

First record of the freshwater medusa *Craspedacusta* sp. (Cnidaria, Hydrozoa) from an artificial lake in Baghdad, Iraq

by Hassan Ali Akber Saadalla

Abstract. A freshwater medusa of the genus *Craspedacusta* Lankester, 1880 is recorded in the artificial lake of Baghdad Tourist Island within Baghdad City. This new record is the first one of a freshwater cnidarian in Iraq and extends the geographic range of this genus to SW Asia. A morphological description of the medusa stage is given together with a characterisation of the habitat.

Kurzfassung. In dem im „Baghdad Tourist Island“ gelegenen künstlichen See innerhalb des Stadtgebietes von Baghdad wurde eine Süßwassermeduse aus der Gattung *Craspedacusta* Lankester, 1880 nachgewiesen. Dieser Nachweis ist die erste Feststellungen eines Süßwasser-Nesseltiers (Cnidara) im Irak und zeigt, dass sich die Verbreitung dieser Gattung bis nach Südwest-Asien erstreckt. Es wird eine Beschreibung der morphologischen Eigenschaften sowie eine Charakterisierung des Habitats gegeben.

Key words. Medusa, freshwater, limnology, *Craspedacusta*, artificial lake, Iraq, Middle East.

Introduction

Craspedacusta is a cosmopolitan invasive freshwater jellyfish widespread in all continents, although quite rare in Africa (SMITH 1998). It was first recorded in England (LANKESTER 1880) within the tanks that held the world's largest water lily, the giant Amazon Water Lily, *Victoria amazonica* (Poepp.) Sow. in the new heated conservatory of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. A detailed list of its distribution was given by PEARD (2005). It appears in 50 states of the U.S.A. including 56 counties in Pennsylvania, four counties in Canada, as well as in 22 other countries around the world, but with no evidence yet of its presence in West Asia and the Mediterranean area (PEARD 2005). *Craspedacusta* has been found in a variety of aquatic environments: freshwater lakes, reservoirs, man-made ponds, water-filled gravel pits, rock quarries, algae-filled ponds and rivers. It can also be found in recreational fishing and boating areas (PEARD 2005).

This paper describes a freshwater medusa recently found in the Baghdad area, Iraq, and records some ecological observations.

Study area

The medusae were found in the artificial lake of the Baghdad Tourist Island, one of the important public tourist places, north of Baghdad city (44°26'N, 33°22'E), with an area of 125 ha. (2150 ×