Two Seas for One Great Diversity: Checklist of the Marine Heterobranchia (Mollusca; Gastropoda) from the Salento Peninsula (South-East Italy)

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Received: 18 March 2020; Accepted: 24 April 2020; Published: 26 April 2020

Abstract: The Salento peninsula is a portion of the Italian mainland separating two distinct Mediterranean basins, theIonian and the Adriatic seas. Several authors have studied the marine Heterobranchia (Mollusca, Gastropoda) fauna composition living in the Ionian Sea, but to date further knowledge regarding this interesting group of mollusks is still needed. Recent studies have corroborated the peculiarity of the Mediterranean Sea showing high levels of endemism and cryptic diversity. On the other hand, marine sea slugs have been revealed to be important indicators of the marine ecosystem’s health, due to their species-specific diet that consist of a vast variety of sessile and benthic invertebrates. A baseline study of the marine Heterobranchia diversity is therefore a necessary step to reveal the hidden diversity and to monitor the possible presence of alien species. The present study shows results from approximately 600 scientific dives carried out during a nine-year period in all of the main submarine habitats of the studied area, while accounting for the marine Heterobranchia from both the Ionian and Adriatic Seas. With this contribution, the list of marine Heterobranchia inhabiting the Salento Peninsula rises to 160. Furthermore, it also reports, for the first time, the presence of one alien species and three new records for Italian waters. Ecological notes and geographical distribution for each added species are provided together with animal iconography, consisting mainly of in situ photographs, for species identification.

Keywords: diversity; sea slugs; nudibranchs; Mediterranean Sea; monitoring

1. Introduction

The Salento Peninsula (South-East Italy) in Puglia is a strip of land right on the border of the eastern Mediterranean Sea, made up of a large variety of habitats: rocky formations, open sandy beaches, marine caves, etc. The Salento Peninsula is a physically well-identified region, encompassing the innermost point of the Gulf of Taranto (40°31’17.8″N 17°06’10.2″E) and the beach of Torre Santa Sabina di Ostuni (40°45’52.3″N 17°41’20.1″E), with a length of 138 kilometers, calculated on the axis between Martina Franca (40°42’17.7″N 17°20’20.9″E) and the Cape of Santa Maria di Leuca (39°47’40.4″N 18°22’05.0″E). The maximum and minimum width are 54 and 33 kilometers, respectively, and the total coastal length is 365 kilometers [1–5]. This peninsula protrudes between two ecoregions of the Mediterranean Sea [6], the Northern Ionian, and the Southern Adriatic seas, which are conventionally separated by the dividing line passing through Otranto (according to the...
biogeographical zones described by Bianchi [7], i.e., zones 6 and 7, respectively). These two basins are characterised by peculiar and distinct main currents and submarine morphologies, resulting in very complex and dynamic ecosystems affected by seasonal fluctuations, which influences both the shallow and deep communities [8,9]. Therefore, this marine area could potentially host a high abundance of Heterobranchia species, due to their pelagic larval stage and diversified diet. Knowledge on diversity is a basic requisite to identify targets and to monitor species composition shifts over time, caused by natural or anthropogenic factors. In fact, the change in marine Heterobranchia fauna composition over time is considered a good ecological indicator of potential environmental modifications [10–14] and this peculiarity is particularly interesting in such a heterogeneous area of the Mediterranean. Furthermore, the capability of marine Heterobranchia to host biological compounds that are potentially interesting for biomedical applications, provides additional value to the study of this particular group of mollusks [14]. In fact, many species of marine Heterobranchia display aposematic vivacious warning colors to indicate that they contain defensive secondary metabolites that are sequestered, transformed from dietary sources, or synthesized de novo [15]. These compounds are used, mainly by nudibranchs, as a chemical defense from predation [16,17] and have revealed to be an important source of diverse bioactive products used as effective analgesic, anti-inflammatory, antiviral, and anticancer drugs [18,19]. The Mediterranean marine diversity is therefore revealed to be interesting, mainly due to the presence of cryptic or endemic species. In fact, several species once considered to be widespread across the Atlantic and the Mediterranean were shown to be a complex of cryptic species, many of which are endemic to the Mediterranean (e.g., [20–23]). This trend is also true for marine Heterobranchia, as demonstrated by recent molecular papers that helped to unravel such cryptic diversity [24–29]. In this context, studies focused on the production of species lists from different geographical areas are needed as an essential starting point to unveil this hidden diversity. In the past decade, the key works on marine Heterobranchia in the area under investigation have been published by Perrone [30–37], who mainly provided data regarding the species inhabiting the Ionian side of the Salento peninsula (Gulf of Taranto), and only provided ecological notes on a small number of species. Recently, Onorato and Belmonte [38] reviewed the biodiversity assessment of the marine submerged caves in the Salento peninsula, which includes some heterobranchs, while Micaroni et al. [39] published a check-list of Heterobranchia from the Ionian locality of Tricase, adding 20 species to Perrone’s previous lists [30–37]. Finally, several published papers that did not have proper checklists, added new records of single species sampled from the Salento Peninsula [29,40–44], contributing to the increase of lists of species known from this Apulian area. However, to date, there is no published checklist of marine Heterobranchia fauna from the Adriatic side of the Salento peninsula. During the last ten years, there has been an increasing interest in marine observation by underwater photographers [45,46]. This has allowed the possibility to extend the research on fauna, to detect lesser known species, and to create a collaboration network between scientists and amateurs who are experts in this field. The so-called Citizen Science dedicated to the Heterobranchia is an important support in expanding the body of knowledge on this group of gastropods, by providing field observations on bathymetric distribution, seasonality [47], egg deposition, reproductive behavior and trophic niche, and by making the data immediately available to the scientific community through web-based social networks [48]. In the last decade, due to the combined efforts of professional underwater photographers and acknowledged systematic experts in sea slugs, many new records and ecological observations on the Salento Peninsula marine Heterobranchia have been collected. Taking all of these points into account, the present study had the following aims to: (i) contribute to the Salento Peninsula marine Heterobranchia checklist with new records from the sublittoral waters, considering both sides of this Peninsula, the Ionian and the Adriatic sides, for the first time; (ii) provide ecological notes and local distribution for each new recorded species; (iii) show in situ photographs of the live animals to document species identification.
2. Materials and Methods

