

PERSPECTIVES OF MARINE BIODIVERSITY STUDIES IN ARGENTINA

PERSPECTIVAS DE LOS ESTUDIOS SOBRE BIODIVERSIDAD MARINA EN LA ARGENTINA

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of the research being carried out at the moment by a group of Argentinean scientists working on the subjects of marine biodiversity and oceanography. When the idea of the Census of Marine Life (CoML) was proposed following the Symposium held during the IAPSO-IABO conference in Mar del Plata in October 2001, there was a wide response from the marine scientific community. Information about current research projects, as well as plans for future work in the context of the CoML, were then obtained from about 70 scientists (Appendix I) belonging to 12 institutions located along the Argentinean coast (Appendix II, Figure 1). This has been used to illustrate what is currently being pursued in marine biodiversity in Argentina and which subjects are considered as priority for future research in the area. This paper is, thus, not an historical update of the knowledge of marine biodiversity, but it attempts to give an idea of the current situation and what is planned for the future. The development of an extensive database of what is known on marine biodiversity in the region is considered to be a necessity, but it constitutes a complete project on its own; as such it is included in the proposals for future work (see Future Work in this paper). It is emphasised that this synthesis is not exhaustive in the content of the topics being studied or in the number of researchers working in marine biodiversity in the country. It is, though, considered to be a representative sample of the knowledge in marine science in Argentina today. This is a starting point for the CoML project in South America and it is hoped that, as it develops, it will be improved by the active participation, advice and experience of many other scientists in the region.

KEYWORDS: Oceanography, census of marine life.