



## Atlantic occurrence of the genus *Bellottia* (Teleostei, Bythitidae) with two new species from the Western North Atlantic

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### Abstract

Thirteen specimens of the bythitid fish-genus *Bellottia* have been reported from the Western North Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. A comparison with the three known species, *B. apoda* Giglioli, 1883 from the East Atlantic and the Mediterranean, *B. armiger* (Smith & Radcliffe, 1913) from the Philippines and *B. galathea* Nielsen & Møller, 2008 from the Solomon Sea and Philippines showed that the 13 specimens are different from all three. Furthermore, the 12 specimens from the Gulf of Mexico (*B. robusta*) are specifically different from the specimen caught off southern Georgia (*B. cryptica*) based on differences in body depth at origin of anal fin, presence or absence of spine on preopercular crest and number of precaudal vertebrae. The two new species appear to be associated with deep-sea coral or reef habitats and likely may have wider distributions than are apparent at present.

**Key words:** Bythitidae, *Bellottia*, two **n. sp.**, Gulf of Mexico, off southern Georgia, deep-sea corals

### Introduction

Hitherto, three species of the viviparous ophidiiform genus *Bellottia* have been described: *B. apoda* Giglioli, 1883 known from numerous specimens from the Mediterranean and five specimens from off Portugal and southwest of Madeira, *B. armiger* (Smith & Radcliffe in Radcliffe, 1913) known from one specimen from the Philippines, and *B. galathea* Nielsen & Møller, 2008 known from two specimens from the Solomon Sea and the Molucca Sea. The single paratype of *B. armiger* was considered conspecific with *B. galathea* by Nielsen & Møller (2008: 34). In the present paper two additional species are described, one from the Gulf of Mexico based on 12 specimens and one from off southern Georgia based on one specimen. One of the Gulf of Mexico specimens examined here was referred to as “*Bellottia* sp.” in Cordes *et al.* (2008), and several specimens, also examined here, were listed as *B. apoda* and new records for the Gulf of Mexico in McEachran & Feckhelm (2005). The specimen from off Georgia was identified as *B. apoda* and noted as a new record for the region in Ross and Quattrini (2007). This specimen was referred to as *Bellottia*. **n. sp.** in Ross and Quattrini (2008).

### Material and methods

Field Collections: Ten of the Gulf of Mexico specimens were collected during investigations of cold-seeps and deep-sea coral habitats (2002–2004) in 506–569 m. Quantitative samples were collected in tubeworm or tubeworm plus coral habitats using the Bushmaster Jr. device deployed from the Johnson-Sea-Link (JSL) submersible. See details of collection and these study sites in Cordes *et al.* (2008). The specimen collected off