

SHORT COMMUNICATION

New records of Pennatulacea (Cnidaria, Octocorallia) from Madeira island

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The Pennatulaceans *Pteroeides spinosum* (Ellis, 1764) and *Pennatula aculeata* Danielssen, 1860 are noted from Madeira for the first time. With the species *Veretillum cynomorium* (Pallas, 1766) already being known from the area, there are now three species of Pennatulacea recorded from Madeira.

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INTRODUCTION

During SCUBA dives along the coasts of Madeira and Porto Santo Islands, the second author noted the presence of species not yet recorded for the area. Similar to previous publications (e.g. Wirtz 1998, 1999), we report here on two marine invertebrates new for the fauna of the Madeira archipelago.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The records were made while SCUBA diving at night near Caniçal, in front of the marina, on sandy bottom, in a depth down to 35 m. Animals were photographed in the field, collected, and preserved in alcohol. Voucher specimens were deposited in the collection of the Museu Municipal do Funchal (História Natural) under the numbers MMF 38527 (*Pteroeides spinosum*) and MMF 38528 (*Pennatula aculeata*). It then turned out that the MMF already contained specimens of these two species but of unknown origin: they had been encountered in the Funchal fish market: *Pteroeides spinosum* (MMF 8490, 8491) and *Pennatula aculeata* (MMF 8489).

In addition, there was a specimen of *Pteroeides spinosum* collected by M. Biscoito in about 70 m depth in the bay of Funchal in February 2000 (MMF 36815).

RESULTS

Pteroeides spinosum (Ellis, 1764)

This is a common species on sandy bottom in front of the marina near Caniçal. The first animals were encountered in about 15 m depth; the species then became more common down to at least 35 m. The species was also observed in front of the marina of Santa Cruz in 20 m depth.

Pteroeides spinosum has previously been recorded from 30 – 60 m depth in the Western Mediterranean Sea and in the Atlantic from the Gulf of Biscay to Angola; it has only recently been recorded from the Canary Islands (Brito & Ocaña 2004).

Pennatula aculeata Danielssen, 1860

An animal belonging to this species was encountered only once, in 20 m depth, on sandy bottom in front of the marina near Caniçal, at night.



Fig. 1. *Pteroeides spinosum*, in about 20 m depth near Caniçal, Madeira. Animal about 20 cm high.



Fig. 2. *Pennatula aculeata*, in about 20 m depth near Caniçal, Madeira. Animal about 20 cm long.

Instead of being embedded in the bottom, the animal was lying on the sand, as shown in figure 2.

The species has previously been recorded from 50 to more than 200 m depth in the Western Mediterranean Sea and in the Atlantic from Scandinavia to the Canary Islands (Brito & Ocaña 2004).

DISCUSSION

There is considerable confusion about the taxonomic state of many species of Pennatulacea (see for instance López-González 1993; Weinberg 2003; Brito & Ocaña 2004). This is partly due to a lack of collections. The species *Veretillum cynomorium* (Pallas, 1766) was the only pennatulid previously recorded from Madeiran waters (Brito & Ocaña 2004); colour photos of Madeiran animals in Wirtz (1995:35) and Wirtz & Debelius (2003:37). This species has a distribution similar to that of the two species noted above: Western Mediterranean Sea and in the Atlantic from northern Spain to South Africa, including the Canary Islands. Thus, there are now three shallow water Pennatulacea recorded from Madeira archipelago.

The species *Virgularia mirabilis* (Linnaeus, 1758) and *Cavernularia pusilla* (Philippi, 1835),

are two more shallow water Pennatulacea with a similar distribution pattern. They are likely to be present in Madeiran waters, as well, awaiting their discovery.

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