

# ***Dissodactylus crinitichelis* Moreira, 1901 and *Leodia sexiesperforata* (Leske, 1778): first record of this symbiosis in Brazil**

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## **Abstract**

The crabs of the genus *Dissodactylus* are well known as ectosymbionts of irregular echinoids belonging to Clypeasteroida and Spatangoida. *Dissodactylus crinitichelis* is the only species of the genus reported in Brazil. The pea crab species has been already recorded associated with four species of echinoids in Brazilian waters. This paper reviews the known hosts for *D. crinitichelis* and registers for the first time the association between the pea crab and the sand dollar *Leodia sexiesperforata* increasing to five the number of known hosts for the crab.

Key Words: Ecological association, ectosymbiont, Pinnotheridae.

## **Introduction**

The diversity of the marine environment, specially the benthic substratum is commonly reflected by many interactions among organisms, even free living ones. Such event is quite common since many of these species act as substratum or environment for others. The existence of many organisms living in association and their close relation allows for the emergence of symbiotics relationships (Thiel *et al.*, 2003; Rohde, 2005; Baeza, 2007). Symbiosis, *sensu* De Bary (1879), can be defined as “a phenomenon in which dissimilar organisms live together” (Vermeij, 1983; Paracer and Ahmadijan, 2000). These interactions are commonly observed among crustaceans. Therefore, these *taxa* have many species that have adapted to co-exist in symbiosis with other invertebrates (Barel and Kramers, 1977; Rohde, 2005).

The Pinnotheridae De Haan, 1833

includes about 302 species of little crabs (Ng *et al.*, 2008) highly specialized in living in close association with other invertebrates. The family is known for their association with various invertebrate *taxa*, such as molluscs, polychaetes, ascidians, crustaceans or echinoderms (holothurians and irregular echinoids) (Schmitt *et al.*, 1973; Powers, 1977; Williams, 1984; Takeda *et al.*, 1997; Thoma *et al.*, 2005, 2009; Ahyong and Ng, 2007). However the pinnotherids are also capable of showing a short free-living stage (first crab stage) (Christensen and McDermott, 1958).

Among the 54 genera of Pinnotheridae, *Dissodactylus* (Smith, 1870) (Ng *et al.*, 2008; Ng and van Tri, 2010) is known as an ectosymbiont of irregular echinoids (Griffith, 1987a). The genus is characterized by a discontinuous anterolateral margin of the carapace, delicate, ventrally curved labium, epistome dorsoventrally reduced, and subrectangular, medially directed ischium-merus of the third maxilliped (Griffith, 1987a;

Campos and Griffith, 1990). The distribution of *Dissodactylus* is restricted to the New World, ranging in the western Atlantic Ocean from Massachusetts (USA) to Argentina, with four species recorded, and in the eastern Pacific from Mexico to Peru, where five species are known (Rathbun, 1918; Schmitt *et al.*, 1973; Werding and Sanchez, 1989; Martins and D'Incao, 1996; Fumis *et al.*, 2006). However, so far, there are no common records between the Pacific and Atlantic regions (Griffith, 1987a; Campos and Griffith, 1990).

The crab *Dissodactylus crinitichelis* Moreira, 1901 is typical of the western Atlantic, ranging from the USA to Argentina (Rathbun, 1918, (as *D. encopei*); Martins and D'Incao, 1996; Fumis *et al.*, 2006). It has been observed maintaining symbiotic relationships with several species of irregular echinoids, such as the spatangoid *Meoma ventricosa* (Lamarck, 1816) and the clypeasteroids *Encope emarginata* (Leske, 1778); *E. michelini* Agassiz, 1841; *Clypeaster subdepressus* (Gray, 1825); and *Leodia sexiesperforata* (Leske, 1778) (Rathbun, 1918; Telford, 1978; 1982; Campos and Solís-Marín, 1998; Wirtz *et al.*, 2009).

