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Geodiversitas est une revue en flux continu publiée par les Publications scientifiques du Muséum, Paris
Geodiversitas is a fast track journal published by the Museum Science Press, Paris
Les Publications scientifiques du Muséum publient aussi / The Museum Science Press also publish:
Diffusion – Publications scientifiques Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle
CP 41 – 57 rue Cuvier F-75231 Paris cedex 05 (France)
Tél. : 33 (0)1 40 79 48 05 / Fax : 33 (0)1 40 79 38 40
diff.pub@mnhn.fr / http://sciencepress.mnhn.fr
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ISSN (imprimé / print): 1280-9659/ ISSN (électronique / electronic): 1638-9395
New occurrences of crabs (Decapoda, Brachyura, Eubrachyura) in the Pliocene of Florida (United States)

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Submitted on 22 June 2018 | Accepted on 29 August 2018 | Published on 6 December 2018


ABSTRACT
Despite the rich fossil record of decapod crustaceans in Florida, there are still several stratigraphic intervals for which almost no fossil decapods have been reported. Here we document the occurrence of two species of eubrachyuran crabs from the Pliocene Pinecrest Member of the Tamiami Formation, Sarasota County, based on complete and well preserved dorsal carapaces: the leucosiid Persephona cf. P. subovata (Rathbun, 1893), and the xanthid Paractaea cf. P. nodosa (Stimpson, 1860). The specimen of Paractaea cf. P. nodosa represents the second fossil record of the genus and the oldest occurrence known to date. The specimen of Persephona cf. P. subovata, despite its geographic occurrence, is more similar anatomically to some extant tropical Eastern Pacific species than to any of the species occurring in Florida today. It is possible that ancestral populations of P. subovata were present in the tropical Eastern Pacific and western Atlantic before the water masses were isolated after the final closure of the currents connecting both water masses, and that the fossil Persephona here studied is part of a relict population of P. subovata that disappeared in the Atlantic after the late Pliocene.

RÉSUMÉ
Nouvelles occurrences de crabes (Decapoda, Brachyura, Eubrachyura) dans le Pliocène de Floride (États-Unis). Malgré le riche registre fossilière des crustacés décapodes de Floride, il y a des niveaux stratigraphiques où ils n’ont pas été encore trouvés. La présence de deux espèces de crabs eubrachyures provenant du Membre Pinecrest de la Formation Tamiami (Pliocène) à Sarasota County, est ici documentée sur la base de carapaces dorsales complètes et bien conservées : le Leucosiidae Persephona cf. P. subovata (Rathbun, 1893), et le Xanthidae Paractaea cf. P. nodosa (Stimpson, 1860). Le spécimen de Paractaea cf. P. nodosa est la seconde occurrence de ce genre dans le registre fossilière et la plus ancienne connue à ce jour. Le spécimen de Persephona cf. P. subovata, même s’il a été récolté en Floride, est anatomiquement plus proche des espèces qui vivent dans le Pacifique Est tropical que des espèces qui habitent en Floride actuellement. Il est possible que des populations ancestrales de P. subovata aient été présentes dans le Pacifique Est tropical et l’Atlantique Ouest avant l’isolement des masses d’eau après la fermeture finale des courants reliant les deux masses d’eau. Ainsi, le fossile Persephona étudié ici, aurait pu faire partie d’une population relict de P. subovata qui a disparu de l’Atlantique après la fin du Pliocène.

KEY WORDS
Heterotremata,
Leucosiidae,
Paractaea,
Persephona,
Xanthidae,
Tamiami Formation.

MOTS CLÉS
Heterotremates,
Leucosiidae,
Paractaea,
Persephona,
Xanthidae,
Formation Tamiami.
INTRODUCTION

The fossil record of decapod crustaceans in southern Florida (United States) is well known and broadly studied (see Luque et al. 2017 and references therein), yet several stratigraphic intervals remain undersampled or with fossil findings unreported. This is the case of the Pliocene Tamiami Formation, a fossiliferous unit from where only a handful of fossil decapods have been properly described including the porcellanid crab Petrolithes myakkensis Bishop & Portell, 1989, associated to the sun star Helioaster microbrachius Xantus, 1860 (Portell & Agnew 2004; Luque et al. 2017: fig. 14A). Most other fossil decapod records known from the Tamiami Formation seem to be fragmentary and largely represented by carapace fragments or cheliped remains (FLMNH Invertebrate Paleontology catalogue online https://www.floridamuseum.ufl.edu/invertpaleo/). Here we describe two eubrachyuran crab occurrences from the Pinecrest Member of Tamiami Formation, Sarasota County: the leucosid crab *Persephona cf. P. subovata* (Rathbun, 1893), and the xanthid crab *Paractaea cf. P. nodosa* (Stimpson, 1860). Based on complete dorsal carapaces, we compare them with related crab taxa and discuss their paleobiogeographic affinities.