The geographical area under investigation was a stretch of more than 270 km of coastline around the Salento Peninsula in Southern Italy (Figure 1). With 600 scuba dives in the past 9 years, different benthic habitats were surveyed, some of which were included in the European legislative context (EU WFD, EU Habitat Directive, EU MSFD): pre-coralligenous and coralligenous assemblages, soft-bottom substrates, *Posidonia oceanica* (Linnaeus) Delile, 1813 meadows, and algal biocoenosis on rocky substrates. All sampled sites were georeferenced (Table 1) to provide accurate data of the studied locations for future monitoring and comparison. When possible, ecological observation and in situ photographs of the individuals recorded were performed and catalogued for species identification. The Scuba dives (0–40 m depth) took place all year round, almost every week, during daylight and at night, between 2011 and 2019. Specimens between 2 and 5 mm in length were photographed alive in the laboratory, in Petri capsules illuminated by a series of low voltage LED lamps, with 6500 K bulbs. The camera used for filming was a tripod mounted Nikon D7100, with 60 mm micro Nikkor or 105 mm micro Nikkor optics, a series of extension rings and additional lenses. The underwater photographic or videography equipment (F.V.) was a Nikon D7000 body, 60 mm micro Nikkor, or 105 mm micro Nikkor optics, extension rings inside an Isotta housing, as well as additional wet lenses SubSee +10 diopter, two underwater flashes Inon z240, and two LED lamps of great luminous power. Or alternatively, (C.L.) a Canon 600D body in a Nauticam 600D housing, equipped with the following lenses—for macro photography and in some cases for micro subjects, the Canon 60 mm USM Macro, and Canon 100 mm USM Macro were used, in addition to wet lenses SubSee +5 and +10 diopter; for wide angle photography, the Tokina 10–17 mm fisheye lens was used. The light source was provided by a couple of Inon strobes z240 and a single focus light I-Torch Video Pro 3. The systematics and the validity of names were checked with the help of the Word Register of Marine Species [49]. Species identification was obtained by morphological investigation and a subsequent consultation of the existent literature ([29,41,44] and other references cited in the present work), guide books [50,51] and websites [48,52,53]. In the case of *Berthellina cf. edwardsii*, the shell from an individual (Voucher RM3_1865) was extracted and used to confirm the identification as this anatomical feature is commonly considered to be diagnostic for this species. The shell was removed and dissolved in a 10% NaOH solution, then rinsed in water, dried, and mounted for examination by optical microscopy, following the same protocol described by Furfaro et al. [54]. Voucher numbers were assigned to the collected individuals that were selected for future molecular analyses; samples were preserved in 95% alcohol and stored in the Department of Science at the Roma Tre University (Rome, Italy) (Table 2). Finally, a comparison between species as recorded by previous authors (Perrone [30–37] (A), Onorato and Belmonte [38] (B), Micaroni et al. [39] (C)) and the present study (D) was carried out and reported in Table 2 with new records highlighted in bold letters. An ethical approach in this research was also carried out by complying with the restrictions in term of collected sample size, environmental survey of the collection sites, use of hand-net picking of specimens (harmless and not destructive) as well as complying with local, regional, national, and international rules, and regulations for access to biodiversity, sustainable use, and benefit sharing (Convention on Biological Diversity and its Nagoya Protocol, national regulations).
Table 1. Number, name, geographic coordinates (latitude and longitude), and the depth range of the sampled stations.

| N° | Station                           | Latitude       | Longitude       | Depth |
|----|-----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------|
| 1  | Mar Piccolo, Taranto (Ionian Sea) | 40°28'53.62"N  | 17°16'00.91"E  | 1–10 m|
| 2  | Capo S. Vito, Taranto (Ionian Sea)| 40°24'35.85"N  | 17°12'06.07"E  | 1–20 m|
| 3  | Porto Pirrone, Taranto (Ionian Sea)| 40°21'27.79"N  | 17°19'40.93"E  | 4–20 m|
| 4  | Torre Ovo, Taranto (Ionian Sea)   | 40°17'29.18"N  | 17°30'11.20"E  | 1–20 m|
| 5  | Campomarino, Taranto (Ionian Sea) | 40°17'34.76"N  | 17°31'41.48"E  | 1–20 m|
| 6  | Porto Cesareo I. Conigli, Lecce (Ionian Sea) | 40°15'52.15"N | 17°52'57.59"E | 1–15 m|
| 7  | Porto Cesareo, Lecce (Ionian Sea)  | 40°14'51.48"N  | 17°54'33.51"E  | 0–1 m |
| 8  | S. Isidoro, Lecce (Ionian Sea)    | 40°13'15.51"N  | 17°55'29.27"E  | 1–5 m |
| 9  | Torre Inserraglio, Lecce (Ionian Sea) | 40°10'41.44"N  | 17°55'51.53"E  | 1–20 m|
| 10 | Santa Caterina di Nardò, Lecce (Ionian Sea) | 40°08'05.87"N | 17°59'15.53"E | 1–15 m|
| 11 | Santa Maria al Bagno, Lecce (Ionian Sea) | 40°07'30.58"N | 17°59'46.43"E | 0–6 m |
| 12 | O.R. Gallipoli, Lecce (Ionian Sea) | 40°06'04.68"N  | 17°58'04.22"E  | 6 m   |
| 13 | Gallipoli, Lecce (Ionian Sea)     | 40°04'34.70"N  | 17°59'50.25"E  | 1–20 m|
| 14 | Gallipoli - Isola S. Andrea, Lecce (Ionian Sea) | 40°02'36.77"N | 17°57'01.64"E | 5–20 m|
| 15 | Gallipoli Pizzo, Lecce (Ionian Sea) | 39°59'57.64"N  | 17°59'27.36"E  | 1–15 m|
| 16 | Marina Mancaversa, Lecce (Ionian Sea) | 39°58'58.04"N | 18°00'18.88"E | 1–5 m |
| 17 | Torre Sudà, Lecce (Ionian Sea)    | 39°56'27.95"N  | 18°02'17.36"E  | 1–5 m |
| 18 | Ugento, Lecce (Ionian Sea)        | 39°52'36.70"N  | 18°05'25.14"E  | 5–30 m|
| 19 | Santa Maria di Leuca, Lecce (Ionian Sea) | 39°48'18.38"N | 18°22'42.56"E | 1–20 m|
| 20 | Tricase, Lecce (Adriatic Sea)     | 39°55'51.31"N  | 18°23'47.92"E  | 1–30 m|
| 21 | Porto Miggiano, Lecce (Adriatic Sea) | 40°01'46.72"N | 18°27'01.30"E | 1–25 m|
| 22 | Otranto, Lecce (Adriatic Sea)     | 40°08'18.52"N  | 18°30'47.65"E  | 1–40 m|
| 23 | Rocca, Lecce (Adriatic Sea)       | 40°17'50.18"N  | 18°24'49.69"E  | 1–6 m |
| 24 | Frigole, Lecce (Adriatic Sea)     | 40°26'20.52"N  | 18°14'46.56"E  | 0–1 m |
| 25 | Brindisi (Adriatic Sea)           | 40°39'54.11"N  | 17°57'34.81"E  | 1–8 m |

