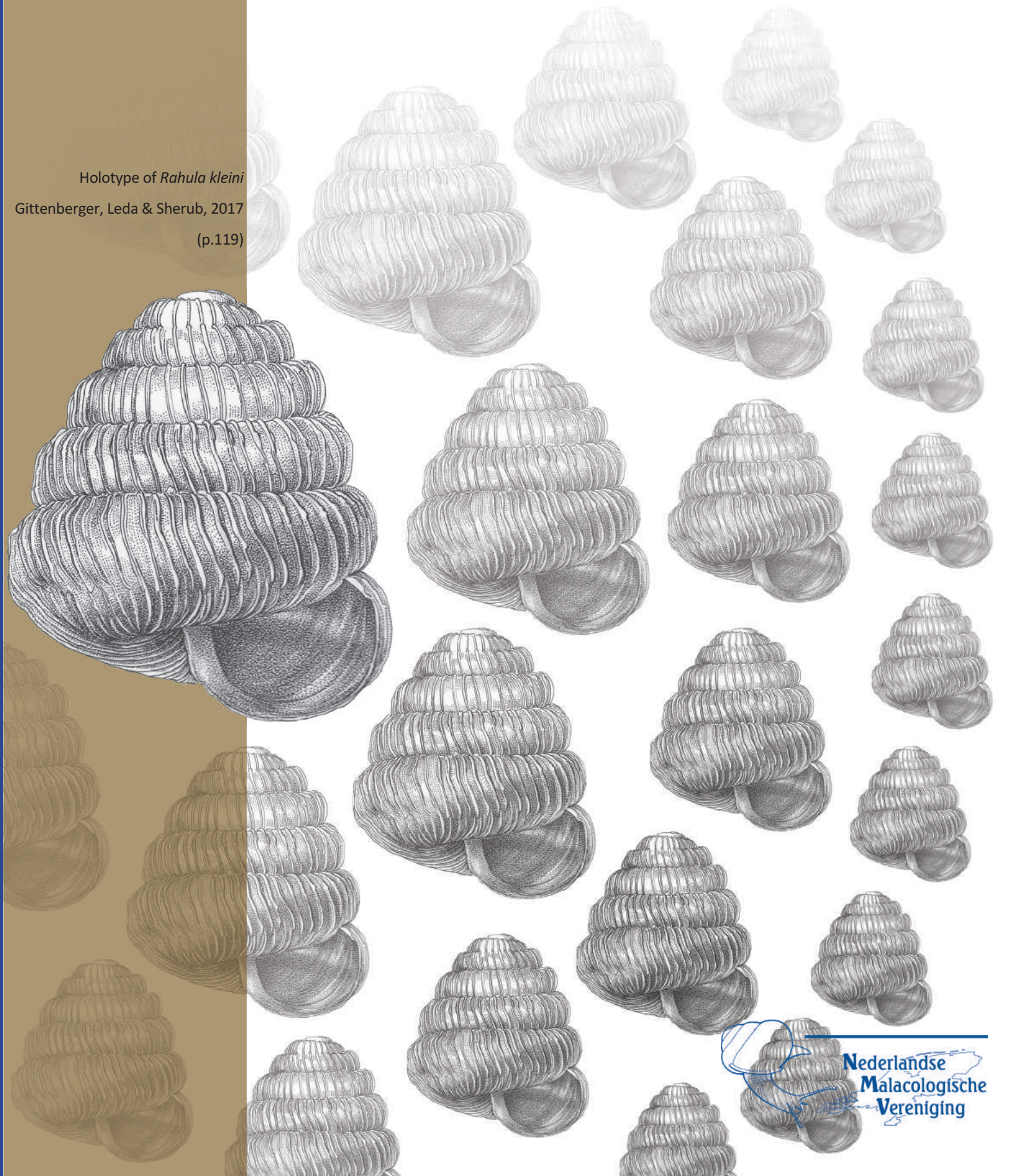
Basteria

TIJDSCHRIFT VAN DE NEDERLANDSE MALACOLOGISCHE VERENIGING
VOLUME 81 (4-6) | 18 DECEMBER 2017

Holotype of *Rahula kleini*
Gittenberger, Leda & Sherub, 2017
(p.119)



