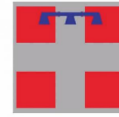




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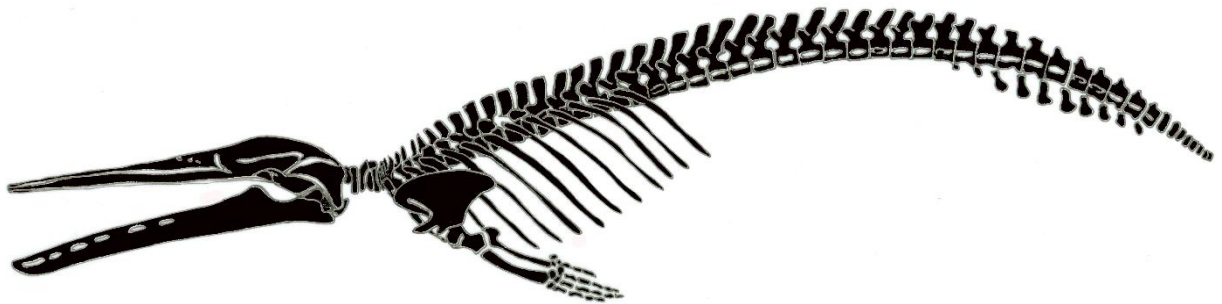


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*A cura di*

Giuseppe MARRAMÀ & Giorgio CARNEVALE

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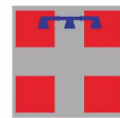
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## Life strategy on hard substrates: the case of a nestling bivalve from Mediterranean coralligenous build-ups

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A variety of marine bivalves are endolithic, living in boreholes they produce inside rocks, corals, shells, or nestling in existing crevices of the substrate, to seek protection. The nestling life habit is an uncommon primitive character that arose in the Ordovician and is shared by some bivalve families among which the Mitylidae. As part of the research performed within the project FISR 04543 “CRESCIBLUREEF - Grown in the blue: new technologies for knowledge and conservation of Mediterranean reefs”, several specimens of the mytilid microbivalve *Gregariella semigranata* have been recovered. They originate from scratched samples of two coralligenous build-ups collected at 36 m depth off Marzamemi (Sicily, Ionian Sea) and mostly consisting of crustose coralline red algae associated with sponges, bryozoans and serpulids, covered at their surface by a canopy of peyssonneliaceans and soft macroalgae. *Gregariella semigranata*, reported here for the first time from the Sicily coast of the Ionian Sea, is known from only a few other recent Mediterranean localities and as fossil since the Miocene, and throughout the Plio-Pleistocene. His mode of life is poorly documented. In the examined concretions, *G. semigranata* occurs in association with soft algae, inhabiting crevices produced by convolutions of coralline red algae, empty serpulid tubes, cavities inside crustose bryozoans and sponges, and sediment pockets. The minute, ovate shells are hidden under the concretions and only their periostracum is visible. This mostly develops posteriorly as branched barbules that form a peculiar tuft protruding from the substrate simulating a bush that, due to its shape and development, can be easily confused with some soft red algae such as those of the genera *Polysiphonia* and *Eupogodon*. This camouflage supports the hypothesis of an intriguing mimesis function of the periostracum, enhancing protection against the epifaunal predators.