Figure 1. Map of the Salento Peninsula indicating the sampling localities; the box highlights the Salento Peninsula at a higher magnification. Numbers refer to sampling stations reported in Table 1.
Table 2. List of species of Heterobranchia occurring around the Salento peninsula; localities are numbered according to Figure 1, with new records in column D, highlighted in bold. Column A = Perrone [30–37]; B = Onorato and Belmonte [38]; C = Micaroni et al. [39]; and D = Present study.

| Taxonomy | A | B | C | D | Vouchers |
|----------|---|---|---|---|----------|
| **Pleurobranchida** | | | | | |
| Family Pleurobranchidae Gray, 1827 | | | | | |
| *Pleurobranchus membranaceus* (Montagu, 1803) | 16 | | | | |
| *Pleurobranchus testudinarius* Cantraine, 1835 | | | 1,17 | | |
| *Berthella cf. edwardsii* (Risso, 1818) | 8,9,19,23 | | | | |
| *Berthella elongata* (Cantraine, 1836) | 16 | | | | |
| *Berthella ocellata* (delle Chiaje, 1830) | 8 | 5,6 | | | |
| *Berthella plumula* (Montagu, 1803) | 16 | | | | |
| *Berthella stellata* (Risso, 1826) | 9 | 22 | | | |
| *Berthella cincta* (Ruppell & Leuckart, 1828) | 18 | | | | |
| **Nudibranchia - Doridina** | | | | | |
| Family Calycidorididae Roginskaya, 1972 | | | | | |
| *Diaphorodoris luteocincta* (M. Sars, 1870) | 6 | | | | |
| *Diaphorodoris papillata* Portmann & Sandmeier, 1960 | 11 | 5,6,10 | | | |
| Family Onchidorididae Gray, 1927 | | | | | |
| *Adalaria proxima* (Alder & Hancock, 1854) | 21 | | | | |
| *Knotusodonta albinegra* (Pruvot-Fol, 1951) | 20,24 | | | | |
| Family Goniodorididae H. & A. Adams, 1854 | | | | | |
| *Goniodoris castanea* Alder & Hancock, 1845 | 20 | 1 | | | |
| *Okenia longitudinalis* Pola M, Paz-Sedano S, Macali A, Minchin D, Marchini A, Vitale F, 2019 [41] | 1,4 | | | | |
| *Okenia mediterranea* von Ihering, 1886 [41] | 6 | | | | |
| *Okenia problematica* Pola M, Paz-Sedano S, Macali A, Minchin D, Marchini A, Vitale F, 2019 [41] | 7 | | | | |
| *Trapania lineata* Haefelfinger, 1960 | 4–6,10,13,15 | | | | |
| *Trapania maculata* Haefelfinger, 1960 | 4–6,10,13,15 | | | | |
| Family Polyceridae Alder & Hancock, 1845 | | | | | |
| *Crimora papillata* Alder & Hancock, 1862 | 5,6,11 | | | | |
| *Kaloplocamus ramosus* (Cantraine, 1835) | 11 | | | | |
| *Polycera elegans* (Bergh, 1894) | 1 | | | | |
| *Polycera hedgpethi* Marcus, 1964 | 1 | | | | |
| *Polycera quadrilineata* (O. F. Müller, 1776) | 3,16 | | 1,3–6,10,13,15 | | RM3_1065 |
| Family Aegiridae P. Fischer, 1883 | | | | | |
| *Aegires punctilucens* (d’Orbigny, 1837) | 4 | | | | |
| Family Cadlinidae Bergh, 1891 | | | | | |
| *Aldisa bangaleris* Pruvot-Fol, 1951 | 23,24 | 6 | | | |
| Family Chromodorididae Bergh, 1891 | | | | | |
| *Felimare fontanstrani* (Pruvot-Fol, 1951) | 6,8 | | | | |
| *Felimare orsinii* (Vérany, 1846) | 8,12,13,15 | | | | |
| *Felimare picta* (Philippi, 1836) | 19 | 13 | 11 | | RM3_1041, RM3_1042, RM3_1043, RM3_1044, RM3_1045 |
| *Felimare tricolor* (Cantraine, 1835) | 5 | 11 | 1,4–6, | 8,10,12,13,15 | RM3_1075, RM3_1076, RM3_1077, RM3_1078 |
| *Felimare villafranca* (Risso, 1818) | 16 | 11 | 1,5,6 | | RM3_1079, RM3_1080, RM3_1081, RM3_1082 |
| Taxonomy | A | B | C | D | Vouchers |
|----------|---|---|---|---|----------|
| **Felimida binza** (Ev. Marcus & Er. Marcus, 1963) |   |   | 15 |   | RM3_1061, RM3_1068 |
| *Felimida krohni* (Vérany, 1846) | 13 | 11 | 4–6,13 |   |   |
| *Felimida luteorosea* (Rapp, 1827) | 16 | 11 | 1,6 |   |   |
| *Felimida purpurea* (Risso, 1831) | 4 | 6 |   |   |   |
| **Family Dorididae Rafinesque, 1815** |   |   |   |   |   |
| *Doris accligera* (Bergh, 1881) |   | 11 | 3 |   |   |
| *Doris pseudoargus* Rapp, 1827 | 19 |   |   |   |   |
| *Doris verrucosa* Linnaeus, 1758 | 19 |   |   |   |   |
| **Family Discodorididae Bergh, 1891** |   |   |   |   |   |
| *Atagena rugosa* Pruvo-Fol, 1951 | 19 |   |   |   |   |
| *Baptodoris cinnabarina* Bergh, 1884 | 8,20 | 22,6 |   |   |   |
| *Discodoris stellifera* (Vayssière, 1903) | 9,19 |   | 15 |   |   |
| *Gargamella perezi* (Llera & Ortea, 1982) | 19,24 |   |   |   |   |
| *Geitodoris bonosi* Ortea & Ballesteros, 1981 | 3 |   |   |   |   |
| *Geitodoris portmanni* (Schmekel, 1972) | 20 |   |   |   |   |
| *Jorunna tomentosa* (Cuvier, 1804) | 3,10,20 |   | 1,13 |   |   |
| *Paradoris indecora* (Bergh, 1881) | 3,24 |   |   |   |   |
| *Peltodoris atromaculata* Bergh, 1880 | 8 | 11 | ALL |   | RM3_1054, RM3_1056, RM3_1057 |
| *Peltodoris sordii* Perrone, 1989 | 3 |   |   |   |   |
| *Platyodoris argo* (Linnaeus, 1767) | 8 | 11 | 5,6,10,13 |   |   |
| *Rostanga antelida* Perrone, 1991 | 4 |   |   |   |   |
| *Rostanga rubra* (Risso, 1818) | 20,23 |   |   |   |   |
| *Taringa armata* Swennen, 1961 | 22 |   |   |   |   |
| *Taringa pinoi* Perrone, 1985 | 20,24 |   |   |   |   |
| *Tayuya lilacinia* (Gould, 1852) | 3 | 1,22 |   |   |   |
| **Family Phyllidiidae Rafinesque, 1814** |   |   |   |   |   |
| *Phyllidia flavus* Aradas, 1847 | 19 | 11 | 4–6,9,10,13 |   | RM3_1049, RM3_1055, RM3_1058 |
| **Family Dendrodorididae O’Donoghue, 1924** |   |   |   |   |   |
| *Dendrodoris grandiflora* (Rapp, 1827) | 16 | 11 | 1,3,5,6 |   |   |
| *Dendrodoris limbata* (Cuvier, 1804) | 1,16,19 | 1,3,5,6 |   |   |   |
| *Doriopsilla areolata* Bergh, 1880 | 17,23 |   | 3,4,6 |   |   |