In Brazil, the first report of an association with *D. crinitichelis* was provided by Coelho and Ramos-Porto (1995) for *Encope* sp.; Martins and D'Incao (1996) cited the associations of the crab with *E. emarginata*, *Mellita* sp., *Clypeaster* sp. and *Luidia* sp.; finally, Wirtz *et al.* (2009) mentioned the relationship with *Meoma ventricosa* in Espírito Santo State.

Previous records show that the sand dollar *Leodia sexiesperforata* is restricted to the Americas, ranging from North Carolina (USA) to Uruguay (Telford and Mooi, 1986). Along the Brazilian coast there are records from Paraíba to Rio de Janeiro (Alves and Cerqueira, 2000; Magalhães *et al.*, 2005; Ventura *et al.*, 2006; 2007; Gondim *et al.*, 2008; Manso *et al.*, 2008). Despite this geographical distribution, all reports of the association of *D. crinitichelis* with this irregular echinoid are restricted to the Caribbean (Telford, 1978; 1982 - Rockley Beach, Bridgetown, Barbados - 13°04'24"N, 59°35'18"W; Campos and Solis-Marín, 1998 - Cuba - 21°30'30"N, 77°46'26"W). The

aim of this paper is to report the association between *Dissodactylus crinitichelis* and *Leodia sexiesperforata* for the first time outside the Caribbean, specifically for Brazil.

## Material and Methods

Sampling was carried out on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010 at the Porto da Barra beach, Salvador - BA, Brazil (13°00'24"S - 38°31'48"W). Specimens of *Leodia sexiesperforata* were obtained by free diving in the subtidal zone. Only a single specimen of the sand dollar showed an associated pea crab. The host and the symbiont were photographed and immediately placed in a plastic bag containing sea water and then taken to the laboratory. Posteriorly they were photographed and fixed in 70% ethanol. The material was deposited in the Crustacean Collection of the Museu de Zoologia da Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA 430)

## Results and Discussion

*Dissodactylus crinitichelis* Moreira, 1901  
(Fig. 1F)

*Dissodactylus crinitichelis* Moreira, 1901.

- Rathbun, 1933: 83. - Rodrigues da Costa, 1969: 260. - Coelho and Ramos, 1972: 196.
- Fenucci, 1975:172. - Powers, 1977:1 20.
- Williams, 1984:438. - Melo, 1985:1 23. - Abele and Kim, 1986:64. - Griffith, 1987:412.
- Martins and D'incao, 1996: 4. - Campos and Solís-Marín, 1998: 330. - Almeida *et al.*, 2010: 358.

*Dissodactylus encopei*; Rathbun, 1901: 22. - Rathbun 1918: 119. - Williams, *et al.*, 1968:56.

*Dissodactylus crinitichelis* is characterized by an almost flat carapace that shows a smooth surface. The length to width ratio of the carapace is 0.75:1. The third maxilliped covers the oral cavity completely. The propodus shows a small

dactyl and articulates in the second half of the inferior margin. The pereopods are short and strong. Outer maxilliped palp is 3-segmented. Telson forms an equilateral triangle. Females bear all abdominal segments distinct. All these characteristics confirm the identification of the specimen provided by the literature (Morreira, 1901; Rathbun, 1918; Martins and D'Incao, 1996). A relevant point, according to Griffith (1987a), is the similarity of *D. crinitichelis* and *D. latus* Griffith, 1987. However, according to the same author, the mean width to length ratio of carapace provides enough bases to distinguish both species ( $1.43 \pm 0.03$  *D. crinitichelis* and  $1.66 \pm 0.05$  to *D. latus*).

*Leodia sexiesperforata* (Leske, 1778)  
(Figs. 1 A-E)

*Echinodiscus sexies perforatus* Leske, 1778: 199.  
*Scutella sexforis* Lamarck, 1816: 9. -  
Desmoulin, 1837: 70.  
*Mellita hexapora* Agassiz, 1841: 41. - Agassiz  
and Desor, 1846: 138.  
*Mellita similis* Agassiz, 1841: 43.  
*Leodia richardsonii* Gray, 1851: 36.  
*Mellita erythraea* Gray, 1851: 36.  
*Mellita sexiesperforata* Bernasconi, 1941: 107.  
*Mellita platensis*: Bernasconi, 1947: 117.

