

A new species of *Stelletta* (Demospongiae, Astrophorida) without microscleres from Abrolhos Archipelago, northeastern Brazil

EDUARDO L. ESTEVES & GUILHERME MURICY

Departamento de Invertebrados, Museu Nacional—Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Quinta da Boa Vista s/nº - São Cristóvão, 20940-040 Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brasil. muricy@acd.ufrj.br

Abstract

Stelletta anasteria **sp. nov.**, a new species of *Stelletta* without microscleres from Abrolhos archipelago, northeastern Brazil, is described. The new species is best classified in *Stelletta* due to its growth habit, the shape of its triaenes and oxeas, presence of a cortex and a disorganized choanosomal skeleton. Besides the absence of microscleres, that set it apart from all other species of the genus, it differs from all other tropical Atlantic species of *Stelletta* in presenting at the same time all megascleres smaller than 590 µm long, the clads of plagiotriaenes smaller than 70 µm long, and those of anatriaenes smaller than 20 µm long. Additionally, anatriaenes with ill-formed and/or additional clads along the rhabdome are common in the new species.

Key words: Porifera, Ancorinidae, *Stelletta anasteria* **sp. nov.**, morphology, Southwestern Atlantic, northeastern Brazil

Introduction

The genus *Stelletta* Schmidt, 1862 is represented by approximately 180 species, some 40 of which occur in the Atlantic Ocean (Hajdu & Carvalho, 2003), with seven on the Brazilian coast: *Stelletta anancora* (Sollas, 1886), *S. beae* Hajdu & Carvalho, 2003, *S. crassispicula* (Sollas, 1886), *S. gigas* (Sollas, 1886), *S. hajdui* Mothes & Lerner, 1999, *S. incrustata* Uliczka, 1929 and *S. ruetzleri* Mothes & Silva, 2002 (see Mothes & Silva, 2002; Hajdu & Carvalho, 2003). The genus is characterized by the presence of euasters without a marked centrum (oxyasters, chiasters and tylasters) as the main microscleres, a cortex, a disorganized choanosomal skeleton, and oxeas and long-shafted triaenes as megascleres (Uriz, 2002a). In the present study we describe a new species of *Stelletta* from Abrolhos archipelago, northeastern Brazil, which is atypical by the absence of microscleres.