**Nudibranchia - Cladobranchia**

**Family Tritoniidae Lamarck, 1809**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
| **Marionia blainvillea** (Risso, 1818) | 9 |   | 19 |   |   |
| **Tritonia manicata** Deshayes, 1853 | 8,16 | 11 | 5,6 |   |   |
| **Tritonia nisoldhneri** Marcus Ev., 1983 | 9 |   |   |   |   |
| **Tritonia striata** Haeckelinger, 1963 | 16 |   | 5,6 |   |   |

**Family Hancockiidae MacFarland, 1923**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
| **Hancockia uncinata** (Hesse, 1872) | 16 |   |   |   |   |

**Family Scyllaeidae Alder & Hancock, 1855**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
| **Scyllaea pelagica** Linnaeus, 1758 | 19 |   |   |   |   |

**Family Tethydidae Rafinesque, 1815**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
| **Melibe viridis** Kelaart, 1858 [55] | 1,5,6 |   |   |   |   |
| **Tethys fimbria** Linnaeus, 1767 | 16 |   | 6,13 |   |   |

**Family Dotidae Gray, 1853**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
| **Doto acuta** Schmekel & Kress, 1977 | 11 |   |   |   |   |
| **Doto cervicenigra** Ortea & Bouche, 1989 | 3,6 |   |   |   |   |
| **Doto floridicola** Simroth, 1888 | 13 |   |   |   |   |
| **Doto fragaria** Ortea & Bouche, 1989 [56] | 6 |   |   |   |   |
| **Doto koenneckeri** Lemche, 1976 | 11 | 13 |   |   |   |
| **Doto paulinae** Trinchese, 1881 | 11 | 6 |   |   |   |
| **Doto pygmaea** Bergh, 1871 | 11 |   |   |   |   |
| Taxonomy                           | A   | B | C | D | Vouchers                                |
|-----------------------------------|-----|---|---|---|-----------------------------------------|
| **Family Proctonotidae Gray, 1853** |     |   |   |   |                                         |
| Antiopella cristata (Delle Chiaje, 1841) | 9   |   | 1,3,5,6 | |                                         |
| **Family Arminidae Iredale & O’Donoghue, 1841** |     |   |   |   |                                         |
| *Armina tigrina* Rafinesque, 1814 |     |   |   |   |                                         |
| Dermatobranchus cf. rubidus (Gould, 1852) [40] | 18  |   | 5 |   |                                         |
| **Family Coryphellidae Bergh, 1889** |     |   |   |   |                                         |
| Fjordia lineata (Loven, 1846) |     |   |   |   |                                         |
| **Family Flabellinidae Bergh, 1889** |     |   |   |   |                                         |
| Calmella cavolini (Vérany, 1846) | 8   |   | 11 | 5,6,13,15 | RM3_354, RM3_481, RM3_482, RM3_484, RM3_1079, RM3_1080, RM3_1081, RM3_1082, RM3_1083, RM3_1084, RM3_1085, RM3_1086, RM3_1087, RM3_1088, RM3_1089, RM3_1090, RM3_1091, RM3_1092, RM3_1093, RM3_1095 |
| **Edmundsella pedata** (Montagu, 181) | 8   | 13 |   |   | RM3_1046, RM3_1047, RM3_1059, RM3_1067 |
| **Flabellina affinis** (Gmelin, 1791) | 8   | 13 | 11 |   | RM3_1050, RM3_1043, RM3_1060, RM3_1063, RM3_1064, RM3_1067, RM3_1070, RM3_1071, RM3_1073 |
| **Paraflabellina gabinieriei** (Vicente, 1975) |     |   |   | 1,4,5,13 | RM3_345, RM3_346, RM3_532, RM3_533 |
| *Paraflabellina ischitana* (Hirano & T. E. Thompson, 1990) | 13  |   | 2,4–6,9,10,13,15 | | RM3_345, RM3_346, RM3_532, RM3_533 |
| **Family Samlidae Korshunova, Martynov, Bakken, Evertsen, Fletcher, Mudianta, Saito, Lundin, Schrödl & Picton, 2017** |     |   |   |   |                                         |
| Luisella babai (Schmekel, 1972) | 13  | 11 | 13 |   | RM3_1069 |
| **Family Piseinotecidae Edmunds, 1970** |     |   |   |   |                                         |
| Piseinotecus soussi Tamsouri, Carmona, Moukrim & Cervera, 2014 [57] |     |   |   |   | RM3_862, RM3_863, RM3_1236 |
| **Family Aeolidiidae Gray, 1827** |     |   |   |   |                                         |
| Aeolidiella alderi (Cocks, 1852) | 16,20 |   | 1,3 |   |                                         |
| Aeolidiella glauca (Alder & Hancock, 1845) | 16  |   |   |   |                                         |
| Berghia coerulescens (Laurillard, 1832) | 16  | 11 | 5,6,13,15,18 | | RM3_354, RM3_481, RM3_482, RM3_484, RM3_1079, RM3_1080, RM3_1081, RM3_1082, RM3_1083, RM3_1084, RM3_1085, RM3_1086, RM3_1087, RM3_1088, RM3_1089, RM3_1090, RM3_1091, RM3_1092, RM3_1093, RM3_1095 |
| Berghia verrucicornis (A. Costa, 1867) | 19  |   | 13,6 |   | RM3_345, RM3_346, RM3_532, RM3_533 |
| Limenandra nodosa Haefelfinger & Stamm, 1958 |     |   |   |   | RM3_345, RM3_346, RM3_532, RM3_533 |
| Spurilla neapolitana (Delle Chiaje, 1841) | 16  | 11 | 1,3,4 |   | RM3_345, RM3_346, RM3_532, RM3_533 |
| **Family Facelinidae Berg, 1889** |     |   |   |   |                                         |
| Caloria elegans (Alder & Hancock, 1845) | 4,5,6 |   |   |   | RM3_1051 |

