

Description of three new species of the deep-sea munnopsid genus *Belonectes* (Crustacea, Isopoda, Asellota) from the Weddell Sea, Southern Ocean

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Abstract

Three new species of the genus *Belonectes* Wilson & Hessler, 1981, from the munnopsid subfamily Eurycopinae Hansen are described from the deep Weddell Sea, Atlantic sector of the Southern Ocean. *Belonectes grasslei* sp. nov., *B. stoddarti* sp. nov., and *B. daytoni* sp. nov. are the first species of the genus described from the region: previously only two species of *Belonectes* were known from the northeastern Atlantic and the Peru-Chile Trench, the southeastern Pacific. The modified diagnosis of the genus *Belonectes* and a key to the species of the genus are presented. The pattern of the total ventral sculpture of the natosome, a medial lobe of article 4 of the maxillipedal palp which is larger than article 5 and the navicular male pleopod 1 with its deep keel are suggested to be additional important generic characters of *Belonectes*. The most useful characters to distinguish species of *Belonectes* are the size of article 1 of the antennula, the shape and size of the articles 3–5 of the maxillipedal palp, the shape of the distal margin of the male pleopod 1, the shape of distolateral part of the protopod of the male pleopod 2, the size and shape of the preanal ridge, and the size of the exopod of the uropod.

Key words: Weddell Sea, Southern Ocean, deep sea, taxonomy, Munnopsidae, new species, *Belonectes*

Introduction

During the expeditions of the ANDEEP project (ANtarctic benthic DEEP-sea biodiversity: colonisation history and recent community patterns) a rich collection of more than 200 munnopsid species was gathered, 80% of which were new to science (Malyutina & Brandt, 2007a). Some of the new species of known and new genera have been already described (Malyutina & Brandt, 2004a, b, c, d, 2006, 2007b; Malyutina, 2008), but most of them are awaiting description. In the ANDEEP III material several specimens of *Belonectes* have been found. During further identification and morphological study of the specimens it proved true that they were all new to science. In the deep-sea samples studied *Belonectes* is the rarest genus within the most speciose and abundant subfamily Eurycopinae with regard to both species and individuals. This was already mentioned by Wilson and Hessler (1981) and it is supported by the material studied from the ANDEEP isopod collections (Malyutina & Brandt, 2007a). The members of the genus differ from other tiny eurycopines with fused pereonites 5 and 6, genera *Disconectes* Wilson & Hessler, 1981, *Baeonectes* Wilson, 1982 and *Tythocope* Wilson & Hessler, 1981, by the elongate streamlined natosome. From the most similar genus *Disconectes*, *Belonectes* also differs by the sculpture of the natosome venter, the tiny uropodal exopod and the large labrum which is longer than the clypeus (Wilson & Hessler, 1981; Malyutina & Brandt, 2006).

There are only two described species of *Belonectes*, *B. parvus* (Bonnier, 1896) from the northeastern Atlantic and *B. latifrons* (Menzies & George, 1972) from the southeastern Pacific (08°13' S 81°09' W, 1927–