Journal of Threatened Taxa

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ISSN 0974-7907 (Online) | ISSN 0974-7893 (Print)

COMMUNICATION

NEW RECORDS AND DISTRIBUTION EXTENSION OF *NASSARIUS PERSICUS* (MARTENS, 1874) AND *N. TADJALLII* MOOLENBEEK, 2007 (MOLLUSCA: GASTROPODA: NASSARIIDAE) TO INDIA

Sayali Nerurkar & Deepak Apte

26 June 2021 | Vol. 13 | No. 7 | Pages: 18846–18852
DOI: 10.11609/jott.6438.13.7.18846-18852

Journal of Threatened Taxa | www.threatenedtaxa.org | 26 June 2021 | 13(7): 18846–18852
ISSN 0974-7907 (Online) | ISSN 0974-7893 (Print)
https://doi.org/10.11609/jott.6438.13.7.18846-18852
#6438 | Received 18 July 2020 | Final received 24 January 2021 | Finally accepted 15 June 2021
OPEN ACCESS
COMMUNICATION

New records and distribution extension of *Nassarius persicus* (Martens, 1874) and *N. tadjallii* Moolenbeek, 2007 (Mollusca: Gastropoda: Nassariidae) to India

Sayali Nerurkar [1] & **Deepak Apte** [2]

[1] Bombay Natural History Society, Hornbill House, Opp. Lion Gate, Dr. Sálim Ali Chowk, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road, Mumbai, Maharashtra 400001, India.
[2] Srushti Conservation Foundation, Flat no 104, Hissa 8, Soba Garden Saffron, C Pune Cit Mahatma Society Pune, Maharashtra 411038, India.
[1] sayali.mavalankar@gmail.com (corresponding author), [2] spiderconch@gmail.com

Abstract: We report new findings of live specimens of *Nassarius persicus* (Martens, 1874) and *N. tadjallii* Moolenbeek, 2007, extending their range to the Gulf of Kachchh, Gujarat, India. The known distribution of both species was limited: *N. persicus* was distributed in the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, and Karachi in Pakistan; *N. tadjallii* was reported from the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. We also provide comprehensive taxonomic descriptions of both species, along with additional morphological and ecological information.

Keywords: Intertidal mudflats, new records, Gujarat, Gulf of Kachchh Marine Sanctuary

Abbreviations: BNHS—Bombay Natural History Society, Mumbai, India | MNHN—Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris, France | WoRMS—World Register of Marine Species.

Editor: A. Biju Kumar, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, India. **Date of publication:** 26 June 2021 (online & print)

Citation: Nerurkar, S. & D. Apte (2021). New records and distribution extension of *Nassarius persicus* (Martens, 1874) and *N. tadjallii* Moolenbeek, 2007 (Mollusca: Gastropoda: Nassariidae) to India. *Journal of Threatened Taxa* 13(7): 18846–18852. https://doi.org/10.11609/jott.6438.13.7.18846-18852

Funding: Bombay Natural History Society, Mumbai.

Competing interests: The authors declare no competing interests.

Author details: Sayali Nerurkar is pursuing her doctoral work on taxonomy and phylogeny of family Nassariidae from India in Bombay Natural History Society, Mumbai. Dr. Deepak Apte is the Executive Director, Srushti Conservation Foundation and is specialized in molluscan taxonomy, biodiversity and Marine Ecology.

Author contributions: DA and SN carried out field work in Gulf of Kutchch, Gujarat. SN identified the species and prepared the manuscript. DA assisted in the preparation of the manuscript and provided photographs of live animals.

Acknowledgements: We are grateful to Mr. Shinde, Technical Expert, Physics Department, Savitribai Phule University, Pune for his assistance in Scanning Electron Micrography of radula of both the species. We thank support through All India Co-ordinated Project on Taxonomy, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India for the work. Special thanks to Dr. J.R. Bhatt, Advisor, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India. We also thank Gujarat State Biodiversity Board, Government of Gujarat for granting necessary permissions.

