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Biodiversity of Turkish Marine Sponges

Bülent GÖZCELİOĞLU

The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey, Turkey
bulent.gozcelioglu@gmail.com

Aim of the study: This study aims to show the latest situation in Turkish marine sponge biodiversity. Studies on marine sponge diversity in the coastal areas of Turkey are limited. A total of 136 species of marine sponges have been recorded in the Turkish seas, with 82 species from the Aegean Sea, 63 species from the Sea of Marmara, 51 species from the Levantine Sea, and 18 species from the Black Sea.

Materials and methods: The number of Turkish sponges was determined by checking the literature. Sampling was also carried out by scuba diving with a maximum diving depth of 40 m. All samples were fixed in alcohol (70%). Species were identified at the Zoological Museum of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, using the method described in detail by Van Soest et al. in 2000.

Results: In total 136 species of marine sponges have been recorded in the Turkish seas. Seven of them have been recorded in studies by us as new to the sponge fauna of Turkey. These are the species *Haliclona sarai* (Pulitzer-Finali, 1969); *Scalarispongia scalaris* (Schmidt, 1862); *Hyrtios collectrix* (Schulze, 1880); *Dendrectilla tremitensis* Pulitzer-Finali, 1983; *Dictyonella incisa* (Schmidt, 1880); (*Axinyssa aurantiaca* (Schmidt, 1864); and *Halichondria* (*Halichondria*) *contorta* (Sarà, 1961). A new *Hymedesmia* species, *Hymedesmia* (*Hymedesmia*) *anatoliensis* sp. nov., is also described by us from the western coast of Turkey. The first report of sponges from the coasts of Turkey dates back to 1885, in which 5 sponge species were reported from the Strait of Çanakkale. The latest report on sponges of the Turkish coasts is from 2016, in which 5 sponge species were reported from the Black Sea. This study summarizes the biodiversity of the marine sponges of Turkey. In the Greek Aegean Sea, in contrast, more than 200 sponge species have been reported. Therefore, it is expected that the number of known sponge species of Turkey will increase significantly with further fieldwork.

Keywords: *Hymedesmia*, new species, Demospongiae, Turkey.