

A new species of *Amphiascoides* Nicholls, 1941 (Crustacea, Copepoda, Harpacticoida) from the Caribbean coast of Mexico

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Abstract

During the analysis of the stomach contents of the hardhead silverside *Atherinomorus stipes* (Müller & Troschel, 1847), a tropical littoral-feeding coastal fish collected in the Yucatan Peninsula, several specimens of harpacticoid copepods were recovered. Among those that were in condition for taxonomic study, was an undescribed species of the miraciid genus *Amphiascoides*. The new species, *A. walteri*, is described based on a group of female specimens. It can be distinguished by a combination of characters not found in any other of the 20 species known to be contained in this genus: aesthetasc on the fourth antennular segment not reaching the last segment of the antennule, 7 setae on the third exopodal segment of the fourth swimming leg, a female fifth leg exopod over 2.3 times longer than wide, a fifth leg baseopod not reaching half the length of the exopod; additional differences were found with respect to the female sixth legs. The number of recognized species of the genus rises to 21; their general distribution is also presented herein. The new species represents the third species of the genus known from the Neotropical region and it is the first record of the genus in Mexican waters.

Key words: marine crustacean fauna, copepods, neotropical, meiobenthos

Introduction

The knowledge of the marine harpacticoid copepod fauna of Mexico is still limited to a few works scattered along both the Pacific and the Atlantic coasts (Suárez-Morales *et al.* 2000); however, recent efforts are increasing the Pacific local lists (i.e. Gómez 2000 a, b, 2001 a–c, Gómez & Conroy-Dalton 2002, Gómez & Seifried 2001). Up to 32 marine harpacticoid species have been recorded in coastal waters of the Gulf of Mexico and the Mexican Caribbean (Fiers 1995; Suárez-Morales & Gasca 1998; Suárez-Morales *et al.* 2000).

While analyzing the stomach contents of several marine coastal fishes captured in a locality named Rio Huach, in southern Quintana Roo, Mexican Caribbean Sea, several