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Two new species of *Distaplia* (Tunicata: Ascidiacea) from the SW Atlantic, Argentina

CRISTIAN LAGGER^{1,2,*} & MARCOS TATIÁN³

¹*Ecología Marina, Facultad de Ciencias Exactas, Físicas y Naturales, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Av. Vélez Sarsfield 299 (5000). Córdoba, Argentina. E-mail: cristianlagger@yahoo.com.ar*

²*Secretaría de Ciencia y Tecnología (SECYT), Universidad Nacional de Córdoba*

³*Instituto de Diversidad y Ecología Animal (IDEA). Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET) Universidad Nacional de Córdoba (UNC).*

E-mail: mtatian@com.uncor.edu

**Corresponding author*

Abstract

The ascidian fauna from the Southwestern Atlantic (Argentine Sea) have scarcely been studied and have rarely been sampled. The existing scanty ascidian records are from specimens collected by dredging many decades ago. During samplings in the San Matías Gulf (Río Negro, Patagonia), two new *Distaplia* species were found. *Distaplia naufragii* **sp. nov.** was collected in the subtidal zone attached to a shipwreck, while the other species, *Distaplia fortuita* **sp. nov.** was found released by the tides in the sandy intertidal zone. These two new species differ deeply from each other in the size and morphology of their zooids. They represent one third of the known species belonging to the family Holozoidae in the SW Atlantic. These results reinforce the importance of new studies in this extensive but little explored area that is, in addition, susceptible to invasion by non-native species.

Key words: ascidians, Holozoidae, *Distaplia naufragii* **sp. nov.**, *Distaplia fortuita* **sp. nov.**, San Matías Gulf, Patagonia

Resumen

La ascidiofauna del Atlántico sudoccidental (Mar Argentino) ha sido poco estudiada y rara vez muestreada. Los escasos registros de ascidias existentes provienen de ejemplares colectados con redes de fondo muchas décadas atrás. Durante muestreos realizados en el Golfo San Matías (Río Negro, Patagonia) se encontraron dos nuevas especies del género *Distaplia*. Una de ellas, *Distaplia naufragii* **sp. nov.** fue colectada en el sublitoral adherida al casco de un naufragio, mientras que *Distaplia fortuita* **sp. nov.** se encontró en el intermareal arenoso, depositada por las corrientes de marea. Ambas especies poseen profundas diferencias entre sí en cuanto al tamaño y la morfología de sus zooides. Estas dos nuevas especies representan un tercio de las especies pertenecientes a la familia Holozoidae conocidas en el Atlántico sudoccidental. Estos resultados refuerzan la necesidad de nuevos estudios en esta área extensa, poco explorada y asimismo, susceptible a invasiones por especies exóticas.

Introduction

Southwestern Atlantic is an extensive region in which there has been very little sampling, resulting in a relatively low number of described ascidian species and a general lack of data. Significant taxonomic investigations have not been pursued since Van Name (1945). However, in the last ten years, many new species of ascidians have been described from the Brazilian Atlantic coast (Rocha 2002; Dias & Rodrigues 2004; Rocha & Costa 2005; Lotufo & Dias 2007; Rocha & Bonnet 2009; Bonnet & Rocha 2011; Kremer *et al.* 2011). Along the long Pacific Chilean coast, Sanamyan & Schories (2003) and Sanamyan *et al.* (2010) described four new aplousobranch species. In contrast, information on the SW Atlantic (Argentine Sea) is fragmented and the scarce published taxonomic studies