The sand dollar *Leodia sexiesperforata* (Leske, 1778) can be identified by the presence of six closed, narrow and elongated lunules (five ambulacrals and one interambulacral). The testis is compressed in the oral/aboral axis and shows five shorts and equal petaloids and four gonopores in the apical system. Color ranges from yellow to light brown (Goodbody, 1960; Serafy, 1979; Hendler *et al.*, 1995; Manso *et al.*, 2008). The specimen of *L. sexiesperforata* has 58.2 mm in diameter, while the known diameter ranges from 22 to 110 mm (Goodbody, 1960; Serafy, 1979; Hendler *et al.*, 1995). A male specimen of *D. crinitichelis*, with 3.2 mm width and 2.6 mm length, was found clinging to the oral side, close to the anterior lunules (Fig. 1F). The position of the crab on the host may be

explained as an evidence of its survival strategy due to its mode of living.

The family Pinnotheridae is usually considered as parasitic or at least semi-parasitic. In this context, the dactyli bifid seem adequate, because they have no clear change in morphology to adapt themselves to a parasitic lifestyle (Telford, 1978). *Dissodactylus crinitichelis* is always characterized as irregular urchin's symbiont, however there are very few studies clarifying the correct association of the species and its sand dollar hosts.

Pohle and Telford (1981) state that *D. crinitichelis* is an obligate parasite because it requires a nearby host to complete its larval development. However, the authors also say that sub-adults and adults stages seem to be facultative parasites. In a subsequent study, Telford (1982a), based on cheliped morphology, stomach contents of the pea crabs and spine allometry of sand dollars, defines the relationship as parasitism, showing that approximately 80% of the food obtained by the crab comes from the host.

However studies carried out by these authors (Pohle and Telford, 1981; Telford, 1982a) are exclusively based on data from *L. sexiesperforata* as a single host. Since *D. crinitichelis* is recorded as symbiont of four other species of irregular sea urchins (*M. ventricosa*, *E. emarginata*, *E. michelini*, *C. subdepressus*), it is important to investigate firstly if there is a preference of the pea crab for one of the sand dollars and secondly whether *D. crinitichelis* has the same behavior with other hosts.

Gray *et al.* (1968) studied the relation of *D. mellitae* (Rathbun, 1900) with different echinoderm hosts and observed that the crab preferred *E. michelini* rather than *Mellita quinquesperforata* (Leske, 1778). Subsequently Dexter (1977) noted the same pattern when studying *D. nitidus* Smith, 1870, which opted by *Mellitella stokesii* (L. Agassiz, 1841). Unfortunately there are not many studies with *D. crinitichelis* and its biology (Telford, 1978) and the very few ones deals with other hosts than *L. sexiesperforata*. In this panorama it is very difficult make further inferences on the

preference of this pea crab.

The analysis of the association records with the sand dollars along the Brazilian coast reveals that *D. crinitichelis* is mainly associated with the *Encope emarginata* and *Meoma ventricosa* (Martins and D'Incao, 1996; Wirtz et al., 2009; Almeida et al., 2010). Additionally, Coelho and Ramos-Porto (1995) mentioned *Encope* sp. as a host in Tamandaré, Pernambuco State. However the genus *Encope* in Brazil is restricted to a single species, *E. emarginata*, which occurs from Pernambuco to Rio Grande do Sul State (Tommasi, 1999; Netto et al., 2005; Capitoli and Bemvenuti, 2006; Lima and Fernandes, 2009; Oliveira et al., 2010). Thus, it is possible to deduce that the record of Coelho and Ramos-Porto (1995) may also refer to *E. emarginata*.