**Table 2. Cont.**
| Taxonomy | A | B | C | D | Vouchers |
|----------|---|---|---|---|----------|
| *Cratena peregrina* (Gmelin, 1791) | 11 | ALL | | | RM3_1038, RM3_1045, RM3_1062, RM3_1066, RM3_1072, RM3_1078, RM3_1094 |
| *Dicata odhneri* (Schmekel, 1967) | 1, 4, 6 | | | | |
| *Dondice banyulensis* Portmann & Sandmeier, 1960 | 6, 8, 13, 19 | | | | |
| *Facelina annulicornis* (Chamisso & Eysenhardt, 1821) | 5, 6, 13–15 | | | | |
| *Facelina fusca* Schmekel, 1966 | 3 | | | | RM3_1201, RM3_1235 |
| *Facelina rubroviittata* (A. Costa, 1866) | 2, 4–6, 12, 13, 15 | | | | |
| *Facelina vicina* (Bergh, 1882) | 6 | | | | RM3_1202 |
| *Favorinus branchialis* (Rathke, 1806) | 16, 20 | 1, 3, 5, 6, 13, 15 | | | |
| *Family Eubranchidae* Odhner, 1934 | | | | | |
| *Eubranchus andra* (Korshunova, Malmberg, Prki´c, Petani, Fletcher, Lundin, Martynov, 2020) | 1, 3, 6 | | | | [44] |
| *Eubranchus cf. farrani* (Alder & Hancock, 1844) | 1, 5, 10, 13, 15, 21 | | | | |
| *Eubranchus cf. linensis* Garcia-Gomez, Cervera & Garcia, 1990 | 1, 6 | | | | |
| *Eubranchus cf. exiguis* (Alder & Hancock, 1848) | 11 | 10, 6 | | | |
| *Family Fionidae* Gray, 1857 | | | | | |
| *Fiona pinnata* (Eschscholtz, 1831) | 11 | | | | RM3_1097, RM3_1098 |
| *Family Trinchesiidae* F. Nordseck, 1972 | | | | | |
| *Catriona maua* Ev. Marcus & Er. Marcus, 1960 | 4 | | | | |
| *Rubramoena amoena* (Alder & Hancock, 1845) | 13 | | | | |
| *Trinchesia genovae* (O’Donoghue, 1926) | 3, 5, 6, 13 | | | | |
| *Trinchesia morrowae* Konshunova, Picton, Furfaro, Mariottini, Pontes, Prki´c, Fletcher, Malmberg, Lundin & Martynov, 2019 | 6 | | | | |
| *Trinchesia cf. miniostriata* Schmekel, 1968 | 13 | | | | |
| *Trinchesia ocellata* Schmekel, 1966 | 5 | | | | |
| *Family Umbraculidae* Dall, 1889 | | | | | |
| *Umbraculum umbraculum* (Lightfoot, 1786) | 16 | 13 | 11 | 3, 5, 6, 13, 15 | RM3_1037 |
| *Family Runcinidae* H. & A. Adams, 1854 | | | | | |
| *Runcina adriatica* T. E. Thompson, 1980 | 11 | 3, 5, 6, 13 | | | [42] |
| *Runcina brevicauda* T. E. Thompson, 1980 | 11 | 13 | | | |
| *Runcina cf. ferruginea* Kress, 1977 | 13 | | | | |
| *Runcina cf. ornata* (Quatrefages, 1844) | 11 | | | | |
| *Family Cephalaspidea* | | | | | |
| *Philine punctata* (J. Adams, 1800) | 4 | | | | |
| *Philine quadripartiita* Ascanius, 1772 | 1 | | | | |
| *Aglaia tricolorata* Renier, 1807 | 11 | 5, 6 | | | |
| *Camachoaglaja africana* (Pruvot-Fol, 1953) | 3, 5, 6, 13 | | | | |
| *Philinopsis depicta* (Renier, 1807) | 5, 6 | | | | |
| *Melanochlamys wildpretii* Ortea, Bacallado & Moro, 2003 | 3 | | | | |
| *Bulla striata* Bruguier, 1792 | 11 | 1, 4 | | | |
| *Family Bullidae* Gray, 1827 | | | | | |
| *Family Haminoeidae* Pilsbry, 1895 | | | | | |

Table 2. Cont.
Table 2. Cont.

| Taxonomy | A | B | C | D | Vouchers |
|----------|---|---|---|---|----------|
| *Haminoea cf. ortesi* Talavera, Murillo & Templado, 1987 | | | | | 3,13 |
| *Weinkauffia turgidula* (Forbes, 1844) | 11 | | | 4 | |
| **Aplysiida** | | | | | |
| **Family Aplysiidae Lamarck, 1809** | | | | | |
| *Aplysia dactylomela* Rang, 1828 [58] | | | | | |
| *Aplysia depilans* Gmelin, 1791 | 16 | 13 | 11 | ALL | |
| *Aplysia fasciata* Poiret, 1789 | 16 | 11 | | ALL | |
| *Aplysia parvula* Morch, 1863 | 16 | 11 | | ALL | |
| *Aplysia punctata* (Cuvier, 1803) | 16 | 13 | | ALL | |
| *Bursatella lachii* Blainville, 1817 | 2,16,19 | | | 1 | |
| *Notarchus punctatus* Philippi, 1836 | 16 | | | | |
| *Petalifera petalifera* (Rang, 1828) | 16,23 | | | 5,13 | |
| *Phyllaplysia lafonti* (P. Fischer, 1870) | 19 | | | | |
| **Sacoglossa** | | | | | |
| **Family Oxynoida Stoliczka, 1868** | | | | | |
| *Loëger serradifalci* (Calcara, 1840) | 2 | | | | |
| *Oxyne olivacea* Rafinesque, 1814 | 2 | | | | |
| **Family Plakobranchidae Gray, 1840** | | | | | |
| *Bosellia mimetica* Trinchese, 1891 | 8,16,19 | 11 | | 3,6,10 | |
| *Elysia flav a Verrill, 1901* | 19,20 | | | 6 | |
| *Elysia gordonae* T. E. Thompson & Jaklin, 1988 | | | | | |
| *Elysia heita Perrone, 1990* | 9,19 | | | 15 | |
| *Elysia marginata* Fez, 1962 | | | | | |
| *Elysia timida* (Risso, 1818) | 16 | 11 | | ALL | |
| *Elysia translucens* Pruvot-Fol, 1957 | 19 | | | | |
| *Elysia viridis* (Montagu, 1804) | 16 | 11 | 1,22 | RM3_1096 | |
| *Elysia rubeni* Martin-Hervás, Carmona, Jensen, Licchelli, Vitale & Cervera, 2019 [29] | | | | | |
| *Thuridilla hopei* (Vérany, 1853) | 16,19,20 | 11 | | ALL | RM3_1044 |
| **Family Hermaeidae H. & A. Adams, 1854** | | | | | |
| *Aplysiopsis elegans* Deshayes, 1853 | 1 | | | | |
| *Cyerce cristallina* (Trinchese, 1881) | 19 | | | 2, 13 | |
| *Cyerce graeca* T. E. Thompson, 1988 | 6 | | | | |
| *Hermaea bifida* (Montagu, 1816) | | | | 1 | RM3_1165, |
| | | | | | RM3_1166, |
| | | | | | RM3_1167 |
| *Hermaea paucicirra* Pruvot-Fol, 1953 | | | | 3,6 | |
| *Hermaea variopicta* (A. Costa, 1869) | 24 | | | 6 | |
| **Family Limapontiidae Gray, 1847** | | | | | |
| *Calliopea bellula* d’Orbigny, 1837 | 16,19 | | | | |
| *Ercolania coerulca* Trinchese, 1892 | 1 | | | | |
| *Ercolania viridis* (A. Costa, 1866) | 11 | | | 3,14 | |
| *Limapontia capitata* (O. F. Müller, 1774) | 25 | | | | |
| *Placida cremoniana* Trinchese, 1892 | | 1,6 | | | |
| *Placida dendritica* (Alder & Hancock, 1843) | 9 | | | 3 | |

