



Article

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The genus *Hybocodon* (Cnidaria, Hydrozoa) in the southwestern Atlantic Ocean, with a revision of the species recorded from the area

CAROLINA S. RODRIGUEZ^{1,2,3}, THAÍS P. MIRANDA⁴, ANTONIO C. MARQUES⁴, HERMES MIANZAN^{2,3,5}
& GABRIEL GENZANO^{1,2,3}

¹ Estación Costera Nágera, FCEyN – UNMdP, Funes 3350, (7600) Mar del Plata, Argentina, email: csrodrig@mdp.edu.ar; genzano@mdp.edu.ar

² Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET)

³ Instituto de Investigaciones Marinas y Costeras (IIMyC), CONICET - UNMdP, Funes 3250, (7600) Mar del Plata, Argentina

⁴ Departamento de Zoologia, Instituto de Biociências, Universidade de São Paulo, Rua do Matão Trav. 14, 101, 05508-090, São Paulo, SP, Brazil, email: thaispmir@ib.usp.br; marques@ib.usp.br

⁵ Instituto Nacional de Investigación y Desarrollo Pesquero (INIDEP), PO Box 175, (7600) Mar del Plata, Argentina, email: hermes@inidep.edu.ar

Abstract

The genus *Hybocodon* includes seven species, two of which (*H. prolifer* and *H. unicus*) have been recorded in the southwestern Atlantic. These reports were based on the medusa stage and only a few diagnostic characters were described, rendering some of these records rather doubtful. Additionally, *H. prolifer* has a boreal distribution, suggesting that the reports of this species from the southern hemisphere could correspond to other *Hybocodon* species. Recently, we sampled benthic and planktonic specimens of *Hybocodon* in the southwestern Atlantic and two species were identified: polyps and medusae of *Hybocodon chilensis* Hartlaub, 1905, and medusae of *Hybocodon unicus* (Browne, 1902). These samples allowed us to review and discuss the geographical distribution and validity of previous records of *Hybocodon* species for this area. We conclude that *H. chilensis* and *H. unicus* are the only *Hybocodon* species presently known for the southwestern Atlantic Ocean.

Keywords: hydroid, hydromedusa, taxonomy, geographical distribution, Tubulariidae

Introduction

The genus *Hybocodon* L. Agassiz, 1860 (Anthoathecata, Tubulariidae) has been recognized as a monophyletic genus within the Tubulariidae (Marques & Migotto 2001). Species of *Hybocodon* have a metagenetic life cycle, the benthic stage is either solitary or colonial living in shaded spaces under rock ledges or in protected rock-pools, usually with hydrorhiza irregularly branched and embedded in sponges (Schuchert 2010). Gonophores arise on branched blastostyles that develop into free-swimming small medusae. The life cycle also includes an actinula larva that settles and metamorphoses into a new polyp (see Petersen 1990; Schuchert 2010).

Currently, the genus *Hybocodon* includes seven nominal species: *Hybocodon apicoloculatus* Xu and Huang, 2006, *Hybocodon atentaculatus* Uchida, 1947, *Hybocodon chilensis* Hartlaub, 1905, *Hybocodon cryptus* Watson, 1984, *Hybocodon octopleurus* Kao, Li, Chang and Li, 1958, *Hybocodon prolifer* L. Agassiz, 1860 and *Hybocodon unicus* (Browne, 1902) (see Galea 2006; Schuchert 2010). *Hybocodon prolifer* and *H. unicus* were recorded from the southwestern Atlantic, but these reports were based only on the medusa stage and a small number of diagnostic characters (Genzano *et al.* 2008 and references therein), making some of them doubtful.

Medusae assigned to *H. prolifer* were reported three times along the Buenos Aires coast (Zamponi 1984; Zamponi & Suarez 1991; Genzano *et al.* 2008). However, it is hypothesized that *H. prolifer* has a boreal distribution, occurring in the North Atlantic, the North Pacific, and the Arctic Sea (Nakayama & Numakunai 2000; Schuchert 2001, 2010). If true, then all reports of this species from the southern hemisphere likely correspond to