

NAVICULA VALERIANA, A BRACKISH EPIBENTHIC DIATOM FROM SOUTH AMERICA: DISCUSSION ABOUT ITS TAXONOMIC POSITION

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Navicula valeriana Metzeltin, Lange-Bertalot & García-Rodríguez was described to Laguna Rocha (34°15'S-54°17'W), Uruguay in 2005. The species was mentioned as rare and has only been so far registered to this locality. This study is devoted to analyze material of *N. valeriana* isolated by the "trapping method" from superficial sediment of the salt marsh, adjacent to the estuary Patos lagoon (31°57'S-52°06'W), Southern Brazil. The species occurred in oligo and mesohaline zones, showing the highest relative abundance (7.2%) at 15 ‰ of salinity. Specimens of this taxon from several populations were observed with more detail in scanning and transmission electron microscopes. *N. valeriana* presents lanceolate valves, rounded apices and parallel striae, slightly radiate near the apices, and the dimensions are the same as the material from Uruguay. The presence of the external longitudinal strips and striae containing rectangular poroids covered by internal hymens approximate this species to the genus *Haslea* R. Simonsen. Nevertheless, the raphe system and presence de Voight fault approaches this taxon to the genus *Navicula s.str.* This combination of morphological features is shared by *N. valeriana* and other brackish water species (*Navicula duerrenbergiana* Hustedt) and differs from all the others species assigned to *Navicula s. str.* and *Haslea*. Based on these results the generic limits of *Navicula s. str.* and *Haslea* are revised and the taxonomic position of the mentioned species is discussed.