

Helix aspersa (Gastropoda Pulmonata) in The Gambia, West Africa

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A shell of *Helix aspersa* has been found on the beach of Banjul (formerly Bathurst), The Gambia.

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To my surprise I found a large, well-developed and heavy shell of *Helix aspersa* O.F. Müller, 1774, among some miscellaneous West African land snail material submitted for identification by Dr. J. Knudsen of the Zoologisk Museum, Copenhagen. The specimen measures 37 x 41 mm (height x major diameter), and is labelled 'Beach s. of Banjul', January 1981, leg. T. Wolff. Banjul is the new name for Bathurst, the capital of The Gambia.

It is a well-known fact that the originally Mediterranean and western European species *H. aspersa* has been widely dispersed by man. In Africa it is now common in many parts of South Africa and also occurs in Zimbabwe. The hot and humid climate of West Africa seems to be less suitable for the species. The only record known to me (and suspect at that) is one shell in the British Museum (Natural History), from Port Victoria, Cameroons, 'Presd.: by Commander Fitzroy' (BM 1920.7.24.31). In the catalogue the series 1920.7.24.1-38 bears the same data, but contains one entered as '*Dorcasia lucanus*', which (if correctly identified) is a South African endemic species. This in my mind makes the Cameroons locality suspect. The dorcasiid *Trigonephrus lucanus* (Müll.) is known to occur around Cape Town, where *H. aspersa* was already well-established long before 1920.

In western North Africa the species occurs in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, where the shells frequently reach large size (e.g. Tunisia: 45 x 40 mm, Germain, 1908: 153). The same author mentions on p. 159 a typical specimen in the Paris museum, obtained by A. Chevalier in January 1900 on the banks of the Casamance River, and therefore south of The Gambia. Whether *H. aspersa* lives in The Gambia, is still to be proven; the shell is fresh and in very good condition, so that it is unlikely to have been transported over a great distance.

REFERENCE

- GERMAIN, L., 1908. Étude sur les mollusques recueillis par M. Henri Gadeau de Kerville pendant un voyage en Khroumirie (Tunisie). In: H. GADEAU DE KERVILLE, ed., Voyage zoologique en Khroumirie (Tunisie): 129-296. Paris.