Abbreviation cf. is from the Latin confer/conferatur, both meaning compare.

3. Results

The present checklist reports 160 marine Heterobranchia species from the Salento Peninsula (Table 2) consisting of: 10 Pleurobranchida, 9 Cephalaspidea, 4 Runcinida, 2 Umbraculida, 9 Aplisiida, 24 Sacoglossa, and 102 Nudibranchia (50 Doridina, 52 Cladobranchia). This contribution added 45 species (Tables 2 and 3) to the marine heterobranchs fauna known from this area, so far, and in particular, 2 species belonging to Pleurobranchida, 6 Cephalaspidea, 1 Runcinida, 9 Sacoglossa, and 27 Nudibranchia (9 Doridina, 18 Cladobranchia). One alien species, *Polycera hedgpethi* Er. (Marcus, 1964), was reported for the first time in the studied area. This work reported for the first time the presence of *Elysia marginatae* (Fez, 1962), *Haminoea cf. ortesi* (Talavera, Murillo and Templado, 1987), and *Rubramoena amoena* (Alder & Hancock, 1845), in Italian waters. Table 3 provides the species list with
ecological remarks of all added species. Furthermore, an extensive photographic catalogue mainly consisting of pictures taken in situ is provided in Figures 2–9.

Table 3. List of the newly recorded Heterobranchia from the Salento peninsula; species names, relative figure numbers, ecological notes, and phenotypical variability for each added species are reported. Abundance is indicated as number of specimens.

| Species Name                     | Figure | Ecological Notes                                                                 | Phenotypical Variability | Abundance |
|----------------------------------|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| *Pleurobranchus testudinarius* Cantraine, 1835 | Figure 2A | On soft bottom during diurnal dive. Depth: 25 m                                 | -                        | 1–2       |
| *Berthellina cf. edwardsii* (Vayssière, 1897) | Figure 2B,C | Usually living singularly or in groups under stones, in small shaded crevices or in dark caves. Depth: 0–15 m | Body color ranging from light creamy-yellow to reddish-orange | >100      |
| *Diaphorodoris lateocincta* (M. Sars, 1870) | Figure 2D | This sedentary species usually lives near bryozoan colonies (*cf. Nolella stipata* Gosse, 1855). Depth: 0–3 m | The specimens of this species show the red spot on the dorsum which varies in shape and size | 3–10      |
| *Trapania lineata* Haefelfinger, 1960 | Figure 2E | Often in clusters, feeding on *Entoprocta* spp. covering black sponges. Recorded all year long. Depth: 0–30 m | -                        | >100      |
| *Trapania maculata* Haefelfinger, 1960 | Figure 2F | Often sympatric with the congeneric *T. lineata*. Depth: 0–30 m                 | -                        | >100      |
| *Crimonara papillata* Alder & Hancock, 1862 | Figure 2G,H | Found all year long, in shady pre-coraligenous shallow waters or coastal caves. Often in association with encrusting bryozoans on which their egg masses are laid. Depth: 0–10 m | Color of the notum variable from light yellow to ochre | >100      |
| *Polycera elegans* (Bergh, 1894) | Figure 3A,B | Observed during the winter months, in shallow waters. Depth: 5 m | Very typical body color pattern, showing blue spots differing in size and number between individuals | 11–30     |
| *Polycera hedgpethi* Er. Marcus, 1964 | Figure 3C,D | Observed during winter season, in shallow waters. Depth: 5 m                   | -                        | 3–10      |
| *Felimare fontandrani* (Pruvot-Fol, 1951) | Figure 3E,F | Observed in large assemblages at the end of spring, associated with the sponge *Dysidea avara* (Schmidt, 1862). Depth: 7 m | Even if this species shows a variable phenotype [26], the Salentine specimens have constant body color pattern | 31–100    |
| *Felimare orsinii* (Vérany, 1846) | Figure 3G | In large groups mating and feeding on black sponges. Found between April and July. Depth: 0–15 m | -                        | 31–100    |
| *Felimida binza* (Ev. Marcus & Er. Marcus, 1963) | Figure 3H | On a rocky substrates. Found during September. Depth: 5–7 m                    | -                        | 1–2       |
| *Tritonia nilsodhneri* Marcus Ev., 1983 | Figure 4A | Found on the yellow gorgonian *Eunicella cavolini* Koch, 1887. Depth: 30 m     | Very mimetic morphotype that can consistently vary from dark brown to pale yellow or white | 1–2       |
| *Doto cervicenigra* Ortea & Bouchet, 1989 | Figure 4B | This small species (few millimetres) is found from winter to early spring on hydrozoans colonies of *Aglassiphonia* Lamouroux, 1812. Depth: 0–3 m | -                        | 11–30     |
Table 3. Cont.

