

**MACROBENTHIC MOLLUSC ASSEMBLAGES AND DIVERSITY IN WEST ANTARCTICA FROM THE
LOW ISLAND (SOUTH SHETLAND) TO THE BELLINGSHAUSEN SEA**

J.S. Troncoso¹, C. Aldea²

1 - Universidad de Vigo, Departamento de Ecología y Biología Animal, Vigo, Spain

*2 - Universidad de Vigo, Departamento de Ecología y Biología Animal, Vigo, Spain and CEQUA, Punta Arenas, Chile
troncoso@uvigo.es*

Although frequent studies have been made on the benthos assemblages living in the Southern Ocean, few studies have dealt with molluscan assemblages and ecology. During the research programs BENTART carried out in austral summers of 2003 and 2006, forty-five stations in a study area including the Low Islands, West Antarctic Peninsula, Bellingshausen Sea and Peter I Island, were sampled using quantitative box-corer, Agassiz trawl, epibenthic sledge and rock dredge, at depths of 53-3304 m. These data were used to search and analyse the malacological assemblages. A total of 2,889 living specimens of molluscs belonging to 139 species of shelled Gastropoda, Bivalvia and Scaphopoda were recoded. Gastropods were the best-represented in species richness, but the bivalves accounted the major abundance and *Cyamiocardium denticulatum* (460 individuals) was the most abundant species. Species richness varied from 1 to 37 species and diversity showed great variations at different stations. The clustering analysis applying the Bray-Curtis coefficient allowed species classification according to constancy and fidelity, and distinguished four groups of stations of low similarities and some differences in faunistic composition: one that gathers the Antarctic Peninsula and Peter I Island, one that also includes the Low Island, and two composed by stations of Bellingshausen Sea.