

SHORT COMMUNICATION

First record of the starfish *Goniaster tessellatus* at Madeira Island

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Wirtz, Peter and J. Machado 2022. First record of the starfish *Goniaster tessellatus* at Madeira Island. *Arquipelago*. Life and Marine Sciences 38: 23 - 25.
<https://doi.org/10.25752/arq.28469>

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INTRODUCTION

Numerous new records of marine species, have been made at Madeira Island in recent years (e. g. Ramalhosa et al. 2014, 2017, Wirtz 2020 a, Wirtz & Araujo 2021). Some of these species appear to have extended their range northwards (e. g. Wirtz & Berenger 2017, Schäfer et al. 2019, Wirtz 2021), possibly due to global warming (Siemer et al. 2021).

Eleven shallow-water starfish species are known from Madeira Island (Wirtz 2020 b). We report here on one more species previous unrecorded for Madeiran waters.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

All observations were made while scuba diving. Comparative observations of the same species were made at various locations from the Cape Verde Islands and São Tomé Island. No specimens were collected.

RESULTS

A single individual of the starfish species

Goniaster tessellatus (Lamarck, 1816) was seen and photographed 14 August 2021 at about 10 m depth just west of Funchal harbour, 32°38'30''N 16°55'05''W. (Figure 1). Apparently, the same individual was then seen repeatedly in the same area until 31 August 2021.

DISCUSSION

Goniaster tessellatus is an amphi-Atlantic species (Clark & Downey 1992). In the western Atlantic, it is known from North Carolina to Brazil, including the West Indies and Gulf of Mexico; in the Eastern Atlantic it has been recorded from São Tomé northwards to Morocco, including the Cabo Verde Islands but not the Canary Islands (Halpern 1970, Pérez-Ruzafa *et al.* 2000, Wirtz 2003). At São Tomé and at the Cabo Verde Islands, the species is dark red (Figure 2). The Madeira individual has a much paler colour. It may have come from a different population. In the Western Atlantic the species is quite variable in colour (https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/255639-goniaster-tessellatus/browse_photos) and a colour pattern similar to the Madeiran one has been observed there (<https://twitter.com/echinoblog/status/781257392268906497>).



Figure 1: *Goniaster tessellatus* at Madeira Island (photo Jorge Machado)



Figure 2: *Goniaster tessellatus* at São Vicente Island, Cabo Verde (photo Peter Wirtz).

The site of discovery of the Madeiran individual is less than 2 km from the main port of Funchal city. Thus, it may have been transported to Madeira Island by marine traffic.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to Wilfried and Ralf of Madeira Divepoint at the Pestana Hotel Madeira Carlton.

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