



Spionidae (Annelida) from shallow waters around the British Islands: an identification guide for the NMBAQC Scheme with an overview of spionid morphology and biology

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Abstract

This is the third guide in a series aimed to help in the identification of northern European samples through the National Marine Biological Analytical Quality Control (NMBAQC) Scheme. A review is presented of general morphology and biology of one of the most common groups in marine and estuarine communities worldwide, spionid polychaetes (Annelida: Spionidae). An identification key to 20 genera and a list of 80 species likely to occur in waters around Britain and Ireland are provided based on the taxonomic literature, collection records and the author's examination of various collections. The names are updated but some records need verification.

Key words: morphology, ecology, reproductive biology, polychaetes, key to genera

Introduction

Spionidae Grube, 1850 is one of the largest taxa of polychaetous annelids; its members are very common in marine and estuarine communities all over the world. Adult spionids and their developing larvae are readily recognized by their general body morphology and the pair of elongate grooved prehensile palps extending from the head, except in adult *Scolelepis* Blainville, 1828 which have ungrooved palps. The presence of palps however is shared by members of the families Apistobranchidae, Chaetopteridae, Longosomatidae, Magelonidae, Poecilochaetidae, Trochochaetidae, and Uncispionidae. In the past they were collectively called spiomorph polychaetes and grouped into the order Spionida due to their morphological similarity (Rouse & Fauchald 1997; Blake 2006). From the rest of the spiomorphs and other palpate polychaetes spionids can be distinguished by the shape of body, parapodia and chaetae even when palps are lost due to damage or fixation. Presence of a prostomium elongated posteriorly as a caruncle and foliose postchaetal parapodial lamellae have traditionally been used as diagnostic characters (Fauchald 1977; Fauchald & Rouse 1997: 117), while dorsal flattened branchiae and dentate hooded hooks were