INTRODUCTION

Nassarius Duméril, 1805 (Gastropoda: Nassariidae) is the most diverse genus within the subfamily Nassariinae and limited to the Indo-West Pacific (Galindo et al. 2016; Dekker et al. 2016). Information on the members of this genus from the Indian subcontinent, a major ecoregion of the Western Indo-Pacific, however, is scarce (Nerurkar et al. 2020). In this paper, for the first time, we report the occurrence of many living specimens of *Nassarius persicus* (Martens, 1874) and *Nassarius tadjallii* Moolenbeek, 2007 from the intertidal reef associated mud-flats of the Gulf of Kachchh, Gujarat, India. We also provide a complete taxonomic description for both species, along with additional information about morphological characters which are previously unknown (radula and operculum) for further reference.

Nassarius persicus was earlier reported from the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, a single record from Aden, Yemen, should be confirmed as it is out of the expected range for this species. This species is also found in Karachi, Pakistan (Cernohorsky 1984). This species is a conspicuous member of the intertidal reef community within the Gulf of Kachchh, Gujarat; however, it was misidentified as *N. arcularia plicatus* (Röding, 1798) (Ghosh 2008: pl. 1, figs. 5–6) and *N. olivaceus* (Bruguière, 1789) (Dave & Mankodi 2008: fig. 1) previously.

Nassarius tadjallii is currently known only from the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. This species is very similar to *N. marmoreus* (A. Adams, 1852), *N. javanus* (Schepman, 1891), and *N. thachorum* Dekker et al., 2016.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Taxon sampling: Specimens of both species were found and handpicked at low tide during the present study, intertidally, up to 1 m depth, at different localities in the district Devbhumi Dwarka, Gujarat, India. Live animals were photographed in the field before collection (IMAGE 1). Animals were preserved in 96–98% ethanol and voucher specimens are housed in the museum of Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS).

Morphological analyses for primary identification: A stereomicroscope (Carl Zeiss ZEISS Stemi 2000C, Germany) was used to observe shell and operculum morphology for each specimen included in the study. A digital vernier (accurate to 0.1 mm) was used for shell measurements. Shells were photographed using SX520 HS Canon digital single-lens reflex camera. For SEM imaging, radulae were mounted on carbon conducting tape and sputter coated with Au-Pd. The scanning electron microscope (SEM) images of radulae were

