

The invasive bryozoan *Zoobotryon verticillatum* has arrived at Madeira Island

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Abstract

The invasive bryozoan *Zoobotryon verticillatum* Delle Chiaje, 1822 is recorded from Madeira for the first time. Apparently it has been growing on the floating pontoons of Quinta do Lorde harbor, at the southeastern coast of Madeira Island, for some time already.

Key words: Bryozoa, north-eastern Atlantic, invasive species

The bryozoan *Zoobotryon verticillatum* Delle Chiaje, 1822, commonly known as “spaghetti bryozoan” grows in large clumps resembling a brown alga (Figure 1). It can attain lengths exceeding one meter. Today, it is considered a cosmopolitan species, known from the south-eastern United States, the Mediterranean Sea, Bermuda, California, Hawaii, the Seychelles, Australia, and elsewhere; however, its current world-wide distribution may well be due to the fact that the species readily grows on boat hulls and is being spread by man; the species has been recorded as an introduced or invasive species in many places all over the world, recently also at the Azores (Amat and Tempera 2009 and references therein). *Z. verticillatum* may overgrow and smother local fauna and flora, clog seawater pipes and affect navigation (references in Amat and Tempera 2009) and has therefore been listed as one of the 24 least wanted invasive species by the United States Early Detection Program (Nagy 2006).

Prompted by the discovery of the species at the Azores, the first author searched for this invasive bryozoan at Madeira Island on 28 May 2009. It took all of ten minutes to discover it growing on ropes and on the floating pontoons of

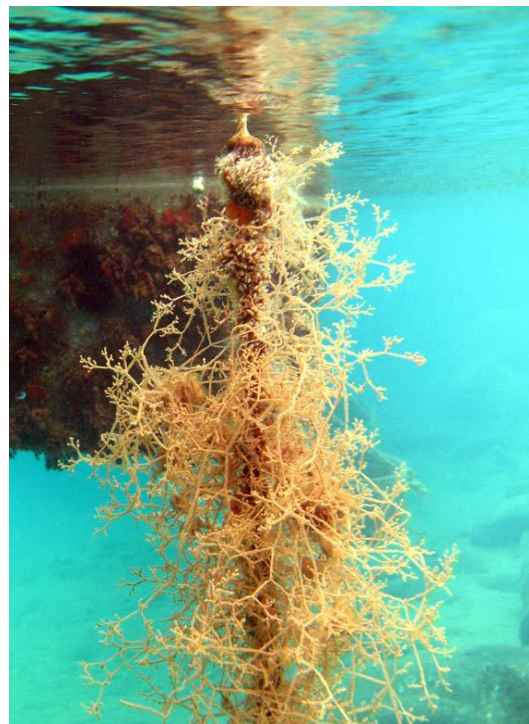


Figure 1. *Zoobotryon verticillatum* in the harbor of Quinta do Lorde, Madeira Island, 28 May 2009 (Photograph by J. Canning-Clode)

Quinta do Lorde harbor (32°44'30"N, 16°42'40"W) at the southeastern coast of Madeira (Figure 1).

The harbor of Quinta do Lorde was one of the study sites of the Ph.D. thesis of the second author which explores global diversity patterns in marine fouling communities (Canning-Clode 2008). Upon searching the field notes of this project, it was found that *Z. verticillatum* had already been recorded (as unidentified species, possibly a brown alga) on 29/04/2008, i.e. even before its recent discovery at the Azores (Amat and Tempera 2009).

A voucher specimen of *Z. verticillatum* from Quinta do Lorde harbor has been deposited at the Museu Municipal (História Natural) in Funchal, Madeira, under the number MMF 40168.

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