

RECENT RECORDS OF SPIDERS (ARACHNIDA: ARANEAE) FROM MALTADavid DANDRIA¹, Albert GATT FLORIDIA² and Stephen MIFSUD³**ABSTRACT**

Two spider species are recorded from Malta, one for the first time (*Zora* sp., Family Zoridae) and one for the second time (*Aphantaulax cincta*, Family Gnaphosidae). Observations and other information about the species together with photographs are provided.

KEYWORDS: *Aphantaulax cincta*, *Zora*, Araneae, Malta.

INTRODUCTION

The most recent checklist of the spider fauna of the Maltese Islands, comprising 141 species in 31 Families, was published in 2005 (Dandria *et al.*, 2005). The two species recorded here, one of which is new to the Maltese fauna, were observed and photographed but not collected. These records bring the number of araneid species in the Maltese fauna to 142 in 32 Families.

THE SPECIES**Family Gnaphosidae**

Aphantaulax cincta L. Koch 1866 (Figure 1)

Malta, Rdum il-Bies, limits of Mistra, 35° 57' 35 N, 14° 23' 39 E, 1 ♀, May 2012. (photographed by Stephen Mifsud)

This spider, with its unmistakable white dorsal markings on a black body, was first recorded in Malta in 1991 (Kritscher, 1996). Kritscher's record is of a male spider, but there is some doubt as to location, Kritscher's indication being quite anomalous, clearly due to his lack of familiarity with local geography. In fact, while he indicates that it was found "between Kalkara Valley and Mistra Bay" ("*Zwischen Kalkara Ravine und Mistra Bay*"), the map showing Kritscher's collecting points puts the locality in the vicinity of Magħtab. The specimen in question is deposited in the Natural History Museum of Vienna. The present record is the second for this species and is based on observation and photography by one of the authors (SM). The spider, a female, was near a silken sac in which it had probably moulted, as shown by the presence of exuvial remains inside the sac. The sac was located on the infructescence of the wild carrot, *Daucus carota* L., found in a garigue habitat at the border of coastal cliffs and scree facing east; 30m a.s.l. and about 100m away from the coast.

World Distribution: Europe, North Africa, Israel (Platnick, 2012).

European Range: Corsica, Croatia, Czech Republic, France Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal Romania, Sardinia, Sicily, Slovakia, Spain, Ukraine, 'Yugoslavia' (Fauna Europea, 2011).

Family Zoridae

Zora sp. (Figure 2)

Malta, Għar is-Sienja, l/o l-Imġarr, 35° 55' 39 N, 14° 21' 16 E 1 ♂, 22 March 2012 (photographed by Albert Gatt Floridia)

This is the first record of the family Zoridae in the Maltese Islands. The spider was found under a stone. Although very similar to *Zora spinimana*, the spider photographed at Għar is-Sienja cannot be definitely identified as such because of some differences, including the dark, almost black coloration (whereas *Z. spinimana* is usually brown) and the lateral stripes on the cephalothorax which are darker and broader than those of *Z. spinimana*. *Z. spinimana*

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is a grassland spider, usually found in grass roots or leaf litter, but also under stones or other objects. The female guards her egg-sac, which is covered by a dense white silken sheet, under stones (Spider Recording Scheme, 2011). The spider at Ghar is-Sienja was found under a stone in a typical garigue community.



Figure 1: Female *Aphantaulax cincta* from Rdum il-Bies, limits of Mistra, Malta. Photos by Stephen Mifsud, 2012.



Figure 2: Male *Zora* sp. from Ghar is-Sienja, limits of I-Imġarr, Malta. Photos by Albert Gatt Florida, 2012.

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