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A new sponge-inhabiting leptostracan species of the genus *Nebalia* (Crustacea: Phyllocarida: Leptostraca) from the Veracruz Coral Reef System, Gulf of Mexico

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Abstract

A new species of Leptostraca, *Nebalia villalobosi*, is described from the Veracruz Coral Reef System, SW Gulf of Mexico. The new species was found associated with the sponge *Ircinia fistularis* (Demospongiae) from the Blanquilla reef at a depth of 12 m. It differs from the closely related species *N. longicornis* and *N. lagartensis* in the form of the eyes and rostrum, the number of articles in the antennular and antennal flagella, the inner border of article 3 on the mandible palp, the length of the exopod of maxilla 2, the rounded denticles on pleonite 6, the enlarged tip on pleopod 5, and the caudal furcae being slightly longer than the telson and pleonite 7 combined. This is the first record of a leptostracan associated with the sponge *Ircinia fistularis*.

Key words: taxonomy, Nebaliidae, leptostracan, new species

Resumen

Se describe una especie nueva de Leptostraca, *Nebalia villalobosi*, del sistema arrecifal Veracruzano, SO del Golfo de México. La especie nueva estaba asociada a la esponja *Ircinia fistularis* (Demospongiae) a una profundidad de 12 m, en el arrecife Blanquilla. Esta especie difiere de las especies cercanas *N. longicornis* y *N. lagartensis* en la forma de los ojos y del rostro, el número de artejos de los flagelos antenular y antenal, el borde interno del artejo tres del palpo mandibular, el largo del exopodito de maxila 2, los dentículos redondeados sobre pleonite 6, el extremo distal del pleópodo 5 ensanchado y la furca caudal ligeramente más larga que pleonite 7 y telson combinados. Este es el primer registro de un leptostraco asociado a la esponja *Ircinia fistularis*.

Palabras clave: taxonomía, Nebaliidae, leptostraco, especie nueva

Introduction

The order Leptostraca comprises small marine crustaceans distributed from the high intertidal zone to abyssal depths. These crustaceans are found in a wide variety of habitats associated with substrates, i.e. algae, seagrasses, soft substrates, marine caves, hydrothermal vents, submarine canyons, coral reefs, and as components in bathypelagic and bottom dwelling areas (Martin & Haney 2009; Roccatagliata *et al.* 2010).

Haney (2008) recorded 42 valid species grouped in 10 genera within three families: Nebaliopsididae, Paranebaliidae, and Nebaliidae. This last family includes the genera *Nebalia*, *Nebaliella*, *Dahlella*, *Sarsinebalia* and *Speonebalia*. The genus *Nebalia* contains 21 species distributed throughout the world's oceans (Haney & Martin 2005).

To date, 5 Leptostraca are described from the Gulf of Mexico (Haney & Martin 2004; Martin & Haney 2009). Gulf distribution is known for *Nebalia lagartensis* Escobar-Briones & Villalobos-Hiriart (on soft bottom covered with green algae), *N. longicornis* Thomson (on soft bottom), *Paranebalia ayalai* Escobar-Briones & Alcocer (on sandy mud substrate), and *P. longipes* (Willemoes-Suhm, 1875) (on soft bottom); and *Saronebalia guanensis* Haney & Martin (collected by light-trap and on *Halimeda*). *P. longipes* (on soft bottom), and *P. belizensis* Modlin

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