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Breaking molds: *Oswaldella laertesi*, sp. nov., a unique Antarctic species of *Oswaldella* Stechow, 1919 (Cnidaria: Hydrozoa: Kirchenpaueriidae)

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Abstract

A new species of the Antarctic genus *Oswaldella* Stechow is described and figured, and its position amongst the remaining species of the genus is discussed. The material was collected from the Ross Sea area (Antarctica) during the BioRoss survey of the western Ross Sea and Balleny Islands in 2004. *Oswaldella laertesi*, **sp. nov.**, is unique amongst known species of the genus in having hydrocladia arranged in three longitudinal rows.

Key words: Hydroids, new species, benthos, Antarctic Ocean, biodiversity

Introduction

A biodiversity survey of the western Ross Sea and Balleny Islands was undertaken during 2004 by the National Institute of Water & Atmospheric Research (NIWA) of New Zealand. An important collection of hydroids was sorted from the numerous benthic samples taken, including an unusual new species of the Antarctic genus *Oswaldella*. The description of that species is given here.

The genus *Oswaldella* is one of the most speciose genera of hydrozoans inhabiting benthic communities of the Antarctic marine ecosystem, embracing approximately 20% of the biodiversity in Antarctic Leptothecata. With the exception of *Oswaldella herwigi*, present in the sub-Antarctic Patagonian region, all species of *Oswaldella* have an Antarctic distribution (cf. Peña Cantero & Vervoort 2004). At present there are 26 described species (cf. Peña Cantero & Vervoort 2004; Peña Cantero & Ramil 2006). A species new to science, *O. laertesi*, **sp. nov.**, is added here.

Oswaldella, as with other members of the family Kirchenpaueriidae, is characterized by the alternate arrangement of hydrocladia, usually in one plane, forming two longitudinal rows. *Oswaldella laertesi*, **sp. nov.**, is unique amongst the members of the genus and the family in having hydrocladia arranged in three longitudinal rows.

Material and methods

Material was collected by the NIWA research vessel *Tangaroa* during the BioRoss survey of the western Ross Sea and Balleny Islands in 2004. Four different gear types were used to collect benthic invertebrates: Van Veen grab, Agassiz trawl, epibenthic sled, and rock dredge. Hydrozoans were fixed in either 8% formalin or 98% ethanol, and later transferred to 70% ethanol.

Type material is held in the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research Invertebrate Collection at Wellington (NIWA), New Zealand.

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