Abstract

Marine zooplankton research in Brazil has been primarily descriptive, with most studies focusing on community structure analysis and related issues. The composition and spatial distribution of several taxonomic groups are currently well known, although less-abundant and small-sized taxa as well as initial stages of almost all species have received little attention. Some numerically important taxa such as heterotrophic protists, ctenophores, acocel turbellarians and ostracods remain virtually unstudied. Large sectors of the continental shelf have not been sampled in detail, particularly those areas influenced by the North Brazil Current (5°N-15°S). Zooplankton abundance and biomass in offshore waters have seldom been quantified, and information on the distribution and vertical migration of meso- and bathypelagic species are lacking. Additional faunistic assessments must target those less-studied taxa and geographical locations. However, priority in ecological studies should be given to process-oriented investigations aimed at understanding the mechanisms controlling zooplankton distribution, trophic interactions within pelagic food webs and production cycles in relation to the physical environment. An effort should be made to incorporate state-of-the-art sampling technology and analytical methods into future research projects.

Keywords

marine zooplankton, ecology, taxonomy, Southwest Atlantic