



The family Ascidiidae Herdman (Tunicata: Ascidiacea) in Bocas del Toro, Panama. Description of six new species

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Abstract

We have been collecting Ascidiaceans in the Bocas del Toro region of Panama since August 2003, mostly in the mangroves but also in shallow coral reefs. Here we will describe six new species from this region (*Phallusia fragilis*, *Ascidia bocatorensis*, *A. collini*, *A. corallicola*, *A. monnioti* and *A. panamensis*), register and complement the description of an additional seven species in the family Ascidiidae (*A. archaia*, *A. curvata*, *A. interrupta*, *A. cf. munda*, *A. sydneyensis*, *A. tenue* and *Phallusia nigra*). We also provide a tabular identification key that also includes *P. caguayensis* and *A. xamaycana*. Most of the species are very abundant on mangrove roots.

Key words: *Ascidia*, biodiversity, *Phallusia*, taxonomy, Tunicata

Introduction

Although a wide variety of species of ascidians are found in the Caribbean Sea, most islands and much of the coastal southern Caribbean have not been extensively surveyed for ascidian species. Van Name (1945) listed sixteen species of Ascidiacea for the Atlantic coasts of Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia and Venezuela, of which only three occurred in Panama.