Nederlandse Malacologische Vereniging

Inhoudsopgave

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Book review

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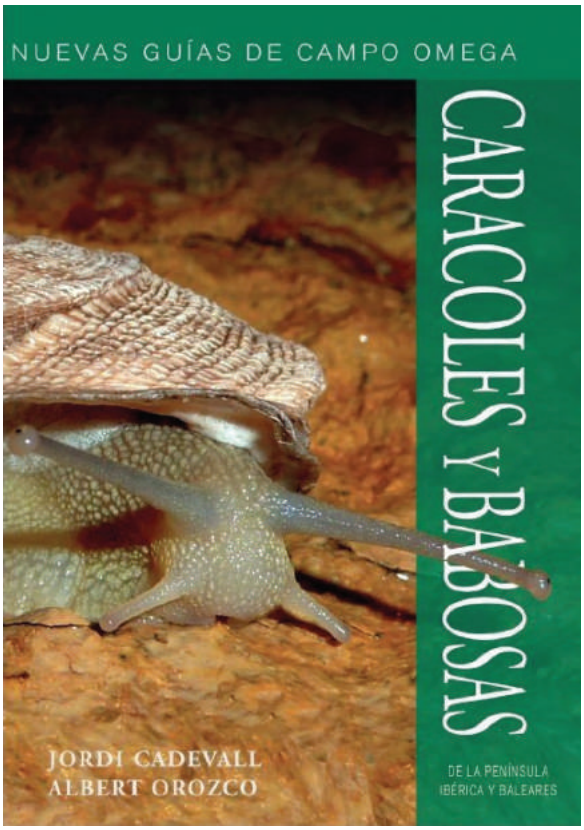
Cadevall J. & Orozco, A., 2016. Caracoles y babosas de la Península Ibérica y Baleares. Nuevas guías de campo Omega: 1-817. Barcelona. ISBN 9788428215992. Price about 79 €.



In 1975 Jaap Vermeulen and I spent a month doing geological field work in the Spanish province of Teruel, which we combined with the collection of terrestrial snails. Upon our return to Leiden (the Netherlands) we consulted dr. Edi Gittenberger in the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie (now part of Naturalis Biodiversity Center) regarding the identification of various species we had collected. He said we could identify the Chondrinidae using his recently published book: Gittenberger (1973). As he leafed through the pages he noted that Teruel was a white spot and the identification was not straightforward. The same was true for several of the other species we had collected, and for some we would collect in following years, especially from the Cantabrian mountains. This anecdote illustrates that even for the Chondrinidae, a recently reviewed group on which relatively much information was already available, new data were valuable.

Terrestrial molluscs from the Iberian peninsula had been studied in the 19th and early 20th centuries but during the long period of dictatorships in Spain and Portugal progress was limited. The end of the dictatorships (in 1974/1975) sparked a scientific revival. Initially studies focused on inventories of the faunas of specific regions or provinces (for example José Castillejo - Galicia, Yolanda Manga – León, Benjamin Gómez and Kape Altonaga – Basque Country, Mariano Larraz – Navarra, Miquel Bech – Catalonia, Alberto Martínez – Valencia, José Arrébola – Andalucia) with Maria Teresa Aparicio and Maria Angeles Ramos working the collections at the Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales in Madrid. Besides a series of doctoral theses and regional guides numerous shorter papers appeared, also by non-Spanish authors, making it a challenge to keep an overview.

Working with a group of specialists, photographers and musea the authors succeeded in compiling the first overview of the terrestrial molluscs of the entire Iberian peninsula. With 817 pages, and weighing 1.5 kg, the resulting book is well beyond a field guide: it is better described as a reference work. 526 species and subspecies are described of which many are endemic: 215 only occur on the Iberian peninsula, 51 only on the Balearic islands and another 43 only in the Pyrenees (the latter including the French Pyrenees). No wonder it brings a wealth of information even to the initiated.

The book starts with a general introduction covering a variety of subjects including how to build a reference collection, an overview of biogeography, a glossary, etc. Very useful is the overview of legal protection of snails, which besides the usual international and national regulations is covered in regulations issued by autonomic regions.

The systematic overview forms the heart of the book, generally comprising one page per taxon (some have more pages) with good photographs of the shell (typically three views, a smaller photo indicating the true size and for some also a detail or a photo of the living animal), some synonyms, a short description, dimensions, habitat and distribution (text and small map). For quite a few taxa there is also a highlighted text box with characteristics differentiating the taxon from those that are most similar. For those taxa for which there are specific regulations these are mentioned. Slugs are covered in a separate section and have a slightly different treatment: naturally photographs of the living animal are most prominent – often two or three photographs per taxon – and drawings of the animal and reproductive system. This is

followed by sections covering species awaiting a formal description, species recorded from the Iberian peninsula but requiring confirmation, species recorded but likely not present and 47 pages with bibliographic references specifically related to each taxon.

