



NEW LONG-SEASON ECOTYPE OF *MORCHELLA* *RUFOBRUNNEA* FROM NORTHERN ISRAEL

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ABSTRACT

True morel (*Morchella* spp.) ascocarps commonly appear in the spring for only a few weeks in many regions worldwide. There has only been one report of a *M. esculenta* population from Israel, presumably mycorrhizal, persisting for several months at one site. The present study describes another species, presumably saprophytic, fruiting in northern Israel from early November to late May (winter and spring). This new long-season ecotype was identified as *M. rufobrunnea* (MS5-IL1) by sequencing of its nuclear ribosomal internal transcribed spacer region. It is reported for the first time in Israel, and for the first time outside of the American continent. Its productivity decline from 2001 to 2007 was correlated with concurrently collected rainfall and temperature data. Our data suggested that the number of morel species and ecotypes displaying long seasonality is greater than previously thought.

Key words: Ascocarp, ITS region, *Morchella rufobrunnea*, morel mushroom, phylogeny, seasonality.

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