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A new genus and species of monostiliferous hoplonemertean (Enopla: Hoplonemertea: Monostilifera) from New Zealand

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Abstract

Vulcanonemertes rangitotoensis gen. et sp. nov. (Hoplonemertea: Monostilifera) is described and illustrated. Major morphological features of the new taxon include an anteriorly divided body wall longitudinal musculature, no pre-cerebral septum, cephalic glands which reach far back behind the brain, and accessory lateral nerves which extend the full length of the body.

Key words: *Vulcanonemertes rangitotoensis* gen. et sp. nov.; New Zealand; Hoplonemertea; morphology; systematics

Introduction

Our knowledge of the nemertean fauna of the New Zealand is poor (Gibson in press). At present only 34 species have been described from the region, of which 24 are from marine, two from supralittoral, four from freshwater and four from terrestrial habitats (Gibson 2002). Nineteen species of monostiliferous hoplonemerteans are known to occur in the New Zealand (Gibson 2002), but only eleven of these, including two supralittoral forms, are marine (Table 1); the remainder live in terrestrial or freshwater habitats.

Although nemertean worms are often both common and abundant members of marine ecosystems, their taxonomy is necessarily based on histological investigations of their internal morphology and the phylum is accordingly all too often ignored.

Gibson's (in press) estimate that there should be at least 116 marine species recorded from New Zealand waters suggests that only about 20% of the potential fauna is at present known, more than a quarter of which is inadequately described (Gibson 1995, 2002).

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