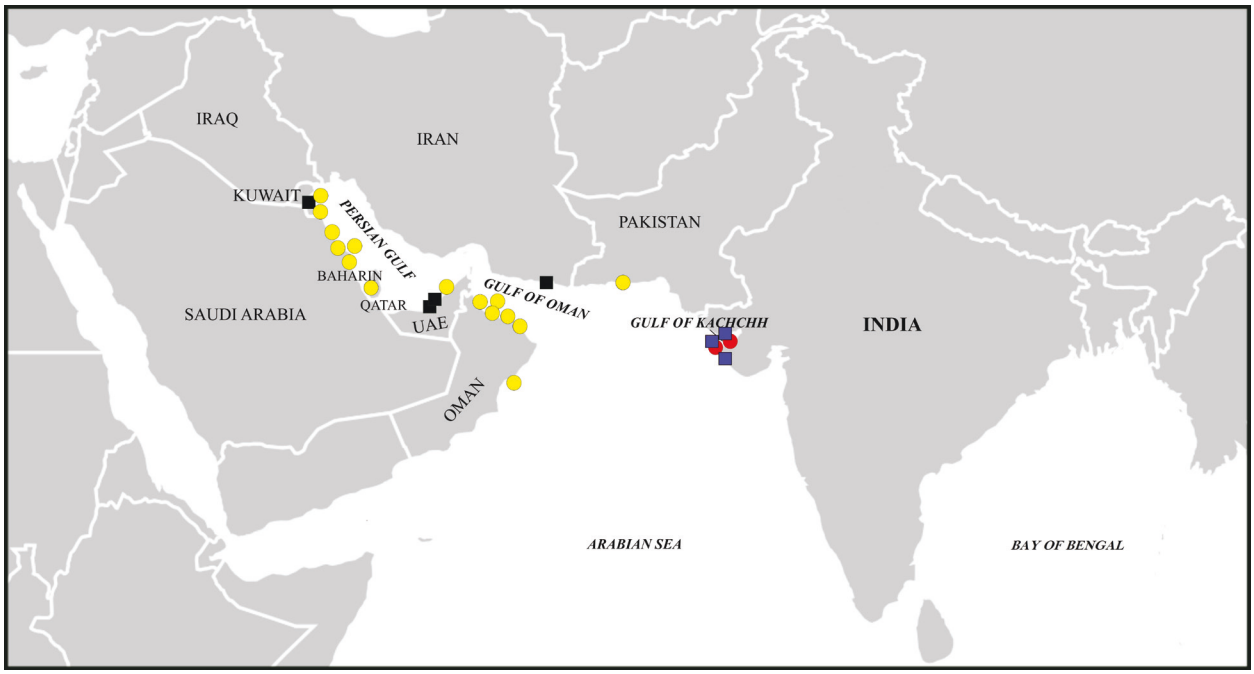

Figure 1. Geographical distribution of *Nassarius persicus* and *Nassarius tadjallii*. Symbols indicate following: Change the colour Yellow (●), known localities of *Nassarius persicus*; Red dot (●), its new localities from India. Black squares (¾), known localities of *Nassarius tadjallii;* blue squares (¾), its new localities from India.

obtained on JEOL JSM 6360A (JEOL, Japan) operating at 10 kV. The materials were confirmed following descriptions provided by Cernohorsky (1984), Bosch et al. (1995), & Moolenbeek (2007) and species names are updated from the (WoRMS) website (Molluscabase Eds. 2021).

RESULTS

Systematics

Family Nassariidae Iredale, 1916 (1835)
Subfamily Nassariinae Iredale, 1916 (1835)
Genus *Nassarius* Duméril, 1805
Type species: *Buccinum arcularia* Linnaeus, 1758 (by subsequent monotypy; Froriep, 1806).

***Nassarius persicus* (Martens, 1874)**
(Images: 1A; 2A–B, E–G & I)
Vernacular name: Persian Nassa.
Type locality: Persian Gulf.

1874.	*Nassa persica* v. Martens, Novit. Conch. Suppl. 5: 94, pl. 5, fig. 47.
1984.	*Nassarius (Plicarcularia) persicus* (v. Martens, 1874) —Cernohorsky, Bull. Auckland. Inst. Mus. 14: p. 71, pl. 5, figs. 3–6.
2008.	*Nassarius arcularia plicatus* (Röding, 1798) —Ghosh: pl. 1, figs 5–6.
2008.	*Nassarius olivaceus* (Bruguière, 1789) —Dave & Mankodi: fig. 1.

Examined material: Holotype: Catalogue number 69524 (specimen in Zoological Museum, Humboldt University, Berlin) (image examined from Cernohorsky, 1984: pl. 5, Image 2).

Other material: BNHS NASSA 303, 1 ex., adult, 1.iv.2014, Poshitra, Devbhumi Dwarka, Gujarat, India, 22.403N, 69.201E, coll. Deepak Apte, shell length 21.0 mm, shell width 13.1 mm. BNHS NASSA 304 (Figs. 2A-B), 1 ex., adult, 1.iv.2014, Poshitra, Devbhumi Dwarka, Gujarat, India, 22.403N, 69.201E, coll. Deepak Apte, shell height 21.6 mm, shell width 13.5 mm. BNHS NASSA 305, 1 ex., adult, 1.iv.2014, Poshitra, Devbhumi Dwarka, Gujarat, India, 22°24'12.9"N, 69°12'05.8"E , coll. Deepak Apte, shell height 23.0 mm, shell width 14.4 mm. BNHS NASSA 325, 1 ex., adult, 15.i.2015, Narara, Devbhumi Dwarka, Gujarat, India, 22.469N, 69.722E, coll. Sayali Nerurkar, shell height 22.3 mm, shell width 13.3 mm. BNHS NASSA 326, 1 ex., adult, 15.i.2015, Narara, Devbhumi Dwarka, Gujarat, India, 22.469N, 69.722E, coll. Sayali Nerurkar, shell height 22.2 mm, shell width 14.3 mm. BNHS NASSA 304 was used for dissecting radula and studying other morphological characters.

