

A review of the clam shrimp family Leptestheriidae (Crustacea: Branchiopoda: Spinicaudata) from Venezuela, with descriptions of two new species

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Abstract

The clam shrimps of the family Leptestheriidae from Venezuela are reviewed. *Leptestheria venezuelica* Daday, 1923, and two new species (*L. cristata* n. sp. and *L. brevispina* n. sp.) are presented. A redescription of *L. venezuelica*, descriptions of the new species, and comparisons with other South American species are included. A checklist of world Leptestheriidae is included.

Key words: Crustacea, Conchostraca, taxonomy, clam shrimp, *Leptestheria*, new species

Introduction

The clam shrimps are comprised of three orders and five families of large branchiopod crustaceans collectively called conchostracans (see Belk 1996, for terminology, and Martin and Davis 2001, for a discussion of alternate classifications). The group is characterized by the presence of a bivalve carapace that encloses the entire body, with (Orders Spinicaudata and Cyclestherida) or without (Order Laevicaudata) a variable number of growth lines. Approximately 200 species have been described world-wide in five families: Cyclestheriidae (Cyclestherida), Cyzicidae, Leptestheriidae, Limnadiidae (Spinicaudata), and Lynceidae (Laevicaudata) (Belk 1982, Martin 1992, Martin and Davis 2001). American conchostracans are diverse, but there are relatively few studies on these rare and interesting species. North American species are better known than South American forms. In North America there is one Cyclestheriid species (Sissom, 1980), eight Limnadiids (Belk 1989, Martin 1989), one Leptestheriid (Packard 1883), six Cyzicids (Mattox 1957) and five Lynceids (Martin and Belk 1988).