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First report of limno-terrestrial tardigrades from the Maltese archipelago

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The first study on the limno-terrestrial tardigrade species from Malta and Gozo was carried out. Material was based on both old collections collected in 1977 and on recently collected material. In only four samples all of which proved positive for the presence of tardigrades, at least seven species of tardigrades were recorded, two of which are probably new species to science.

In spite of the lack of permanent freshwater environments and of significant elevations in the archipelago, the results appear encouraging and suggest that the tardigrade fauna of this small archipelago may prove to be relatively rich in species diversity, with the possibility of finding endemic species. Further indepth studies are required to compare the tardigrade fauna of Malta with that of Sicily and North Africa. Such studies will also provide a wider knowledge of biodiversity and biogeography of the Mediterranean area.

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