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Folk classification of sea sponges (Animalia, Porifera) by artisanal fishermen of a traditional fishing community at Camamu Bay, Bahia, Brazil
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Abstract

The folk classification of sea sponges by artisanal fishermen is presented by discussing how they recognize, label and classify these marine organisms. Research was carried out in the county of Pontal do Contrato, at Camamu Bay, Bahia State, Brazil. Fieldwork was accomplished from January to May 2008 by means of open-ended interviews, projective tests and direct observation, which were performed with 66 artisanal fishermen, both men and women, whose ages ranged from 18 to 75 years old. The data were analyzed following Berlin's principles of folk biological classification, as well as through Venn diagrams, ethnosemantic analyses and similarity indexes. The results show that sea sponges are perceived as kinds of plants, and grouped together with cnidarians, ascidians and algae within a broader ethnocategory labeled as 'slime'. The majority of the interviewees recognized poriferans through physical attributes such as color patterns, body shape and consistency. However, sea sponges are preferably named taking into account their color patterns. Studying the way people recognize and classify sponges may assist wildlife inventories and appropriate conservation strategies for possibly endangered species.

Keywords

Ethnospongiology / Ethnotaxonomy / Fishing Community / Sea Sponges / Traditional Knowledge.

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