

Sipunculans from the coast of northern Cyprus (eastern Mediterranean Sea)

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Abstract

The present study deals with the species of Sipuncula collected from northern Cyprus in 1997 and 1998 by RV *K. Piri Reis* at depths ranging from 0 to 600 m. Faunistic analysis of the material yielded a total of 6 species and 5 subspecies belonging to four families Golfingiidae, Phascolionidae, Phascolosomatidae, and Aspidosiphonidae, of which four species (*Nephasoma* (*Nephasoma*) *constrictum*, *Phascolosoma* (*Phascolosoma*) *scolops*, *P. (P.) agassizii agassizii* and *P. (P.) stephensoni*) are reported for the first time from the eastern Mediterranean. Among the habitats sampled, *Posidonia oceanica* and mud were represented by the highest number of species (6 species), followed by rocks (5 species) and *Cystoseira crinita* (5 species). Quantitative analysis of shallow-water benthic habitats indicated that sipunculan density in the area ranged from 25 individuals m⁻² to 350 individuals m⁻². According to the MDS analysis, there are two major species assemblages in the area, mainly structured by the types of habitats and depth.

Key words: Sipuncula; distribution; ecology; biometry; Lessepsian; Cyprus; eastern Mediterranean Sea

Introduction

Previous reports of Sipunculans from the coast of Cyprus comprise the publications by Murina (1964), Hadjichristophorou *et al.* (1997), Argyrou *et al.* (1999) and Galil & Zibrowius (1998). According to these studies, only 7 species occur along the Cyprus coast, compared to 33 species reported from the entire Mediterranean basinal areas (Pancucci-Papadopoulou *et al.* 1999), 21 species from the eastern Mediterranean Sea (Murina *et al.* 1999; Pancucci-Papadopoulou *et al.* 1999), 17 species from the coast of Greece (Murina *et al.* 1999; Pancucci-Papadopoulou *et al.* 1999), and 11 species from Turkish coasts (Ostroumoff 1896; Demir 1952; Caspers 1968; Kocataş 1978; Ergen *et al.* 1994; Çinar *et al.* 1999).