

CHARACTERISATION OF THE CRAB *NEOSARMATIUM MEINERTI* DE MAN (DECAPODA: SESARMINAE) PREDATION ON *AVICENNIA MARINA* PROPAGULES

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Mangrove forests are essential for coastal and reef protection. It is an ecosystem providing protection from sedimentation and a range of goods and utilities for local population (Walters *et al.*, 2008). *Avicennia marina* is a pioneering mangrove species. This tree plays an important role in the colonization and the recolonization of mangroves (Osborn and Berjak., 1997) as it is one of the first species to settle in unforested and deforested areas (loc. cit.). *Neosarmatium meinerti* is a herbivorous crab, feeding essentially of leaves fallen on the ground and propagules (Dahdouh-Guebas *et al.*, 1997). The propagule predation has a direct impact on mangrove regeneration (Bosire *et al.*, 2005) and therefore on their dynamics. In this perspective we intend to characterize this predation and assess its impact on mangrove forest dynamics and especially on *Avicennia marina*. We focus on the time and amount of propagules predated upon and on interactions amongst the predators during feeding.

References

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