NAT. CROAT. | VOL. 35 | No 1 | 247-250 | ZAGREB | July 31, 2026

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short communication/kratko priopćenje
DOI 10.20302/NC.2026.35.17

FIRST RECORD OF THE NUDIBRANCH *FELIMARE PICTA* (R. A. PHILIPPI, 1836) (GASTROPODA: CHROMODORIDIDAE) IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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Čelebičić, M., Habul, A. & Kahrić, A.: First record of the nudibranch *Felimare picta* (R. A. Philippi, 1836) (Gastropoda: Chromodoridiidae) in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nat. Croat., Vol. 35, No. 1, 247-250, 2026, Zagreb.

In this paper, the first record of the nudibranch *Felimare picta* (R. A. Philippi, 1836) (Gastropoda: Chromodoridiidae) in Bosnia and Herzegovina is reported. The specimen was observed at 7 m depth on a sandy bottom in Malostonski zaljev Bay and documented using underwater photography, expanding the known distribution of the species in the Adriatic Sea. It also emphasizes the importance of surveys in the relatively understudied marine habitats of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Key words: sea slug, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Adriatic Sea

Čelebičić, M., Habul, A. & Kahrić, A.: Prvi nalaz gološkržnjaka *Felimare picta* (R. A. Philippi, 1836) (Gastropoda: Chromodoridiidae) u Bosni i Hercegovini. Nat. Croat., Vol. 35, No. 1, 247-250, 2026, Zagreb.

Rad donosi prvo zabilježeno pojavljivanje morskog puža *Felimare picta* (R. A. Philippi, 1836) (Gastropoda: Chromodoridiidae) u Bosni i Hercegovini. Primjerak je uočen na dubini od 7 m na pjeskovitom dnu u Malostonskom zaljevu i dokumentiran je podvodnom fotografijom, čime se proširuje poznata rasprostranjenost vrste u Jadranskom moru. Naglašava se važnost provođenja istraživanja u relativno slabo istraženim morskim staništima Bosne i Hercegovine.

Ključne riječi: morski puž, Bosna i Hercegovina, Jadransko more

Heterobranch sea slugs are a diverse group of marine gastropods, with 660 species reported from the Mediterranean Sea (Costello *et al*., 2001; Zenetos *et al*., 2016; Prkić *et al*., 2018; Fortič *et al*., 2023). In the Adriatic Sea, which covers the coasts of Albania, Croatia, Italy, Montenegro and Slovenia, 271 species have been recorded (Prkić *et al*., 2018). Despite this richness, the marine heterobranch fauna of Bosnia and Herzegovina remains poorly studied, with only a limited number of species reported to date. The first records were provided by Šoljan (1980), who documented *Philine quadripartite* Ascanius, 1772 and *Tethys fimbria* Linnaeus, 1767 (originally reported as *Tethys leporine* Linnaeus, 1758; taxonomy follows WoRMS, 2021). More than three decades later, twelve additional species were recorded, including *Berthella aurantiaca* (Risso, 1818),

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Aplysia fasciata Poiret, 1789, *Aplysia punctate* Cuvier, 1803, *Elysia timida* (Risso, 1818), *Berthellina edwardsii* (Vayssière, 1896), *Felimida luteorosea* (Rapp, 1827), *Thuridilla hopei* (Vérany, 1853), *Dendrodoris grandiflora* (Rapp, 1827), *Camachoaglaja africana* (Pruvot-Fol, 1953), and *Felimare villafranca* (Risso, 1818), as well as two invasive species: *Bursatella leachii* Blainville, 1817 and *Melibe viridis* (Kelaart, 1858) (Nahić *et al*., 2016; Delić *et al*., 2019; Kahrić *et al*., 2021, 2023; Fortič *et al*., 2023).

During a field survey in Malostonski zaljev Bay, Bosnia and Herzegovina, one specimen of *Felimare picta* (R. A. Philippi, 1836) was observed at a depth of 7 m on a sandy bottom (42°54′55.1″N, 17°35′35.3″E) (Fig. 1). The species was documented using underwater photographic equipment, and no specimens were collected. Identification was based on morphological features visible in situ and compared with the descriptions available in the literature (e.g., Prkić *et al*., 2018). Taxonomy and nomenclature follow the World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS, 2025). Malostonski Bay, a small coastal area on the eastern Adriatic, is characterized by sandy substrates with scattered rocky patches, providing suitable habitats for a variety of heterobranch sea slugs.

