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## ABUNDANCE AND SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF PHYLLOSOMA LARVAE OF *SCYLLARUS* SPP. (CRUSTACEA: DECAPODA) IN THE NW MEDITERRANEAN

Sandra Mallol, Francisco Alemany, David Díaz and Raquel Goñi

Centro Oceanográfico de Baleares. Instituto Español de Oceanografía. Muelle de Poniente s/n, 07015 Palma de Mallorca; email of presenting author: [sandra@ba.ieo.es](mailto:sandra@ba.ieo.es)

In the Mediterranean Sea phyllosoma larvae belong to 6 species from 4 genera within the Decapod families Scyllaridae and Palinuridae. There is currently little knowledge on the taxonomy, biology and ecology of phyllosoma stages from these families. This study, based on zooplankton samples caught off the Balearic Islands between 2001 and 2005, is the first to document the abundance and spatial distribution of phyllosoma larvae in NW Mediterranean waters. In each annual survey, carried out in June-July, we sampled a regular grid of about 200 stations each 10 nautical miles apart. Quantitative double-oblique plankton tows were carried out at each station between 70 m depth to the surface with Bongo 60 nets fitted with 333 micron mesh, as well as CTD casts from 300 or 650 m to the surface. Moreover, in the 2001 and 2002 surveys, additional plankton samples were obtained at the intermediate points between stations by means of subsurface tows carried out with Bongo 90 nets equipped with 2 mm mesh. A total of 417 phyllosoma larvae of genus *Scyllarus* were identified from the Bongo 60 and 90 samples, with the notable absence of any members of the family Palinuridae. Specimens from 2004 and 2005 surveys (82 individuals) were measured (total length, carapace length and carapace width) and their developmental stage was determined in order to define morphotypes, as a first step to classify them at species level. We discuss the abundance and distribution of such *Scyllarus* sp. phyllosoma larvae in relation to mesoscale hydrographic features and environmental variables.