Diagnosis

Shell: Shell up to 23 mm in length (20.8 mm in holotype), elongate-ovate, with high, conical spire (Figs. 2A–B); very thin periostracum clearly visible in the live animal. Protoconch of three glassy-white whorls (Figs. 2E–F). Teleoconch of 6.5–7.25 weakly convex whorls, sculptured with strong axial ribs. Axial ribs are angulate and weakly constricted by a sharp, subsutural spiral line, to form weak nodes at the suture (same as that of holotype); ribs numbering from 12–14 on the penultimate and 12–19 on the body whorl, ribs becoming moderately obsolete in the center of the body whorl; only body whorl sculptured with very weak spiral striae, 3–4 basal spiral threads more prominent, siphonal fasciole with cords. Colour of shell is yellowish to olive green in live animals while dry shells look straw-yellow or pale grey. A creamy, pale colored spiral band is clearly visible on the shell with a nebulous darker band in the background of dorsal side of body whorl. The body whorl ends with four to five shallow axial ribs followed by a strong varix. Colour of varix is same as that of the shell. Aperture white, ovate, narrow, with 3 brown bands interiorly; outer lip thickened, edge slightly turned backwards; interior of outer lip with 7–8 lirate denticles (same as that of holotype). Columella heavily calloused, white, columellar shield large and extending up to body whorl suture; columella plicate with one strong plication at the base and 5–8 small folds. Anterior or siphonal canal short, distinct, wide and marked with 4–5 oblique basal cords. Posterior or anal canal distinct, deep, "U" shaped and marked by an intense posterior columellar ridge.

Operculum (Image 2G): Operculum corneous, yellowish to light brown in colour, serrate at the margins. Roughly trapezoidal in shape with curved bases, simple, flattened with terminal basal nucleus which is slightly turned to left. Information on operculum of holotype is not available.

Radula (Image 2K): Approximately, 62–70 rows of teeth, rachidian teeth with concave crescentic base, cutting edge is fringed with 11 or 12 sharp pointed, conical denticles with symmetrical arrangement. Corners of rachidian plate wide and smooth. Accessory intermediate lateral plates present in between each rachidian tooth and left lateral and right lateral tooth, respectively. Lateral teeth with two arched, narrow, elongated and pointed hook-like cusps, basal cusp is shorter than the upper cusp; the inner cutting edge of the basal cusp (between the two cusps) is finely serrate. The outer edge of the basal cusp (below the basal spur) is serrate with small five to six sharp, pointed denticles.

Image 1. A—Dorsal view of living animal of *Nassarius persicus* (Martens, 1874) from Poshitra, Gujarat, India, BNHS NASSA 304 | B—Dorsal view of living animal of *N. tadjallii* Moolenbeek, 2007 from Shivrajpur, Gujarat, India, BNHS NASSA 340. © Deepak Apte.

Basal spur is somewhat flat with a small bump.

Distribution (Figure 1): Saudi Arabia, Persian Gulf: Al Khobar; Ain-as-saih near Al Khobar; Ras Mishab; Tarut Bay; Saihat; Dammam. Bahrain: Al Manamah; Zallaq, Sheiks beach. KUWAIT: Failakah I.; Injifa shore; Kuwait Bay. United Arab Emirates: Trucial Coast, Sharjah. Oman: Mina al Fahal; Masirah I.; 18 km south-east of Muscat (mangrove/muddy flats); Marsis, Masirah I.; 2 km north of Sur Masirah, Masirah I.; Sur Masirah beach, Masirah I.; Dawwah beach, Masirah I.; southeastern end of Bar Al Hikman Peninsula; Al Sawadi Resort, Muscat; Muscat; As Seeb, 3 miles offshore (40 m depth); Bandar Jissah. Pakistan: Karachi. (GBIF Occurrences https://www.gbif.org/species/10492859; Cernohorsky 1984; Bosch et al. 1995; DuPont & Al-Tamimi 2002; Feulner & Hornby 2006; Al-Yamani et al. 2012; Asgari et al. 2012; El-Sorogy 2016; Grizzle et al. 2018; Al-Kandari et al. 2020; Yekta & Dekker 2021).

Localities within India: Previously none.

New localities within India (Figure 1): Narara and Poshitra, both localities in the Gulf of Kachchh, district Devbhumi Dwarka, Gujarat.

Habitat: Intertidal, up to 1 m depth, within degraded reef-flat with coral sand and silt.

