

New records of octocorals (Cnidaria, Anthozoa) from the south western Atlantic Ocean, with zoogeographic considerations

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Abstract

The present study deals with six new records of octocoral species (two alcyoniid soft corals and four primnoid gorgonians) for the south western Atlantic Ocean. These new records, mainly for the gorgonians, improves the knowledge of their present distribution. The species *Thouarella koellikeri* and *Dasystenella acanthina* have their known distribution widened, showing in the first case a continuous bioceanic distribution (south east Pacific - south west Atlantic). The species of the genus *Primnoella*, *P. biserialis* and *P. compressa*, widen their distributional range tending to a geographical continuity along the south eastern coasts of the American continent, avoiding the zoogeographic barrier constituted by the Río de la Plata.

Key words: Octocorallia, new records, Alcyoniidae, Primnoidae, south western Atlantic Ocean, south east Pacific, zoogeography

Introduction

The 2000–4000 estimated octocoral species are broadly distributed (Williams 2001), from inshore waters down to deep-sea abysses, and from the Arctic to the Antarctic Oceans.

Herein, the studied area is limited to the Subantarctic or Notal (Boschi 1976) and Antarctic regions (Ekman 1953; Kramp 1959). Octocoral studies for these regions are scarce and outdated. According to Bayer (1981), the systematics of this group is poorly understood for the South American coast from Trinidad to the estuary of the Río de la Plata, as well as for the Antarctic region, and minimally accounted for off south east America. Bayer (1981) describes the latter area as having scattered taxonomic descriptions and isolated distribution records, many of them improperly supported. Taxonomic records for the