First report of the land planarian *Endeavouria septemlineata* (Hyman, 1939) (Platyhelminthes, Tricladida, Continenticola, Geoplanidae) in French Polynesia

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Summary. We report the presence of the land planarian *Endeavouria septemlineata* from Tahiti, French Polynesia, on the basis of a single specimen collected in 2017. Identification of the species was ascertained by external and internal morphology and DNA COI sequence. The finding is of importance for conservation, since this species is a predator of soil animals.


Alien species are considered one of the major threats to biodiversity, especially in islands which harbour endemic species (Lowe et al., 2000). Several land planarians invading islands in the South Pacific have been reported, including *Platydemus manokwari* (Justine et al., 2015) and *Bipalium kewense* (Justine et al., 2018).

The land planarian *Endeavouria septemlineata* (Hyman, 1939) Ogren & Kawakatsu, 1991 was first described from the mountainous regions on the island of Oahu, Hawaii (Hyman, 1939); it has been found in the Cook Islands (FAO-SAPA, 2002) and recently in Brazil (Carbayo et al., 2008). This species is a well-known predator of terrestrial molluscs: Winsor et al. (2004) compiled a list of more than 9 species of molluscan prey from earlier references. Boll et al., (2015) studied the behaviour of the species both in the field (in Brazil) and in the laboratory. *Endeavouria septemlineata* showed a gregarious behaviour and fed on woodlice, millipedes, earwigs and gastropods; in the laboratory, specimens often displayed more of a scavenging than a predating behaviour (Boll et al., 2015). In view of this information, the species should be considered a threat for the biodiversity of the soil fauna, either as a predator of native fauna or as a competitor of native scavengers.

We report here that *E. septemlineata* has now been found in Tahiti, French Polynesia. The species was positively identified through morphological and molecular analysis, with 100% similarity of DNA (COI gene) with specimens from Brazil.

A single specimen of *E. septemlineata* was photographed in the field (Figure 1A) and collected by one of us (JG) on Mt Marau, Tahiti, in a high altitude hygrophylic forest, in a ravine dominated by native plants surrounding habitat highly invaded by invasive plants on 3 August 2017 (Gerlach, 2017). The specimen was shipped to LW for morphological examination and was registered as LW1833; a small part of the body, preserved in absolute ethanol, was sent to JLJ for molecular analysis, and registered in the collections of the Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle, Paris, France, under number MNHN JL311. The specimen sent for morphological examination was in two parts as a section of the body had been removed for molecular analysis: an anterior portion measuring 3 mm long, showing a single row of large eyes antero-laterally that do not contour the tip, and a posterior portion 8.5 mm long, with the mouth 4.5 mm and gonopore 3 mm from the posterior end. The dorsal markings (Figure 1B) comprise seven dark stripes on a cream ground colour: a fine dark median longitudinal stripe, separated from paired dark broad stripes by an equal width of ground colour.
External to these are paired fine greyish marginal stripes with diffuse margins, then separated by an equal width of ground colour paired dark sub-marginal stripes. The ventral markings (Figure 1C) consist of coarse dark mottling, more intense laterally, over the creeping sole that occupies some 50% of the ventral surface. The external morphology and histology of the copulatory organs of the Mt Marau specimen correspond closely with the original description of *E. septemlineata* (Hyman, 1939) in particular the presence of an intrapenial papilla, and the proximal and distal chambers of the seminal vesicle; the penis papilla occupied most of the common genital atrium. The external and internal morphology of the specimen of *E. septemlineata* from Mt Marau was also close to those of specimens from Hawaii confirmed histologically by LW as *E. septemlineata* (LW1521 Anini, Kauai, Hawaii and LW1522 Niululu, Kauai, Hawaii).

![Image](image-url)

**FIGURE 1.** *Endeavouria septemlineata* from Mt Marau, Tahiti. A, live photograph in the field. B, C, preserved specimen; B, dorsal aspect, C, ventral aspect. Scale in C valid for B and C; no scale for A.

Genomic DNA was extracted using the QIAamp DNA Mini Kit (Qiagen). The protocol for obtaining sequences was the same as in Justine *et al.* (2018). Briefly, fragments of the COI gene were amplified with the primers BarS (forward 5′-GTTATGCCTGTAATGATTG-3′) (Álvarez-Presas *et al.*, 2011) and COIR (reverse 5′-CCWGTYARMCCCHCCWAYAGTAA-3′) (Lázaro *et al.*, 2009), following Mateos *et al.*, (2013) and with the primers JB3 (=COI-ASmit1) (forward 5′-TTTTTTGCGATCCTGAGGTTTAT-3′) and JB4.5 (=COI-ASmit2) (reverse 5′-TAAAGAACACATAATGAAAATG-3′) (Bowles *et al.* 1995; Littlewood *et al.* 1997). PCR products were purified and sequenced in both directions on a 3730xl DNA Analyzer 96-capillary sequencer (Applied Biosystems). Results of both analyses were concatenated to obtain a COI sequence of 862 bp in length. The sequence was edited using CodonCode Aligner software (CodonCode Corporation, Dedham, MA, USA), compared to the GenBank database content using BLAST and deposited in GenBank under accession number MH572010. MEGA7 (Kumar *et al.*, 2016) was used to estimate genetic distances.
Our new sequence was compared to two partial sequences of COI of *E. septemlineata* deposited in GenBank, KC608222 and KC608233, both from Brazil. These sequences are shorter and there were a total of 304 positions in the final dataset. Distances (kimura-2 parameter) with KC608233 was 0%, and distance with KC608222 was 1%; in contrast, distance with other land planarians such as *P. manokwari* (KR349581) or *Parakontikia ventrolineata* (KR349587) were respectively 19.4% and 17.3%.

We thus consider, based on both morphology and molecules, that the specimen found in Tahiti is identified without doubt as *E. septemlineata*.

This finding might have important consequences for the conservation of native soil fauna in the island of Tahiti, including species of partulid snails, which are highly diverse and comprise many endemic species in the Pacific islands, of which many are now extinct (Cowie, 1992; Gerlach, 2017). Since land planarians are generally transferred with plants and soil, it is likely that *E. septemlineata* is also present in other islands of the Society Islands (French Polynesia) and possibly in other islands in the Pacific. A survey is necessary to confirm this hypothesis, and major research programs are needed (Meyer et al., 2018).

**References**


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