| Species Name                                      | Figure | Ecological Notes | Phenotypical Variability | Abundance |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------|------------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| **Doto floridicola** Simroth, 1888               | 4C,D   | The average size of specimens observed is ca. 5 mm. Its host hydrozoan colonies belonging to *Aglaophenia*. Depth: 8-12 m | -          | 11–30     |
| **Paraflabellina gabinierei** (Vicente, 1975)    | 4E     | On hard substrates. Depth: 0-25 m | The body colors vary from white to opaque pinkish | 3–10     |
| **Limenandra nodosa** Haefellinger & Stamm, 1958 | 4F     | Found on *Padina pavonica* (Linnaeus) Thivy, 1960 in summer. Depth 6 m | -          | 1–2       |
| **Coloria elegans** (Alder & Hancock, 1845)     | 4G     | Usually observed on hard substrata. Depth: 0–15 m | Body pattern with cerata brightly colored from white to light orange | 11–30    |
| **Dicata odhneri** Schmekel, 1967                | 4H     | Found in shallow waters. Depth: 0-15 m | -          | 11–30     |
| **Donicice bangalensis** Portmann & Sandmeier, 1960 | 5A   | Conspicuous in size and brightly coloured. Depth: 0- to more than 30 m | -          | 11–30     |
| **Facelina fusca** Schmekel, 1966                | 5B     | Found in a tidal pool in association with the green algae *Anadyomene stellata* (Wulfen) C. Agardh, 1823. Depth: 0.5 m | -          | 1–2       |
| **Facelina rubrovittata** (A. Costa, 1866)       | 5C     | Observed all year long in shady pre-coralligenous habitats. Depth: 0-15 m. | The color of the digestive gland visible through cerata vary from light orange/pink to dark violet | 31–100   |
| **Facelina vicina** (Bergh, 1882)               | 5D,E   | Depth: 0–15 m | -          | 3–10       |
| **Eubranchus cf. farrani** (Alder & Hancock, 1844) | 5F   | Found at shallow depth on hydrozoans colonies. Depth: 0–15 m | This species shows differences in the shape and the number of the dorsal yellow spots | 11–30    |
| **Eubranchus cf. linensis** Garcia-Gomez, Cervera & Garcia, 1990 | 5G,H | Depth: 0-5 m. | -          | 11–30     |
| **Catrina maua** Ev. Marcus & Er. Marcus, 1960  | 6A     | Recorded in shallow water on hydrozoans colonies. Depth: 0.5 m | -          | 1–2       |
| **Rubramoena amoena** (Alder & Hancock, 1845)   | 6B     | Found in April in shallow water. Temperature 15°C. Depth: 8 m | -          | 1–2       |
| **Trinchesia genovae** (O’Donoghue, 1926)       | 6C,D   | Occurs in shallow water on algae, bryozoan, and hydrozoans substrates. Depth: 0–20 m | -          | 11–30     |
| **Trinchesia cf. miniosirata** Schmekel, 1968    | 6E     | On rocky substrates. Depth: 9 m | -          | 1–2       |
| **Trinchesia moroanae** Korshunova, Picton, Furfaro, Mariotti, Pontes, Prkić, Fletcher, Malmberg, Lundin & Martynov, 2019 | 6F | Common in March-April and in July when it is possible to observe several specimens living and laying eggs on hydroid of the genus *Sertularella* Gray, 1948. Depth: 0–15 m | The typical color of the apical portion of the rhinophores and the oral tentacles varies from orange to yellow or it could completely lack. | >100   |
### Table 3. Cont.

| Species Name                                      | Figure       | Ecological Notes                                                                 | Phenotypical Variability | Abundance |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| 30 Runcina cf. ferruginea Kreiss, 1977             | Figure 6G    | Very small species 1.5–2 mm, as expected for Runcina species. Depth: 8 m.        | -                        | 3–10      |
| 31 Philine punctata (J. Adams, 1800)               | Figure 6H    | Found only as single and very small specimen, ca. 1 mm, on Posidonia oceanica rhizomes. | -                        | 1–2       |
| 32 Philine quadripartita Ascanius, 1772            | Figure 7A    | Recorded on soft bottoms. Depth: 8 m                                             | -                        | 1–2       |
| 33 Camachoaglaja africana (Pruvot-Fol, 1953)       | Figure 7B,C  | Recorded on soft bottoms or on algae. Depth: 0–20 m                               | Its body color pattern varies from a dark form to another much lighter and densely covered by whitish tiny dots | 11–30    |
| 34 Philinopsis depicta (Remier, 1807)              | Figure 7D    | Found on soft bottoms or on algae mainly during winter season and in shallow water. Depth: 0–15 m | -                        | 11–30    |
| 35 Melanochlamps wildpretii Ortea, Bacallado & Moro, 2003 | Figure 7E    | Found in winter in shallow water. Depth: 0–3 m                                   | -                        | 1–2       |
| 36 Haminoea cf. ortae Talavera, Murillo & Templado, 1987 | Figure 7F    | Found on green algae. Depth: 0–3 m                                               | -                        | 31–100    |
| 37 Elysia gordanae T. E. Thompson & Jaklin, 1988   | Figure 7G,H  | Very mimetic species, usually in association with the green alga Flabellaria petiolata (Turra) Nizamuddin, 1987. Depth: 0–15 m | -                        | >100      |
| 38 Elysia margaritae Pez, 1962                     | Figure 8B    | On Dictyota dichotoma (Hudson) J.V. Lamouroux, 1809. Depth: 0–2 m                 | -                        | 1–2       |
| 39 Aplysiopsis elegans Deshayes, 1853              | Figure 8C    | Depth: 0–12 m                                                                     | -                        | 3–10      |
| 40 Cyerce graeca T. E. Thompson, 1988              | Figure 8D    | Found on April. 18 °C water temperature. Depth: 3 m                               | The body color pattern varies from whitish to light yellow            | 1–2       |
| 41 Hermaea bifida (Montagu, 1816)                  | Figure 8E    | Found mainly in spring and summer on green algae. Depth: 5–6 m                    | -                        | 3–10      |
| 42 Hermaea paucicirra Pruvot-Fol, 1953             | Figure 8F    | Found on algae in shallow waters. Depth: 0–1 m                                    | -                        | 1–2       |
| 43 Ercolania coerula Trincresse, 1892              | Figure 8G,H  | Found on algae in shallow waters. Depth: 0–5 m                                    | -                        | 3–10      |
| 44 Limapontia capitata O. F. Müller, 1774          | Figure 9A    | Found on algae in shallow waters. Depth: 0.5 m                                    | -                        | 11–30     |
| 45 Placida crenoniana (Trincresse, 1892)           | Figure 9B    | Depth: 0–12 m                                                                     | -                        | 11–30     |
Figure 2. (A) Pleurobranchus testudinarius. St. 3 (B) Berthellina cf. edwardsii. St. 11. In the right-low corner, the internal shell (length: 4.2 mm). (C) Berthellina cf. edwardsii. St. 11 (D) Diaphorodoris luteocincta. St. 11 (E) Trapania lineata, mating individuals. St. 11 (F) Trapania maculata. St. 11 (G) Crimora papillata. St. 11 (H) Crimora papillata, with spawn. St. 11.
Figure 3. (A) Polycera elegans. St. 1 (B) Polycera elegans. St. 1 (C) Polycera hedgpethi. St. 1 (D) Polycera hedgpethi. Two individuals after mating. The reproductive openings are clearly visible in the specimen on the upper portion. St. 1 (E) Felimare fontandraui. St. 11 (F) Felimare fontandraui, mating individuals with spawn. St. 11 (G) Felimare orsinii, mating individuals. St. 14 (H) Felimida binza. St. 25.
Figure 4. (A) Tritonia nilsodhneri. St. 18 (B) Doto cervicenigra. St. 11 (C) Doto floridicola. St. 22 (D) Spawn of Doto floridicola. St. 22 (E) Paraflabellina gabinierei. St. 11 (F) Limenandra nodosa. St. 3 (G) Caloria elegans. St. 11 (H) Dicata odhneri. St. 11.
Figure 5. (A) Dondice banyulensis. St. 13 (B) Facelina fusca. St. 7 (C) Facelina rubrovittata. St. 11 (D,E) Facelina vicina. St. 11 (F) Eubranchus cf. farrani. St. 11 (G,H) Eubranchus cf. linensis St. 11.
Figure 6. (A) Catriona maua. St. 9 (B) Rubramoena amoena. St. 22 (C) Trinchesia genovae. St. 11 (D) Trinchesia genovae. St. 7 (E) Trinchesia cf. miniostriata St. 22 (F) Trinchesia morrowae. St. 11 (G) Runcina cf. ferruginea. St. 22 (H) Philine punctata St. 9.
Figure 7. (A) *Philine quadripartita*. St. 1 (B) *Camachoaglaja africana*. St. 7 (C) *Camachoaglaja africana*. St. 22 (D) *Philinopsis depicta*. St. 10 (E) *Melanochlamys wildpretii*. St. 7 (F) *Haminoea cf. orteai*. St. 22 (G) *Elysia gordanae*. St. 11 (H) *Elysia gordanae*. St. 11.
Figure 8. (A) Spawn of *Elysia gordanae*. St. 22 (B) *Elysia margaritae*. St. 11 (C) *Aplysiopsis elegans*. St. 1 (D) *Cyerce graeca*. St. 11 (E) *Hermaea bifida*. St. 1 (F) *Hermaea paucicirra*. St. 7 (G,H) *Ercolania coerulea*. St. 7.
4. Discussion

