

***XEROPICTA ZEEVBARI*: A NEW SPECIES FROM HAR HARIF, NEGEV, ISRAEL****Henk K. Mienis<sup>1</sup> & Oz Rittner<sup>2</sup>**

**Abstract:** Empty shells of a small Geomitrid species found in the Central Negev on Har Harif are described as belonging to a new species: *Xeropicta zeevbari*. This new species is rather unlike any other Geomitrid species living under desert conditions either elsewhere in the Negev, Israel or in Sinai, Egypt.

**Key words:** Mollusca, Gastropoda, Geomitridae, *Xeropicta zeevbari*, distribution, Israel, Negev.

In last autumn the junior author carried out fieldwork at the border of Israel and Egypt. Among others he collected some land snails on Har Harif on 15 October 2019. This mountain rises to a height of 998 m. The flanks of the mountain are covered by loess and don't allow the sparse rainfall to penetrate the soil. Its current vegetation is very much like the typical desert vegetation as found elsewhere in the Central Negev (Scott, 1977; Horowitz, 1977).

The few snails collected at Har Harif belonged to five different species: *Euchondrus albulus* (Mousson, 1861), *Xerocrassa cremnophila* (de Charpentier, 1847), *Xerocrassa tuberculosa* (Conrad, 1852), *Eremina desertorum* (Forsskål, 1775) and a rather small species belonging to the Geomitridae. The latter could not be identified with any of the species recognized by Forcart (1976 & 1981), which included the current species classified as belonging to the Geomitridae. We looked also in vain for the description of similar snails in older works showing Geomitrid snails from Egypt, especially those mentioned for the Sinai-Negev area in Pallary (1909, 1924a-b, 1929 & 1939) and Germain (1921 & 1922). We reached the conclusion that it is an undescribed species most probably belonging to the genus *Xeropicta* Monterosato, 1892.

Family Geomitridae Boettger, 1909

Genus *Xeropicta* Monterosato, 1892.

*Xeropicta zeevbari* nov. spec. – Figure 1.

Diagnosis: A *Xeropicta* species which differs from all other congeneric species occurring in Israel and Egypt by its small conical, globular shell.

Locus typicus: Israel, Central Negev, Har Harif near the border of Egypt.

Type material: Holotype: SMNH MO 83601. Paratypes: SMNH MO 83602/5 all from the type locality.

Material examined: Israel, Negev, Har Harif, leg. O. Rittner, 15 October 2019 (SMNH MO 83601 – holotype; SMNH MO 83602/5 – paratypes and SMNH MO 83603/3 – damaged shells).

Distribution: So far only known from the type locality: Har Harif. Central Negev, Israel (Fig. 2).

Etymology: *Xeropicta zeevbari* is named after Mr. Ze'ev Bar (1931-2019), one of the first serious local students of land snails in Israel (see Mienis, 2020).

Description: The shell is conical globular above and rounded below. The umbilicus is round, narrow and deep. The periphery of the whorls is rounded. The 1¼ embryonic whorls are colored light brown; they are initially rather convex and smooth, but the latter part shows the beginning of axial ribs. They are followed by 3½ convex whorls which are separated by a deep suture, they show axial ribs which

are becoming irregular in size towards the aperture. The aperture is round and shows a strong internal white rim. Initially first 1½ whorls are colored light brown with irregularly whitish flecks, the last two whorls are whitish showing a light brown interrupted spiral band just above the periphery and some brown dots near the suture. The last whorl shows still three thin, light brown spiral lines below the periphery towards the umbilicus.



Fig. 1: *Xeropicta zeevbari* new species from Har Harif – Holotype  
(Photo: Oz Rittner)

Dimensions: Holotype: Height 6.29 mm; Width 8.88 mm.  
 Paratypes: Height 7.43 mm; Width 8.60 mm;  
 Height 6.70 mm; Width 8.04 mm;  
 Height 6.37 mm; Width 8.78 mm;  
 Height 5.98 mm; Width 8.04 mm;  
 Height 5.63 mm; Width 8.02 mm.

Discussion: Of the *Xeropicta* species occurring in Israel only *Xeropicta haifaensis* (Petrbok, 1946), confined in its distribution to the Mediterranean coastal area, is similar in its small size, however it has a more depressed shell, the aperture is more squarish while it shows often two ribs within the aperture. *Xeropicta ilanae* Forcart, 1981, from the Negev, is a distinctly larger species with a much flatter shell and it shows a carinated periphery.

