

Two new species of the mesopelagic isopod genus *Syscenus* Harger, 1880 (Crustacea: Isopoda: Aegidae) from the southwestern Pacific

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Abstract

Syscenus moana sp. nov. and *Syscenus karu* sp. nov. are described. *Syscenus moana*, from off southern New Caledonia at depths of 1250–1410 m, differs from all species of *Syscenus* in having robust setae on the uropodal rami; *S. karu*, from off Vanuatu at depths of 450–480 m, is distinguished in particular from all but one species (*S. peruanus* Menzies & George, 1972) by the presence of eyes, and by stout pereopods.

Key words: Isopoda, Aegidae, *Syscenus*, New Caledonia, southwest Pacific, mesopelagic

Introduction

Syscenus Harger, 1880 is a small genus of usually eyeless species, known from all oceans except the Southern Ocean. The feeding habits for most species remain unknown, but one species has recently been shown to attack and feed on fishes (Ross *et al.* 2001) and is possibly host dependent. *Syscenus* is primarily tropical and temperate in distribution, and has been recorded from depths as shallow as 70 metres in the North Atlantic (Kensley 2004) to 4609 m off northern Peru (Menzies & George 1972); most records are between approximately 500 and 2000 metres.

Bruce (1997) revised the generic diagnosis for *Syscenus* Harger, 1880 and listed the then known species. This contribution adds a further two species to the genus, bringing the total number of *Syscenus* to nine. Three species are known from the northern Pacific, the East Pacific (off tropical Peru) has one species (see Bruce 1997) and the North Atlantic two species (Kensley 2004).