Remarks: *Nassarius persicus* occur abundantly in its habitat and observed to be a dominant member of the intertidal fauna in intertidal reef-flats of Poshitra, Gujarat. It is a new record for India and a valuable addition to the fauna of Gulf of Kachchh Marine Sanctuary, Gujarat. Formerly, this species was misidentified (Ghosh 2008; Dave & Mankodi 2008), but a thorough investigation of its morphological characters clarifies its correct identity. The shell of *N. persicus* is similar to the western Indian Ocean species *N. arcularia plicatus* (Röding, 1798) in having large shield like columellar callous extending up to the penultimate whorl, creamy-yellow to pale grey colour of shells, a narrow brown band or dark brown spots or a nebulous darker band between sutural coronations of shells of both the species. But *N. persicus* can be easily distinguished from *N. arcularia plicatus* in having a slender shell with high spire, *N. arcularia plicatus* has a globous shell with moderate spire and spiral sculpture. Misidentification of *N. persicus* as *N. olivaceus* could be only due to the 'olive green' colour of the shell in live condition, else not any morphological similarity exists between these two species.

***Nassarius tadjallii* Moolenbeek, 2007**
(Images 1B; 2C–D, H–J & L)
Vernacular name: Tadjalli's Nassa.

2007.	*Nassarius tadjallii* Moolenbeek: 94, pl. 5, fig. 47.

Type locality: Ras al Batin, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Examined material: Holotype: ZMA.MOLL.139465, adult, i.1997, Ras al Batin, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in breakwaters, 3m, coll. P. Micali (images examined from Moolenbeek, 2007: p. 58, figs. 1, 2) (specimen in Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Leiden, Netherlands). NMR56145, 1 ex., adult, Al Bide, Kuwait, in sand at low tide, 14.iv.1982, coll. J.G.B. Nieuwenhuis (image examined from https://www.nmr-pics.nl/Nassariidae_new/album/slides/Nassarius%20marmoreus.html (specimen in the Natural History Museum, Rotterdam).

Other material: BNHS NASSA 323, 1 ex., adult, 15.i.2015, Narara, Devbhumi Dwarka, Gujarat, India, 22.469N, 69.722E, coll. Sayali Nerurkar, shell length 24.4 mm, shell width 12.2 mm. BNHS NASSA 324 (Figs. 2C–D), 1 ex., adult, 15.i.2015, Narara, Devbhumi Dwarka, Gujarat, India, 22.469N, 69.722E, coll. Sayali Nerurkar, shell length 24.0 mm, shell width 13.0 mm. BNHS NASSA 340 (Image 1B), 1 ex., adult, 17.i.2015, Shivrajpur, Devbhumi Dwarka, Gujarat, India, 22.345N, 68.949E,