Martins and D'Incao (1996) also included the genera *Mellita*, *Clypeaster* and *Luidia* among potential hosts for *D. crinitichelis* but the specimens have not been identified further than the generic level. However as *Luidia* Forbes, 1839 belongs to Asteroidea its record as host for pea crabs is extremely unusual since *Dissodactylus* are characterized by their specific association with irregular echinoids (sand dollars and heart urchins) (Griffith, 1987a; Telford, 1982).

The genus *Mellita* is represented in Brazil by a single species, *M. quinquesperforata* (Leske, 1778), which has a wide distributional range along the Brazilian coast, occurring from Pará to Rio Grande do Sul State (Matos et al., 2000; Barros et al., 2001; Netto et al., 2005). Consequently the record of Martins and D'Incao (1996) can be possibly attributed to this host species.

However, according to Tommasi (1999) eight species of *Clypeaster* have been recorded in Brazil. *C. subdepressus* (Gray, 1825) is the species with the widest distribution. Records along the Brazilian coast expand from Bahia to Southern Brazil (Krau, 1956; Alves and Cerqueira, 2000; Magalhães et al., 2005; Netto et al., 2005; Vellutini and Migoto, 2010; Xavier, 2010). Because of the range of this irregular echinoid it is possible to assume

that *C. subdepressus* was the species observed by Martins and D'Incao (1996).

According to Tommasi (1999), six genera and fourteen species belonging to Clypeasteroidea Agassiz, 1872 have been registered along the Brazilian coast. *Clypeaster* is the largest genus with eight species whereas the others have only one species each. For Spatangoidea Claus, 1876 there are records of seven genera, each one with a single species. These two taxa (Clypeasteroidea and Spatangoidea) are the most important hosts for the species of *Dissodactylus* since the literature indicates the restriction of the association of these crabs to sand dollars and heart urchins (Rathbun, 1918; Telford, 1978; 1982; Griffith, 1987a; Campos and Solís-Marín, 1998; Wirtz et al., 2009).

