

Description and life cycle of the hydrozoan *Hydractinia uniformis*, sp. nov. (Cnidaria: Hydrozoa: Hydractiniidae), from the coast of southeastern Brazil

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Abstract

A new species of hydrozoan, assigned here to the genus *Hydractinia*, is described from the southeastern coast of Brazil (São Paulo state). This new species is distinguished from all known species of the genus *Hydractinia* by a combination of the following characters: monomorphic colonies, long tentacles of the polyp, production of frustules, and free medusae with branched mouth arms and ocelli.

Key words: Cnidaria, Hydrozoa, Athecatae, Anthoathecata, Filifera, Hydractiniidae, *Hydractinia*, life cycle

Introduction

Many nominal genera have been assigned to the family Hydractiniidae L. Agassiz, 1862. The characters used to distinguish these are vague, and a generic revision is overdue. Boero *et al.* (1998) redefined the family and Schuchert (2001) pointed out several taxonomic and nomenclatural problems, but the taxa in Hydractiniidae are still poorly characterized. The family is currently defined (adapted from Bouillon *et al.*, 2004: 61–62) as follows: hydroid colonies stolonial and polymorphic; hydrorhiza reticular or an encrusting mat with or without perisarcal covering, frequently with chitinous or calcareous spines; gonophores giving rise to fixed sporosarcs, eumedusoids, or free medusae. Medusae with 4 simple or branched oral lips elongated to form arms with terminal clusters of cnidocysts; marginal tentacles 4, 8 or more, solitary; radial canals 4; circular canal present; gonads on manubrium, interradial, sometimes extending along proximal portions of radial canals; with or without ocelli.