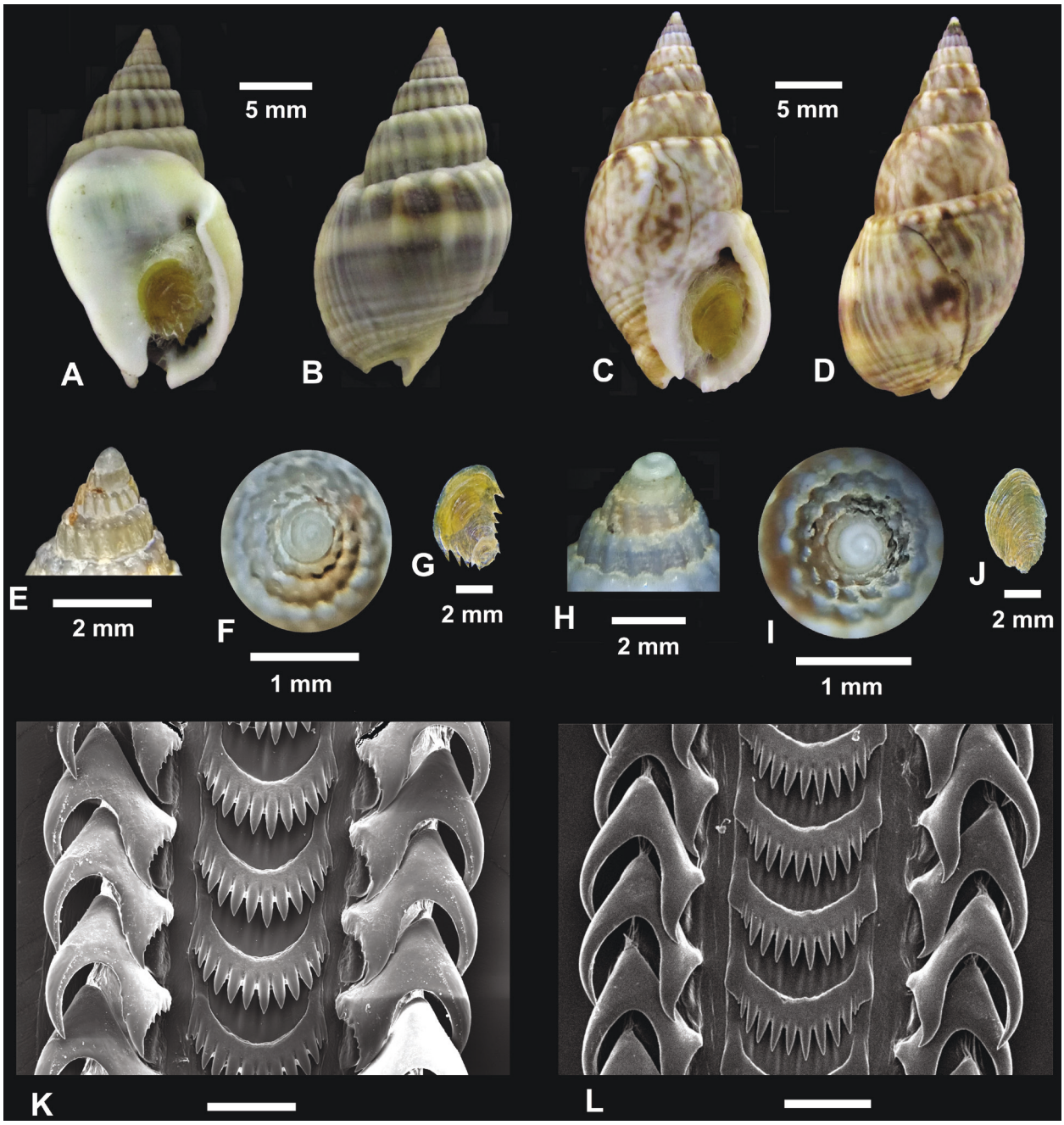

Image 2. ***Nassarius persicus*** **(Martens, 1874), BNHS NASSA 304. A–B—Shell, height 21.6mm, width 13.5mm | E–F—apex | G—operculum | K—radula (scale= 100µm).** ***Nassarius tadjallii*** **Moolenbeek, 2007, BNHS NASSA 324: A-B—Shell | C-D—Shell, height 24.0mm, width 13.0mm | H-I—apex | J—operculum | L—radula (scale= 100µm). © Sayali Nerurkar.**

coll. Deepak Apte, shell height 26.4 mm, shell width 13.9 mm. BNHS NASSA 348, 1 ex., adult, 18.i.2015, Poshitra, Devbhumi Dwarka, Gujarat, India, 22.403N, 69.201E, coll. Deepak Apte, shell height 28.4 mm, shell width 14.2 mm. BNHS NASSA 324 was used for dissecting the radula and studying other morphological characters.

Diagnosis

Shell: Shell up to 28.4 mm in length (25.4 mm in holotype), elongate-ovate, conical with high spire and less convex whorls (Figs. 2C–D); periostracum was thin, fibrous, brownish (thin, fibrous, brownish periostracum present in holotype). Protoconch of 2.5 white whorls approximately (Figs. 2H–I). Teleoconch of 6.25 to 6.50 whorls, of which first three axially ribbed and with 4–6

spiral grooves gradually disappearing; remaining whorls smooth with only one, rather strong sub-sutural groove. Suture prominently channeled. Between the suture and the sub-sutural groove, the area is slightly nodulose and consists of alternate creamy white and dark brown dots. Shell colour is white or cream in the background with light and dark brown patterned patches. These patches are arranged in two light and three dark alternate bands, visible on the body whorl (shell colour in holotype is light brown, with darker brown patches). This banding pattern is not mentioned in the original description. The body whorl ends with three to four minor axial ridges followed by a strong varix. Varix is creamy white in colour and bears three distinct brown patches as extensions of the three dark patterned bands of the body whorl (Varix orange brown in holotype. This brownish hue caused by its intact periostracum). Aperture whitish, ovate, moderately wide, interior of outer lip with about nine lirate denticles. Columella plicate with two or three fine folds. Columellar callus thin, smooth, white, spreading slightly on body whorl and extending outwards at siphonal canal forming anterior ridge. Anterior or siphonal canal short, distinct, wide and marked with five spiral grooves or basal cords which ends as five denticles on outer lip. Posterior or anal canal distinct, moderately deep and marked by a strong posterior columellar ridge and a strong denticle on the top of the outer lip. Parietal denticle also prominent. Shell of BNHS NASSA 324 has three to four prominent repair scars on penultimate and body whorls.