LOCATION AND STRATIGRAPHY

The specimens studied herein were collected by the second author (Eric Kendrew) in the Sarasota County, Florida (United States), from two different localities separated from each other by no more than 15 km (Fig. 1). Locality A corresponds to the SMR Aggregates quarry (27°20′05″N, 82°19′58″W), and locality B to the old APAC Shell quarry, West of I-75 (Interstate) (27°14′18″N, 82°27′11″W). The section outcropping in the APAC quarry from Sarasota, showing the superjacent and subjacent beds, is used as standard reference section for the Pinecrest Member (Olsson & Petit 1964) of Tamiami Formation, equivalent to mid-Piacenzian (Pliocene) in age (Petuch & Roberts 2007: fig. 4.3).

According to Hunter (1968), the lithology of the Pinecrest Member of the Tamiami Formation (Okeechobee Group) is composed of clean quartz sandstones, locally with shell beds and calcareous muds. Some of these shell beds are composed almost exclusively of either oysters, scallops, strombids, or the large worm gastropod *Vermicularia recta* Olsson & Harbison, 1953 (see Petuch & Roberts 2007). This member yields one of the richest molluscan fauna known in the Pliocene of Florida that lived during the warmest and most tropical time of the entire Pliocene (Petuch & Roberts 2007). The extension of the Pinecrest Member is approximately to that of the Tamiami Formation, and in Sarasota County it reaches 10 m of thickness (Petuch & Roberts 2007: 85, fig. 4.8).

The specimen of *Persephona cf. P. subovata* (Rathbun, 1893) (Fig. 2) was found in sediment inside of a large gastropod *Hexaplex bertiwekorum* (Petuch, 1988), recovered from ex situ spoil piles coming from the SMR quarry (locality A). This endemic gastropod species is considered as an index fossil for the Pinecrest Member (see Petuch & Roberts 2007: 85; fig. 4.10K), suggesting that the spoil materials belong to the Unit 7 of the Pinecrest Member of Tamiami Formation (Petuch & Roberts 2007). The specimen of *Paractaea cf. P. nodosa* (Fig. 3) was found in situ in the APAC quarry (locality B), together with bioherms of *Vermicularia recta* from the Unit 5 of the Pinecrest Member, which is index fossil of this member as well (see Petuch & Roberts 2007: 85, figs 4.11G, 4.13). Thus, the age of the studied specimens can be considered as middle Piacenzian (Late Pliocene). Specimens are housed in the Natural Museum of Natural History (USNM), Washington, DC (United States).

SYSTEMATIC PALAEONTOLOGY

(FOLLOWING NG ET AL. 2008)

Genus *Persephona* Leach, 1817

**Type species.** — *Persephona latreillei* Leach, 1817, by subsequent designation of Rathbun (1922).

*Persephona cf. P. subovata* (Rathbun, 1893)

Fig. 2A-D

**Material.** — One dorsal carapace, USNM PAL 720104, found inside the shell of a specimen of the gastropod *Hexaplex bertiwekorum* (Petuch, 1988).

**Measurements** (in mm). — Length = 17; width = 14; fronto-orbital width = 5.4; posterior margin = 6.9.

**Description**

Carapace roundish, sub-ovate to sub-pyiform, slightly longer than wide, strongly vaulted, with coarse granulation dorsally, particularly towards the carapace margins. Fronto-orbital margin prominent, about two times as wide as it is long, somewhat upturned, extending forward well beyond the anterolateral margin (Fig. 2A); front narrow, wider than the orbits; orbits bearing two closed orbital fissures, the innermost orbit almost half as long as the outermost orbit (Fig. 2B). Sub-hepatic region not inflated and lacking a sub-hepatic spine or tubercle. Lateral margins ornamented with aligned coarse granules (Fig. 2C). Posterior margin bearing three well-developed marginal conical spines nearly as long as they are wide at their bases (Fig. 2D); mesial spine slightly longer than lateral spines; posterior margin between the lateral spines with large conspicuous granules. Sternal, pleonal, and appendicular elements not preserved.
REMARKS

Based on the overall carapace form, the dorsal granulation, and the presence of three posterior spines, the specimen studied could be assigned to either *Persephona* or *Iliacantha* Stimpson, 1871, both closely related leucosiid genera within the Ebaliinae, and co-occurring in the western Pacific and eastern Atlantic coasts of the Americas. However, species within these genera are sometimes difficult to differentiate (Hendrickx 1997), and most of their diagnostic characters are found on their chelipeds, ambulatory legs, mouthparts, pleon, gonopods, sternum, and carapace color patterns, which are not preserved in the fossilized studied material. Furthermore, juvenile specimens of *Iliacantha* spp. and *Persephona* spp. may lack some conspicuous traits seen in adults of their species such as the sub-hepatic swelling and the development of a sub-hepatic spine, obscuring the placement of incomplete fossil taxa.