This study reported 160 marine Heterobranchia species from the Salento Peninsula giving the most up to date list of marine heterobranchs inhabiting this area of the Apulian coasts. This was particularly remarkable considering that the total number of registered species belonging to this mollusks group for the whole Mediterranean Sea was approximately 550 [51]. The composition of the main groups of marine heterobranchs living in the Salento Peninsula reported in this work is shown in Figure 10. The groups with the largest numbers of species added were Cladobranchia (18) and Doridina (9), as expected, these nudibranchs belonged to the groups with the richest variety of taxa. Surprisingly, with the present contribution, 6 species of Cephalaspidea were added to the ones reported previously. Another interesting consideration was concerning the superorder Sacoglossa, which almost doubled after this study. Finally, some species were noteworthy because they are currently under studied or because the validity of the species is still in doubt. This was the case for Berthellina cf. edwardsii, Eubranchus cf. exigus, E. cf. farrani, E. cf. linensis, Facelina fusca, Haminoea cf. orteari, Runcina cf. ferruginea and Trinchesia cf. miniostriata. In particular, in the case of Berthellina cf. edwardsii we depicted (Figure 2B) the internal shell (4.2 mm long), since it fits the standard average length of the shell commonly used as diagnostic for this species, albeit we preferred to keep an uncertainty (cf.) before a further molecular study would allow a clear-cut identification. The studied marine area, deeply influenced by two different seas and characterized by a variety of submarine habitats, hosts a high variety of species, which makes it an important geographical area for this sea slug diversity. In fact, with this work we report that the total number of marine Heterobranchia living in the Salento Peninsula is 160, which is about a third of the total number of currently accepted species reported for the whole Mediterranean Sea. This is quite an important finding, also considering the fact that a high diversity in heterobranchs composition indirectly reflects a high structuring and diversification of the habitats involved, and consequently, of the biodiversity that they contribute to maintain [14]. Studying and monitoring the marine Heterobranchia diversity in the Salento Peninsula is valuable for highlighting the consequences of the global marine changes reported in the last decade [10–12,59,60], such as warming and acidification of waters or invasion of alien species. An additional detailed and constantly updated iconography is available on the website of the Salento Sommerso group (http://www.salentosommerso.it/index opi.php), a non-profit association devoted to the preservation and documentation of the underwater biodiversity of the Salento Peninsula.
Author Contributions: F.V. and C.L. conceived the project and performed most of the SCUBA diving and took in situ pictures. G.F. and P.M. analysed the data and carried out the SCUBA diving. F.V., C.L., G.F., and P.M. wrote the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Acknowledgments: Special thanks to Genuario Belmonte (University of Salento, Italy), Lucas Cervera Currado (University of Cadiz, Spain), and Egidio Trainito (Sardinia, Italy) for their useful suggestions. The authors wish to thank Elena Mazzone (Rome, Italy) for the revision of the English text. A very special than ks to our diving companions Marcella D’Elia, Domenico Licchelli, Cesare Bortone, and Pierantonio Cicirillo, with whom we shared many dives. We thank Antonello Perrone for suggestions and criticism. We thank Gianfranco Alemanno, Andrea Astore, Gianni Colucci, Piero Lenoci, Vincenzo Marra, Enrico Pati, and Gianluca Romano, for supporting us with many photographic images, specimens, and for sharing some of their data with us. Thanks to Manuel Ballesteros from the University of Barcelona (Spain), Marta Pola from the University of Madrid (Spain), Enric Madrenas and Miquel Pontes (Spain), Manuel Malaquias of the University of Bergen (Norway), and Jakov Prkić (Croatia) for the many suggestions and constructive exchanges of ideas and experiences. The authors are greatly indebted to the four anonymous reviewers, who provided many valuable comments, and improved the English.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript, or in the decision to publish the results.

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