

Remarks on some species of tardigrades from South America with the description of *Minibiotus sidereus* n. sp.

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Abstract

Seven species of tardigrades are reported from Ecuador, one of which, *Fractonotus caelatus* (Marcus 1928) is new for South America and one, *Minibiotus sidereus*, is new for science. *Minibiotus sidereus* has circular, elliptical and star-shaped cuticular pearls (with 3-8 arms), pharyngeal bulb with large apophyses, three short macropylacoids and small micropylacoid; the eggs have many conical processes with 6-7 annulations.

Key words: Tardigrades, *Minibiotus sidereus* sp. n., South American fauna

Introduction, material and methods

As pointed out in a previous paper (Pilato *et al.* in press), the number of taxa (species and subspecies) of tardigrades known for South America (about 200 Tierra del Fuego included) induces us to consider inadequate the knowledge about the fauna of this geographical area. In this paper the study of the tardigrades of South America is continued on material from Ecuador. Moss, liverwort and soil samples were collected by Prof. Francesco Lombardo and Prof. Giorgio Sabella during an expedition organized by our Department (February-March 1996). All specimens are mounted in polyvinyl lactophenol and preserved in the collection of Binda and Pilato (Department of Animal Biology "Marcello La Greca" of the University of Catania).

The *pt* index used is the percentage ratio between the length of a structure and the length of the buccal tube measured from the transverse ridges of the buccal armature to the base of the pharyngeal apophyses (Pilato, 1981).

In the description of *Minibiotus sidereus* sp. n. some drawings refer to paratypes; the holotype is a specimen with an orientation suitable for measurements.