

MOLPADIA MUSCULUS RISSO, 1826 (ECHINODERMATA, HOLOTHUROIDEA) FROM THE SHALLOW WATER ZONE, ADMIRALTY BAY, KING GEORGE ISLAND, ANTARCTICA

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Most species of molpadid sea cucumbers occur in deep water and represent a poorly known group of the benthic fauna. The body is sausage shaped narrowed posteriorly into a caudal appendage. They possess reduced or absent tube feet along the body wall, and oral disk bearing from 10 to 15 small digitate tentacles arranged in circle around the mouth. *Molpadia* differs from other genus of Molpadidae by its calcareous deposits that include anchors, rosettes of racquet-shaped plates, tables and fusiform rods. Phosphatic deposits can be present or absent. The genus *Molpadia* is widely spread around the oceans of the world. *Molpadia musculus* had been previously recorded in deep sea areas around Antarctica, especially near the South Shetland Islands by the USNS Eltanin 6-26 (1962-1977), USCGC Eastwind (1966) and US Staten Island (1962-1963) expeditions. Only during the latter expedition 3 specimens were collected from shallow water, one of which in Admiralty Bay, King George Island, and since then no other record was made of this species in this area. Recently, a total of 25 specimens of *Molpadia musculus* were collected in Martel Inlet, close to the Brazilian Antarctic Station Comandante Ferraz (62°08'S, 58°24'W) and Botany Point (62°09'S, 58°34'W), from 20 to 55m. Samples were acquired using a van Veen grab (0,056m²), a mini Box Corer (0,0623 m²), and a dredge (0,24m²) during the Brazilian Antarctic Expeditions XXI, XXII, XXIII and XXIV, austral summers 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05, and 2005-06 respectively. The specimens are red to violet in colour. Their calcareous deposits include fusiform rods with up to seven central perforations. Dark orange phosphate deposits are abundant and aggregated, especially in the mid-body section. This study aims to contribute to the knowledge of the distribution and taxonomy of molpadid sea cucumbers from the Antarctic shallow water benthic fauna.