

Gnathostomulida from the Otago Peninsula, southern New Zealand

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Abstract

Ten species of Gnathostomulida, three new to science, are reported from the SE end of South Island, New Zealand: *Haplognathia asymmetrica*, *H. gubbarnorum*, *H. rosea*, *H. ruberrima*, *Pterognathia sica*, *P. ugera*, *P. tuatara* n. sp., *P. portobello* n. sp., *Gnathostomula* cf. *salotae* and *Austrognatharia australis* n. sp. This paper brings the number of species known from New Zealand to 12, of species known from the Pacific Ocean to 43, and of described gnathostomulid species worldwide to 98.

Key words: Gnathostomulida, marine interstitial fauna, New Zealand

Introduction

Gnathostomulida are a phylum of microscopic, non-segmented marine worms that occur, sometimes in large numbers, in sand enriched with organic detritus as found on sheltered beaches and intertidal flats, coastal ponds, and near coral reefs, sea grasses and mangroves (Sterrer 1998). The phylum may be most closely related to Rotifera, Acanthocephala and Micrognathozoa within the superphylum Gnathifera, as suggested on the basis of ultrastructural (Rieger & Tyler 1995, Sørensen 2003) and rDNA evidence (Giribet et al. 2000; but see Giribet et al. 2004). Distinguished mainly by a strictly monociliated epidermis and a bilaterally symmetric muscular pharynx that usually contains complex cuticular mouth parts, Gnathostomulida comprises two orders (Sterrer 1972, Sørensen et al. 2006): Filospermoidea (with two families, three genera and 26 species) and Bursovaginoidea; the latter with two suborders, Scleroperalia (with nine families, 19 genera and 45 species) and Conophoralia (with one family, three genera and 22 species).

Of 93 species described to date, many have cosmopolitan distribution. Six species in three genera had been known from the Pacific (Gerlach 1958, Riedl 1971, Ehlers & Ehlers