVLÍČEK 1999, CSUZDI et al. 1999, PAVLÍČEK et al. 1996, 1997). During this period, a countrywide earthworm survey of more than 60 localities was conducted and the occurrence of 11 species of genus *Dendrobaena* and two species of genus *Bimastos*, including four new species (CSUZDI et al. 1999, CSUZDI & PAVLÍČEK 1999), was recorded. Thereafter, earthworms of both genera were collected at 65 additional localities. *Murchieona minuscula* (Rosa, 1906), probably an Adriatic-Mediterranean earthworm species, was recorded in Israel for the first time during our collection trips in spring 2001.