Operculum (Image 2J): Operculum of BNHS NASSA 324 is corneous, yellowish brown in colour. Trapezoidal, elongate, simple, flattened with smooth inner margin, crenate outer margin and terminal nucleus. Information on operculum of holotype is not available.

Radula (Image 2L): Radula consists of 62–68 rows of teeth; rachidian teeth with concave crescentic base and cutting edge fringed with 9–11 sharp, pointed, conical denticles in symmetrical arrangement; corners of rachidian plate wide and smooth; accessory intermediate lateral plates present in between each rachidian tooth and left lateral and right lateral tooth, respectively. Lateral teeth with two arched, narrow, elongated and pointed hook-like cusps, the basal cusp being shorter than the upper cusp; the inner cutting edge of the lateral teeth (between the two cusps) is smooth. The outer edge of the basal cusp (below the basal spur) is also smooth. Basal spur is prominent. Information on radula of holotype is not available.

Distribution (Figure 1): United Arab Emirates: Ras al Batin, Abu Dhabi; Al Imarat, Abu Dhabi; Dubai. Kuwait: Al Bide; Bede Circle; Kuwait Towers; Kuwait Bay. Iran: Chahbahar. Oman: not any specific locality given (GBIF Occurrences https://www.gbif.org/species/6502821; Moolenbeek 2007; Al-Yamani et al. 2012; Al-Kandari et al. 2020; Yekta & Dekker 2021).

Localities within India: Previously none.

New localities within India (Figure 1): All three localities namely, Narara, Poshitra from Gulf of Kachchh and Shivrajpur (Arabian Sea), falls under district Devbhumi Dwarka, Gujarat, on northwestern coast of India.

Habitat: Intertidal, up to 1 m depth, within degraded reef-flat with coral sand and silt.

Remarks: *Nassarius tadjallii* Moolenbeek, 2007 is a new record for India which extends the distribution eastwards and is an addition to the marine fauna of Gujarat. This species shows morphological similarities and can be confused with *N. marmoreus* (A. Adams, 1852), *N. javanus* (Schepman, 1891) and *N. thachorum* Dekker et al., 2016. *N. marmoreus* from Oman is smaller and much darker in colour compared to *N. tadjallii*. *N. javanus*, which can be found in India (Tamil Nadu), is smaller and has a much more globose body whorl. *N. thachorum* from Vietnam differs from *N. tadjallii* in having a much weaker or lacking subsutural groove, the presence of a ridge consisting of small denticles on the columella, and has a darker colour of the shell (Dekker et al. 2016).

DISCUSSION

Prior to this work, *Nassarius persicus* and *N. tadjalli* had not been reported from India (Nerurkar et al. 2020) and thus, the present records extend the known range of these species from the Arabian Peninsula to Gujarat, India. Both these species of *Nassarius* currently are found only at Narara, Poshitra (Gulf of Katchchh) and Shivrajpur (Arabian Sea but close to Gulf of Katchchh) and not seen along the rest of the Indian coasts.

Marine fauna changes considerably in the northern part of the Gujarat State, especially in the Gulf of Katchchh. In the north, the fauna is influenced by the Arabian Sea upwelling which appears to have significant influence on the faunal change from Gulf of Katchchh across Mekran and into the Arabian Gulf. But we know little about it as faunal barrier. Williams et al. (2011) while discussing continental ark idea, observed a similar pattern in the case of dispersal of *Lunella coronata* (Gmelin, 1791) morph B along the continental coastline, from Arabian Peninsula to Porbunder, Gujarat, India.

Likewise, Tripathy et al. (2013) listed *Congetia chesneyi* (Oliver & Chesneyi, 1994) from Adatara from the Gulf of Katchchh , Gujarat, India which otherwise in is known only from Kuwait area.

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Journal of Threatened Taxa

www.threatenedtaxa.org

ISSN 0974-7907 (Online) | ISSN 0974-7893 (Print)

June 2021 | Vol. 13 | No. 7 | Pages: 18679–18958
Date of Publication: 26 June 2021 (Online & Print)
DOI: 10.11609/jott.2021.13.7.18679-18958

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