The book compiles data from an impressive number of separate papers (there are 33 pages of references). Nevertheless, further sampling is expected to find new taxa (as many endemics occupy very small areas). More research is required for certain problem groups, which means the authors had to make difficult choices. For example, DNA studies (Elejalde et al., 2009) indicate that with the exception of *P. daanidentata* Raven, 1988, all *Pyrenaearia* species from the Cantabrian mountains belong to a single species *P. cantabrica* (Hidalgo, 1873). In the field guide also *P. oberthuri* (Ancey, 1884) is maintained as valid species, but no arguments are given. As stated by Elejalde et al. (2009) and earlier authors and is corroborated by my own samples, there is a cline from thin shelled, low spired, ribbed and sometimes hairy shells of *P. cantabrica* along the coast to the thick shelled, high spired and smooth *P. oberthuri* high in the Picos de Europa. Nowhere both forms live sympatric and it is impossible to draw a sharp line between them. Whereas for other species the text in the yellow box gives valuable indications how to differentiate similar taxa no such text appears for *P. oberthuri*. It would have been worthwhile adding a few sentences. Also, it would have been worthwhile showing some of the variation within *P. cantabrica*. Based on my own samples and studies I expect additional valid taxa to exist within this group.

The same applies to *Helicella*. In the book *Helicella itala itala* (Linnaeus, 1758) is described as widely distributed, with the subspecies *H. itala pampelonensis* (A. Schmidt, 1856) and *H. itala nubigena* (de Saulcy, 1852) as endemisms from Navarra and the Pyrenees respectively and *H. valdeona* Gittenberger & Manga, 1977, as separate species in a small part of the Cantabrian mountains. During field work in NW Spain much variation was noted (in size, colouration, shape and umbilicus) and at numerous localities two taxa of *Helicella* (not *H. valdeona*) were found living sympatrically, indicating this material comprises at least two species. However, when prof. Gittenberger and myself dissected various specimens from this region we could not find a logical separation. Further work is needed.

The book was used to for the identification of shells from various parts of Spain and was found to be an excellent starter guide. In groups with large numbers of species, e.g. the genus *Xerocrassa*, it was challenging to find a match as there are neither identification keys nor overview plates (a typical drawback of field guides). Therefore it was necessary to check many pages, and for some species other works were also consulted. Especially for species with small and/or transparent shells the photos in the book often do not reflect the typical colours (e.g. *Acanthinula, Truncatellina, Oxychilus*) and in some the resolution does not allow all details to be seen (e.g. growth lines in *Tudorella*).

In the specific case of *Xerocrassa* the distribution maps proved very helpful as numerous species occur only in small areas. These distribution maps have generally been made with great care, colouring specific localities, areas or provinces whilst recording the literature used for each species (pages 722-768). That is far superior to the maps on the Fauna Europaea website where entire countries are coloured even if there is only a single record. Even so, for a good biogeographic analysis even the colouring by province does not provide adequate information. As can be expected there are also some oversights: although it lives close to the sea (like several ellobiids), *Truncatella subcylindrica* (Linnaeus, 1767) is typically considered a terrestrial snail but has been omitted; *Ovatella denticulata* (Montagu, 1803) has also been reported from NW Spain (e.g. Rolan, 1983); and a paper was overlooked in which *Paralaoma servilis* (Shuttleworth, 1852) was first reported from the Atlantic coast and *Vertigo substriata* (Jeffreys, 1833) was first reported from the Iberian peninsula (based on records from León and Asturias; Raven, 1984).

The authors are to be commended. Despite the comments above, their herculean task has delivered a guide that will prove to be indispensible for anyone interested in snails from the Iberian peninsula, and will facilitate and stimulate further study.

The book is written in Spanish, which may be an obstacle for quite a few people. Notwithstanding this, based on the good graphics the book will be useful even to those that do not dominate that language. The book is already widely used amongst Dutch malacologists with an interest in terrestrial snails. It deserves to be used widely – my copy is already showing signs of wear.

References

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