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Swedish Plectida (Nematoda). Part 8. The genus *Onchium* Cobb, 1920

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Abstract

Four known and one new species of *Onchium* are described from bottom sediments collected in Skagerrak off the west coast of Sweden. The following known species are redescribed: *Onchium ocellatum* Cobb, 1920, *O. metocellatum* Wieser, 1956, *O. parocellatum* (Allgén, 1940) and *O. robustum* Gerlach, 1965. *Onchium longispiculum* **sp. n.** is characterised by the 1.34–1.77 mm long body, anterior body end without cephalic capsule, anteriormost somatic sensilla located posterior to onchiostyle base, ocelli absent, excretory pore located at basis of lips, onchiostyle uniformly cylindrical, alveolar supplements indistinct, tubular supplements absent, spicules arcuate and 44–65 µm long. The new species has a unique set of characters (absence of developed ocelli and very long somewhat asymmetrical spicules) separating it from all other known species of the genus *Onchium*. The following nomenclatorial changes are proposed: *O. conicaudatum* (Allgén, 1935) is considered a junior synonym of *O. metocellatum*; *O. conicaudatum* apud Wieser, 1951 is considered a synonym of *O. minutum* Kito, 1981. The diagnosis of the genus *Onchium* is emended and a tabular compendium and dichotomous identification key to species of the genus *Onchium* are provided.

Key words: Camacolaimidae, *Onchium*, Skagerrak, Sweden, taxonomy

Introduction

The genus *Onchium* Cobb, 1920 was proposed for the species *Onchium ocellatum* Cobb, 1920 on the basis of a single juvenile specimen. Although the main diagnostic characters were not given in the original description, the preceding identification key mentioned, among others, the following characters: “wall of pharynx armed with teeth or onchia”, “armature spear like”, “spear ... without bulbous base” and “oesophagus with posterior swelling” (Cobb, 1920). At the same time, a few pages later, Cobb described *Onchulella ocellata* Cobb, 1920 from a single female, without comparing it to *Onchium ocellatum*. According to the same key, *Onchulella* is grouped with species with the oesophagus lacking a posterior swelling, although in the original description Cobb states that the “posterior part (of it is) more or less obscure”. The subsequent detailed description of the glands in the pharyngeal region is, however, nearly identical in both *Onchium ocellatum* and *Onchulella ocellata*. Therefore, both genera were subsequently synonimised by Wieser (1956b), who also proposed a new name *Onchium metocellatum* Wieser, 1956 for *Onchulella ocellata* to avoid homonymy with *Onchium ocellatum*. After the original publication, several new species were described in the genus *Onchium* while a few species were transferred from other genera of nematodes. Until now, the genus included seven valid species and one species of uncertain taxonomic status (Holovachov & Boström, 2010).

Two species of the genus *Onchium* were previously recorded in Sweden according to the Swedish taxonomic database (www.dyntaxa.se). *Onchium conicaudatum* (Allgén, 1935) was described from Öresund under the name *Camacolaimus conicaudatus* Allgén, 1935 but has not been reported since. *Onchium ocellatum* was described from the same geographic area and in the same publication by Allgén (1935) under the name *Camacolaimus cobbi* Allgén, 1935. Type material for both species could not be located in the nematode collection of C. Allgén.

Five species belonging to the genus *Onchium* were found during recent sampling in marine and brackish habitats along the Swedish coast, conducted as a part of the on–going STI–supported project "Taxonomy and distribution of free–living nematodes of the order Plectida in Sweden", and are described below. Of these, two are

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Notes on ecology of the genus *Onchium*

Specimens of different species from the genus *Onchium*, including *O. ocellatum* (Fig. 2D) and *O. metocellatum* (Fig. 5D), were observed partly or completely encased by what appear to be remains of unicellular organisms. In many cases, adult females had laid eggs inside, and in the case of *O. metocellatum* both sexes were present inside the same putative host. Parasitism of nematodes in general and of members of the family Camacolaimidae inside Foraminiferans have been described several times in the past (Laucknen, 1980; Le Calvez, 1953; Hope & Tchesunov, 1999; Tchesunov *et al*., 2000). Unfortunately, the poor preservation of putative hosts discovered during the present study does not allow for their proper identification.

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