*Xeropicta vestalis vestalis* (Pfeiffer, 1841) from the coastal area of Egypt, *Xeropicta vestalis joppensis* (Schmidt, 1855) and *Xeropicta carmelensis* Forcart, 1976 from the western Karmel, are also much larger, have a wider umbilicus and don't penetrate the Central Negev. From the *Xerocrassa* species living in the Central Negev of Israel and bordering areas in Sinai, Egypt (see Forcart, 1976) only certain specimens belonging to *Xerocrassa langloisiana langloisiana* (Bourguignat, 1853) are similar in size, but they differ from *Xeropicta zeevbari* by the presence of a rim at the periphery, stronger axial

ribs and a less developed rim within the aperture, while the shell is dull instead of shining and its basic color is crème and not white.

Although we placed this species in the genus *Xeropicta* we don't rule out the possibility that we are dealing with a *Xerocrassa* species. Only anatomical research can solve that problem. It is unfortunate that we could study only empty shells. Har Harif, the type locality of *Xeropicta zeevbari*, is located at a strategic position at the Israeli-Egyptian border, therefore this area is not open for the general public.

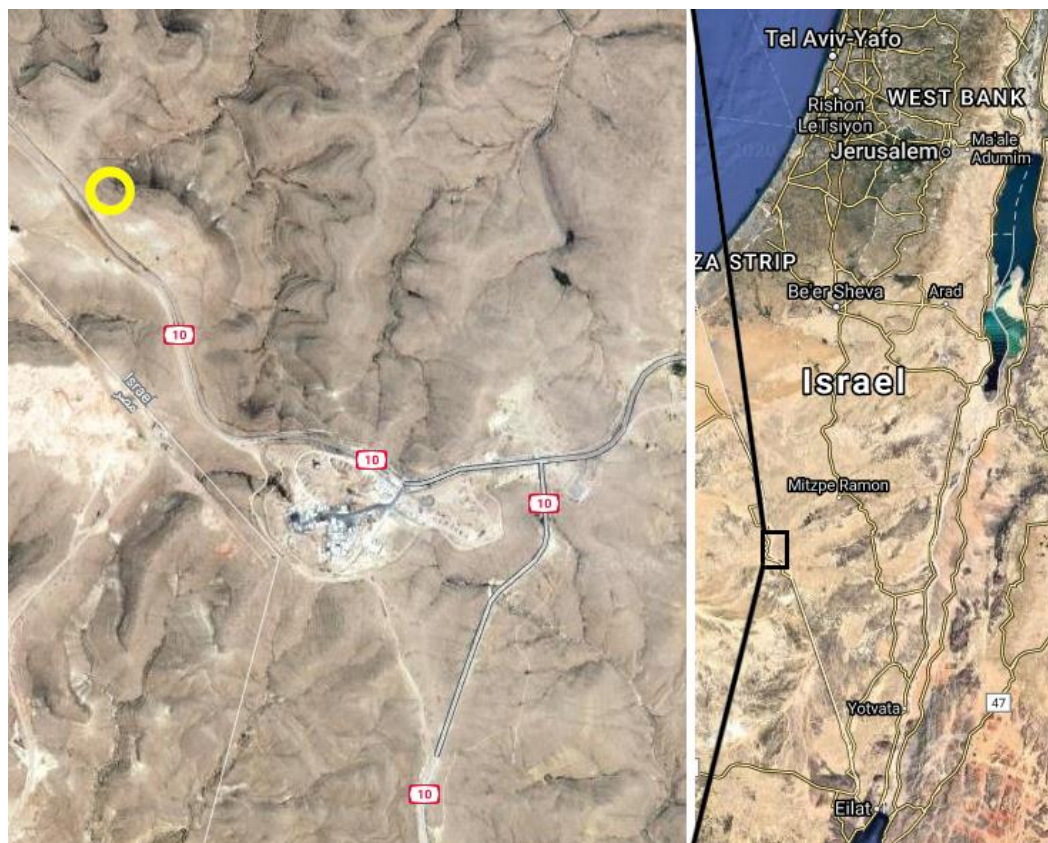


Fig. 2: Map of the type locality of *Xeropicta zeevbari*

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