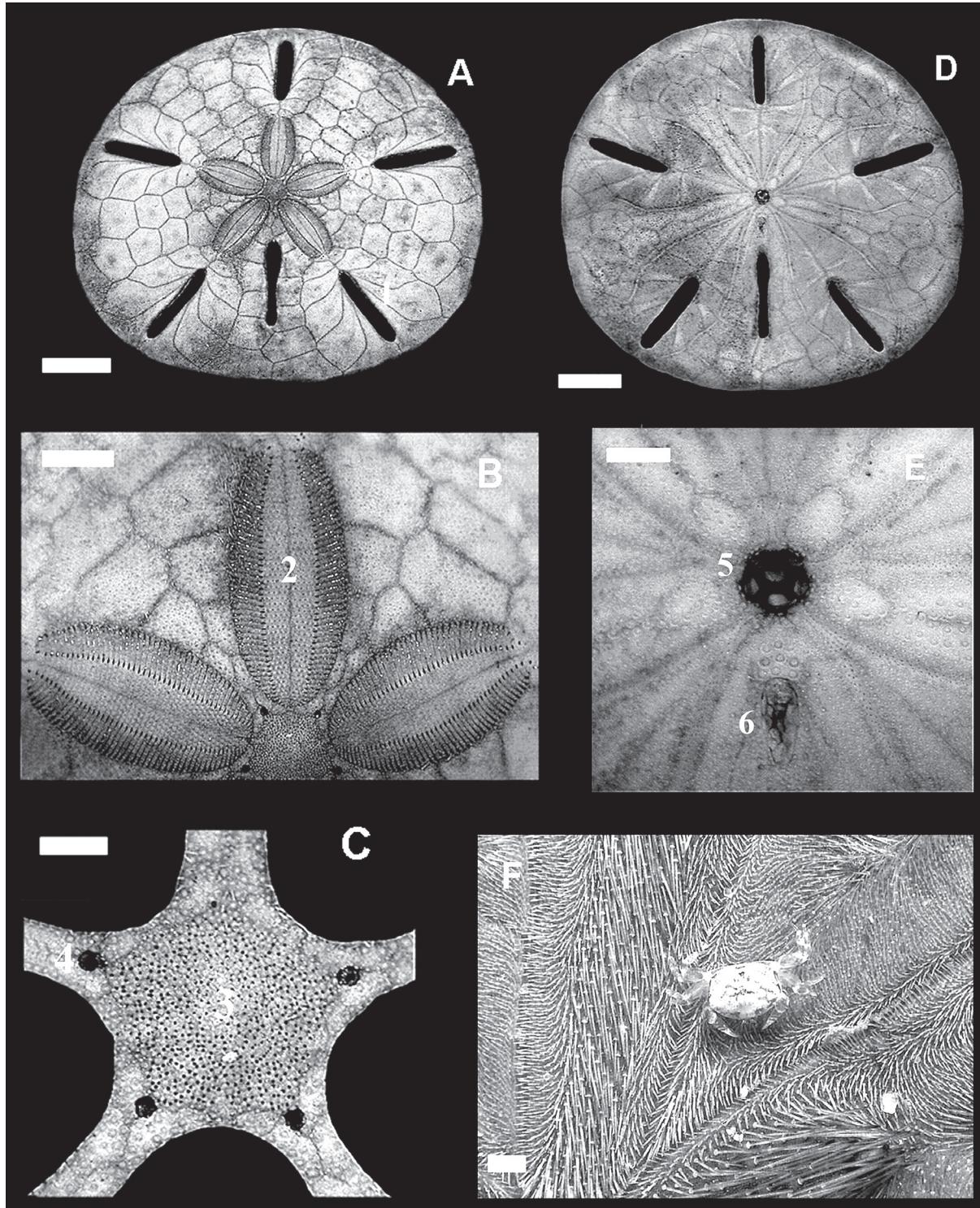
Previous works indicate that the association between *D. crinitichelis* and irregular echinoids (clypeasteroids and spatangoids) has a register of five host species (Rathbun, 1918; Schmitt et al., 1973 Telford, 1978; 1982; Campos and Solís-Marín, 1998; Wirtz et al., 2009). In Brazil there are only four known hosts so far (Coelho and Ramos-Porto, 1995; Martins and D'Incao, 1996; Wirtz et al., 2009). This paper increases the number of host-species for *D. crinitichelis* to five, after adding the record of *L. sexiesperforata*.

*Leodia sexiesperforata* is found preferably in biogenic sands (Telford and Mooi, 1986) and the geographic distribution of this sand dollar extends as far as Argentina (Bernasconi, 1941; 1947 (as *M. platensis*); Telford and Mooi, 1986; Alves and Cerqueira, 2000; Magalhães et al., 2005; Ventura et al., 2006; 2007; Gondim et al., 2008; Manso et al., 2008). Reports of the relationship of these two species are restricted to Caribbean waters (Telford, 1978; 1982; Telford and Mooi, 1986; Campos and Solis-Marin, 1998), consequently, this association is restricted to the Tropical Province (Palacio, 1980). Despite that the distribution of both species *D. crinitichelis* and *L. sexiesperforata* ranges to Argentina, (Patagonic Province) this association had not been registered out of Tropical Province yet (Palacio, 1980).

## Acknowledgments

We would like to thank specially to Dr. Ernesto Campos (Facultad de Ciencias U.A.B.C., Mexico) and an anonymous

reviewer for the helpful collaboration and important suggestions. This study was supported by CNPQ (Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico) and FAPESB (Fundação de Amparo a Pesquisa na Bahia).



**Figure 1.** *Leodia sexiesperforata*. A, B and C – Aboral view showing lunules (1), petaloids (2), madreporite (3) and gonopores (4). D and E – Oral view showing mouth (5) and anus (6). F – Photo *in situ* of *Dissodactylus crinitichelis* in symbiosis with *L. sexiesperforata*. Scale bars: A and D = 10 mm; B = 2.5 mm; C = 1 mm; E = 2 mm; F = 1.5 mm.

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