

## World Register of marine Cave Species (WoRCS): a tool for evaluating sponge diversity in marine caves and anchialine systems of the world

**Vasilis Gerovasileiou<sup>1</sup>, Alejandro Martínez<sup>2</sup>, Leontine E. Becking<sup>3, 4</sup>, Guilherme Muricy<sup>5</sup>, Fernando Álvarez<sup>6</sup>, Geoff Boxshall<sup>7</sup>, William F. Humphreys<sup>8</sup>, Damià Jaume<sup>9</sup>, Peter J. van Hengstum<sup>10</sup>, Hiroshi Yamasaki<sup>11</sup>, Nicole Boury-Esnault<sup>12</sup>, Thierry Perez<sup>12</sup>, Eleni Voultsiadou<sup>13</sup>, Stefanie Dekeyzer<sup>14</sup>, Wim Decock<sup>14</sup>, Bart Vanhoorne<sup>14</sup>, Leen Vandepitte<sup>14</sup>, Nicolas Bailly<sup>1, 15</sup>, Thomas M. Iliffe<sup>10</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Hellenic Centre for Marine Research, Greece, [vgerovas@hcmr.gr](mailto:vgerovas@hcmr.gr); <sup>2</sup> CNR-ISE, Italy; <sup>3</sup> Marine Animal Ecology, Animal Science Group, Wageningen University, Netherlands; <sup>4</sup> Naturalis Biodiversity Center, Netherlands; <sup>5</sup> Departamento de Invertebrados, Museu Nacional, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; <sup>6</sup> Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico; <sup>7</sup> Department of Life Sciences, Natural History Museum, UK; <sup>8</sup> Department of Terrestrial Zoology, Western Australian Museum, Australia; <sup>9</sup> IMEDEA (CSIC-UIB), Mediterranean Institute for Advanced Studies, Spain; <sup>10</sup> Texas A&M University at Galveston, USA; <sup>11</sup> Leibniz Institute for Evolution and Biodiversity; Museum für Naturkunde, Germany; <sup>12</sup> IMBE-UMR7263 CNRS, Université d'Aix-Marseille, Station Marine d'Endoume, France; <sup>13</sup> School of Biology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece; <sup>14</sup> Flanders Marine Institute/Vlaams Instituut voor de Zee (VLIZ), Belgium; <sup>15</sup> FishBase Information and Research Group, Philippines

As reservoirs of sponge diversity, marine caves have attracted the interest of sponge researchers from around the world at an early stage. The need to compile all the existing largely scattered information on the sponge diversity of this unique ecosystem has been recently recognized and some regional overviews came out. The World Register of marine Cave Species – WoRCS ([www.marinespecies.org/worcs](http://www.marinespecies.org/worcs)), a Thematic Species Database of the World Register of Marine Species – WoRMS, offers a valuable resource for an integrated approach to this issue. The aim of WoRCS is to create a comprehensive taxonomic and ecological database of species known from marine caves and anchialine environments worldwide. Within this thematic database, the cave-related information is managed by the WoRCS thematic editors in collaboration with the taxonomic editors of WoRMS, who manage the taxonomic content. The database is an online open source and includes information on the biology, ecology, and distribution of all species. Data on sponge distribution in marine caves are linked to the Gazetteer of the Marine and Anchialine Systems of the World, which is part of the Marine Regions information system and includes geographical and geological information for all study areas. Currently, the database includes 1629 species belonging to 19 phyla as well as 573 relevant literature sources. With 423 accepted species, Porifera is the richest in species phylum of sessile metazoans in the database, covering 26% of the existing records. Demosponges predominate with 365 species, followed by 33 calcareans, 24 homoscleromorphs and 1 hexactinellid. In their attempt to catalogue the world sponge diversity in marine caves, the WoRCS thematic editors and collaborators have initiated an exhaustive overview of all sources, including unpublished data from their expeditions. Herein the followed methodology, available sources and tools along with preliminary results of this initiative are presented. The main goal of this initiative is to describe distribution patterns in this fragmented ecosystem, to highlight unique elements of sponge diversity and provide a baseline for future conservation actions.

### Sponge biodiversity of the shallow sublittoral Antarctic Peninsula

**Claire Goodwin<sup>1</sup>, Katharine Hendry<sup>2</sup>, Jade Berman<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Atlantic Reference Centre, Huntsman Marine Science Centre, St Andrews, NB, Canada [claire.goodwin@huntsmanmarine.ca](mailto:claire.goodwin@huntsmanmarine.ca)

<sup>2</sup> Department of Earth Sciences, University of Bristol, UK

<sup>3</sup> Ulster Wildlife Trust, Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK

Currently the diversity and abundance of sponges on shallow Antarctic reefs is likely to have been significantly underestimated (Cardenas et al. 2016). The difficulty of identifying sponges *in situ* has led to them being recorded simply as 'Porifera' in many studies, despite often being the dominant phylum on Antarctic hard substrates. We collected sponge specimens from 22 sites (0-24m depth) spanning from King George Island, South Shetland Islands (62°12.185'S) to Jenny Island, Marguerite Bay (67°43.325'S). Sampling was undertaken by SCUBA which enabled study of the large boulders and bedrock walls, these tend to be particularly sponge rich and unlikely be well sampled by remote methods. The survey was carried out from a 26.5m vessel which enabled access to sites inaccessible to larger vessels; these included little studied areas such as the Biscoe Islands. In total 309 specimens were collected encompassing 24 species of which four were new to science. Records of the appearance of sponge were obtained, including some which have not previously been