First record of *Telmatactis cricoides* (Duchassaing, 1850) (Actiniaria) in the Western Mediterranean

Primera cita de *Telmatactis cricoides* (Duchassaing, 1850) (Actiniaria) en el Mediterráneo occidental

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Three species of the genus *Telmatactis* Gravier, 1916 (Actiniaria, Isophellidae) have been reported in the Mediterranean Sea (Hofrichter, 2003; WoRMS, 2015): *T. cricoides* (Duchassaing, 1850), *T. forskalii* (Hemprich & Ehrenberg in Ehrenberg, 1834) and *T. solidago* (Duchassaing & Michelotti, 1864).

Telmatactis cricoides has an amphi-Atlantic distribution, including the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, Macaronesia, Brazil, Ascension, Saint Helena, Gulf of Guinea and some other localities (den Hartog, 1995; Varela *et al*., 2001; WoRMS, 2015). This species is also distributed in the Eastern and Central Mediterranean Sea, with records from Israel to Malta (den Hartog, 1995; Wirtz, 1996). According to den Hartong (1995) current winter temperatures in the Western Mediterranean could be unfavorable for the survival of this species and eastern populations probably are interglacial relicts that could re-extend their range to the west following the increase of water temperature after the peak of the last glacial period. This fact could be also favored in the current frame of Global Change. Thus, many warm-water species from the Eastern Mediterranean, together with those entering via the Suez Canal, have begun to be detected in the western part of the Mediterranean Sea in recent years as a consequence of present-day warming (Bianchi, 2007) resulting in the called "tropicalization" of the Mediterranean Sea (Bianchi and Morri, 2003).

During a sampling campaign in Chafarinas islands, 15 specimens of *T. cricoides* were identified (fig. 1). The general form of the specimens and,

Fig. 1.—Specimen of *Telmatactis cricoides* from Chafarinas Islands.
Fig. 1.—Ejemplar de *Telmatactis cricoides* de las Islas Chafarinas.

particularly, the characteristic clavate tentacle tips left no doubt about their identity, as reported by den Hartog (1995). They were observed on September 4th 2015, close to Congreso Island (coordinates: 35°10'44.14"N, 2°26'21.46"W), inside a horizontal crack facing east at 7 meters depth.

The depth in which the specimens from Chafarinas Islands were detected is included in the usual depth range of the species along its distribution area, 0 to 42 m (Wirtz, 1996; Hofrichter, 2003).

Despite the existence of a great variation in color (up to 25 different color morphs) and size (average oral disc diameter ranging from a few centimeters to 20 cm, the latter in some individuals from Canary Islands) previously reported in the literature (den Hartog, 1995; Wirtz, 1996), all the specimens observed in Chafarinas Islands had a size of approximately 6 cm diameter of the oral disc and tentacles, and the same pattern of greyish white color.

Currently we do not know if the presence of this species in Chafarinas Islands, and in general in the Western Mediterranean waters, is a consequence of the "tropicalization" of the Mediterranean Sea or if it was previously present there but not detected due to the lack of studies. Also, since the species is present in Macaronesia, a third possibility could be that *T. cricoides* arrived

to the Alborán Sea entering via the Strait of Gibraltar, but the fact that this taxon has not been reported in the Gulf of Cádiz, despite to be a very well studied area, does not support this hypothesis. Future research to determine the affinity of this population with those from the Eastern Mediterranean and Macaronesia will be necessary for understanding its colonization pattern in the past.

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