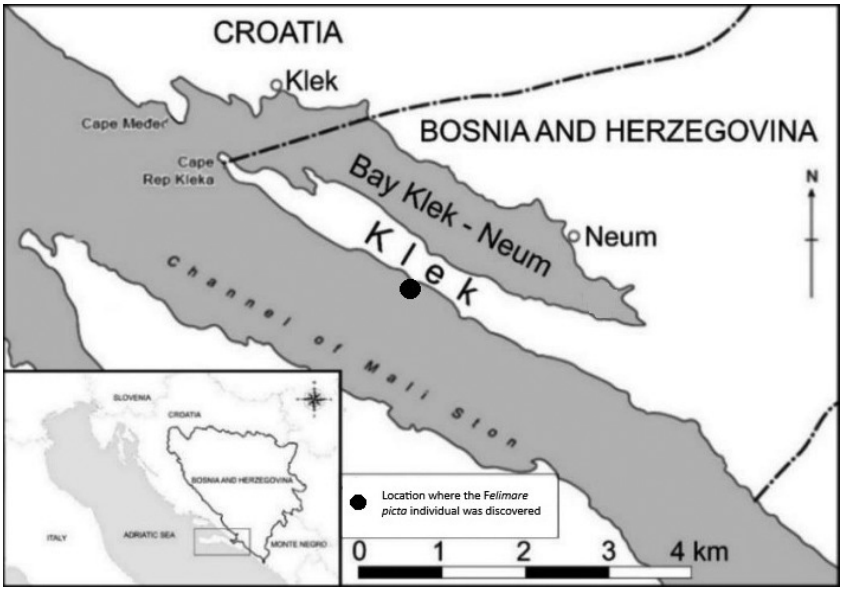


Fig. 1. Map of the study area showing the locations where species were recorded.

The observed specimen displayed typical morphological characters of *F. picta* (Fig. 2) including an elongated bluish body with yellow longitudinal lines and marginal bands, as well as a mantle edge lined with bright yellow. The individual measured approximately 15 cm in length, which is consistent with the maximum sizes reported for the species. These features match the descriptions provided by Prkić *et al.* (2018) and Zenetos *et al.* (2016).

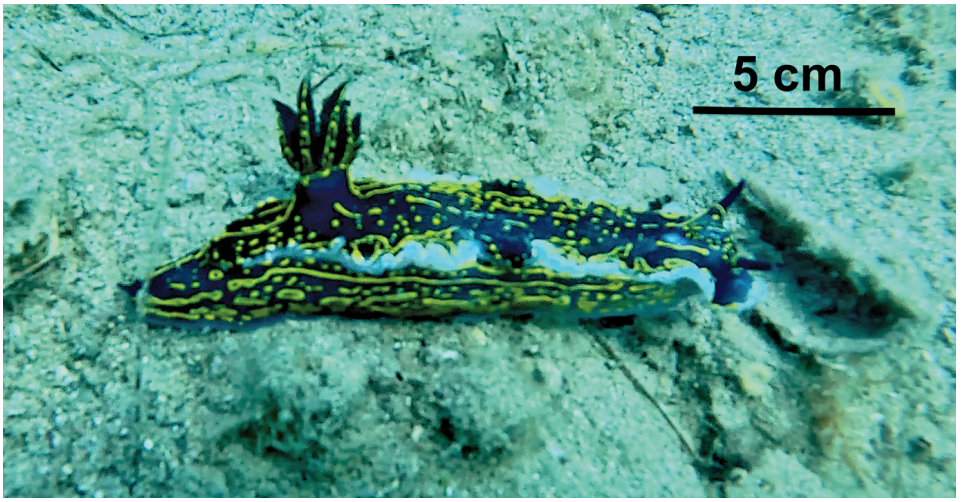


Fig. 2. *Felimare picta* (R. A. Philippi, 1836) observed in Malostonski zaljev Bay, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

F. picta (R. A. Philippi, 1836) is a widely distributed nudibranch species in the Mediterranean Sea, with numerous records along the Adriatic coasts of Croatia, Montenegro, and Italy (Prkić *et al.*, 2018; Zenetos *et al.*, 2016). Its occurrence in Bosnia and Herzegovina was therefore expected, but until now it had not been documented. The present record expands the known distribution of the species within the Adriatic Sea and underlines the importance of continuous surveys and photographic documentation in the relatively understudied marine habitats of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although only a single specimen was observed, its presence indicates suitable environmental conditions in Malostonski Bay. Future systematic studies are needed to evaluate the diversity, frequency, and ecological role of nudibranchs in this part of the Adriatic.

Received September 12, 2025

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