Today, several species of *Persephona* occur in the coasts of Florida, such as *P. aquilonaris* Rathbun, 1933, and *P. medi-terranea* (Herbst, 1794). Nevertheless, and despite the incompleteness of the material available for study, the fossil specimen does not seem to match any of the extant species currently known from the eastern Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico (D. Felder and B. Galil, pers. comms. June 2018). In fact, the fossil from the Tamiami Formation seems to be more similar to either *P. edwardsii* Bell, 1855, or *P. subovata* (Rathbun, 1893) (Fig. 4A, B); both species from the eastern Pacific of the Americas. These species share with the fossil from the Tamiami Formation here reported the sub-ovate carapace outline and the lack of a strong sub-hepatic
tubercle (compare to Boone 1930: pl. 10; Hendrickx 1997: fig. 104; Magalhães 2012: fig. 16). Although *P. edwardsii* and *P. subovata* are restricted to the western Pacific and the fossil here studied comes from the Atlantic Gulf, it is possible that ancestral populations of *P. edwardsii* or *P. subovata* were present at both sides prior to the closure of the connectivity of water masses between the tropical Eastern Pacific and the Atlantic, and that the fossil from Florida is part of a relict population of *P. edwardsii* or *P. subovata* that disappeared in the Atlantic.

Several fossil records of *Persephona* are known from the Neogene and Quaternary of the tropical and subtropical Americas (see summary in Luque et al. 2017), including a similar specimen from the early-middle Pleistocene of Fort Drum, Okeechobee County, Florida, assigned to *P. mediterranea* by Portell & Agnew (2004) (Luque et al. 2017: 49, 50, fig. 14F). Both specimens from Florida share the presence of some small granulations on the posterior margin between the main lateral spines, a carapace longer than wide, a similar dorsal granulation pattern, and a fronto-orbital margin extending well beyond the anterolateral margin, although the Pleistocene specimen from Okeechobee County is almost three times larger than the Sarasota specimen herein illustrated. In the Florida Museum of Natural History (FLMNH) Invertebrate Paleontology webpage, there are several records of *Persephona* sp. from the Tamiami Formation, most being cheliped articles (meri). Several other *Persephona* sp. remains from the Plio-Pleistocene Nashua and Caloosahatchee formations, and the Bermont and Fort Thompson formations are also included in the Invertebrate Paleontology collections at the FLMNH (see also Portell & Agnew 2004, and references therein). The new carapace confirms the presence of the genus.
A

B

C

Fig. 3. — Paractaea cf. *P. nodosa* (Stimpson, 1860), USNM PAL 720105 from the Pinecrest Member of Tamiami Formation (middle Piacenzian, Pliocene) of locality B in Sarasota County, Florida (United States): A, dorsal view; B, frontal view; C, posterior view. Scale bar: 10 mm. Photographs by A. Ossó.
in the Pliocene of Florida. *Persephona aquilonaris* has been reported for the Pleistocene Beaumont Formation of Texas (Collins et al. 2014). Although it is tempting to include the Pliocene fossil here studied within *P. aquilonaris* due to the overlapping geographic ranges that include eastern United States and Mexico (Magalhães et al. 2016), based on the evidence available it is not possible for us to include the new fossil among other Atlantic taxa with certainty, and rather seems to be more similar to *P. subovata*. For the time being, we assign this fossil to the latter species until more complete specimens become available for a more thorough comparison.

**Superfamily XanThoidea** MacLeay, 1838  
**Family Xanthidae** MacLeay, 1838  
**Subfamily Actaeinae** Alcock, 1898  
**Genus Paractaea** Guinot, 1969

**Type species.** — *Xantho rufopunctatus* H. Milne Edwards, 1834, by original designation.

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**Paractaea cf. P. nodosa** (Stimpson, 1860)  
**Fig. 3A-C**

**Material.** — One carapace, USNM PAL 720105, with cuticle preserved, partially embedded on limestone matrix, and with broken posterolateral margins.  
**Measurements (in mm).** — Length = 27; width = 38; fronto-orbital width = 20; posterior margin = 12.

**Description**  
Carapace transversely hexagonal, strongly sculpted, much wider than long, approximately 70% as long as the carapace maximum width. Fron to orbital approximately 50% the carapace maximum width. Carapace vaulted longitudinally at anterior third, weakly convex transversely. Regions well marked and defined by strong sub-regional lobules, except urogastric region; all sub-regional lobules covered by clusters of rounded granules. Grooves separating regions and sub-regions, broad, smooth. Front bilobed, slightly advanced, medially notched, sinuous with granulated edges; separated from the inner orbital angle by notches. Orbits directed for-
wardly; supraorbital margin raised, edges granulated, with two distal fissures separated by a medial tooth; infraorbital margin visible dorsally. Anterolateral margins convex with five granulated teeth or nodes (extraorbital tooth included; epibranchial tooth not preserved). Posterolateral margins straight. Posterior margin straight, rimmed, ornate with a row of granules, about 30% of total width. Frontal region smooth; post-frontal lobule distinct. Gastric process well defined by lobules; Protoparagastic region distinct of divided and parallel protogastric lobes. Mesogastric region three lobed, anterior small, reaching half of protogastric lobes, and the two-posterior subtriangular; metagastric region indistinct from posterior part of mesogastric region; urogastric region flattened, smooth, separated of meso- metagastric region by two gastric pits. Cardiac region V-shaped, divided posteriorly; intestinal region narrow, inflated laterally. Hepatic region smooth. Outer epibranchial lobe do not reaches anterolateral margin; inner epibranchial lobe V-shaped. Meso and meta-branchial lobules distinct. Sternal, pleonal, and appendicular elements not preserved.

REMARKS

The general outline of the Florida’s specimen and its sculptured dorsal carapace indicates it belongs to Paractaea (see Guinot 1969). Nevertheless, its specific affinities are less clear given the great similarity among the different species and subspecies of Paractaea, all of them extant. Indeed, besides the number of existing species and subspecies of this genus, a number of forms of the type species P. rufopunctata (H. Milne Edwards, 1834) (Fig. 4C) have been erected through time, mostly based on differences in the dorsal sculpture, setations, appendages, and even geographic distribution (e.g. Guinot 1969; Mendoza et al. 2014: 275). In this respect, herein we follow the list of species and subspecies available of Paractaea, validated by Ng et al. (2008: 195, 196, 207). The anterolateral margin with five nodose teeth, and the pattern of the dorsal sculpture of the Florida’s specimen, fit perfectly within the anatomical range seen in P. rufopunctata. However, the fossil specimen has broader grooves separating the lobes and lobules than modern P. rufopunctata, in particular the urogastric region, which is large and smooth, and the two posterior lobules of metagastric region, which are subtriangular. Those characters match the diagnosis of Guinot (1969: 252, 253) for the American Atlantic species P. nodosa (as P. rufopunctata forma nodosa): “un très large sillon entre l’aréole mésogastrique et la région cardiaque […] notons chez les nodosa des siliens dorsaux plus larges et, en conséquence, des lobules plus espacés.” (see also Rathbun 1930: 251, 257, 258). Therefore, in absence of other diagnostic features as chelae, ambulatory legs or ventral parts, missing in the specimen here studied, we consider it tentatively as P. nodosa (Fig. 4D).

Previously, Collins & Morris (1976: 125, 126, pl. 19, fig. 7) reported a specimen from the Pleistocene Coral Rock Series of Barbados as Actaea rufopunctata nodosa (Luque et al. 2017: 55). That specimen matches well the general diagnoses of either P. rufopunctata or P. nodosa. However, its lobules appear larger and tighter than in the specimen from Florida, and consequently the grooves separating them appear very narrow instead of broad as in the latter, which would separate it from the diagnosis of P. nodosa (sensus Guinot 1969). To our knowledge, the specimen from the Pleocene of Florida represents the second record of Paractaea in the fossil record and the oldest for the genus known to date.

Acknowledgements

We thank Mark Florence (Invertebrate Paleontology, Paleobiology Department, Smithsonian Institute National Museum of Natural History USNM, Washington, D.C., United States) for help facilitating access to the collections; Bella Galil (The Steinhardt Museum of Natural History, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel) and Darryl Felder (Department of Biology, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Louisiana, United States) for valuable discussions about the systematic placement of the fossil Persephona. Joseph Poupin (MNHN, Paris), Karen Reed (Smithsonian Institute, USNM, Washington, D.C., United States) and Ondej Radosta (CradDatabase) kindly provided photographs of comparative material. We are grateful to Alessandro Garassino and Sylvain Carbonnier for their constructive reviews.

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