

CORINA COVIAGA, GABRIELA CUSMINSKY, ALEJANDRA PATRICIA PERÉZ  
ANALÍA DÍAZ, ANTJE SCHWALB, MARTA ALPERIN, FINN VIEHBERG,  
ROBIN WHATLEY, DANIEL ARIZTEGUI & VERA MARKGRAF

DISTRIBUTION AND ECOLOGY OF FRESHWATER OSTRACODS  
FROM NORTHERN PATAGONIA: AN APPROACH

There are only a few studies about the ostracod faunal assemblages and their environmental requirements from Patagonia (e.g. CUSMINSKY *et al.*, 2011; RAMÓN MERCAU *et al.*, 2012). Here we present the results of a survey of thirteen water bodies (streams, springs, temporary habitats) in Northern Patagonia (39° 52' – 41° 50' S; 70° 36' – 71° 27' W) and their comparison with those of previous studies in the eastern Patagonia. The goal of this research is to enhance our understanding of the regional Patagonian ostracoda fauna and evaluate the relationship between ostracod species and physical and chemical (depth, temperature, pH, conductivity, dissolved oxygen concentration, seston and main ions) parameters of host waters along a W-E precipitation gradient (ranging from 1200 to 160mm/annually). To date, seven species were identified: *Amphicypris nobilis* Sars 1901, *Bradleystrandesia fusca* (Jurine, 1820), *Cypridopsis vidua* (O. F. Müller, 1776), *Cypris pubera* O. F. Müller 1776, *Eucypris virens* (Jurine, 1820), *Heterocypris incongruens* (Ramdohr, 1808) and *Tonnacypris lutaria* (Koch, 1838). The more frequent species were *T. lutaria* and *E. virens*, while *A. nobilis* and *C. vidua* were only found in one site. Males of *A. nobilis* were found while the other species were represented only by females. The environment of this fauna is related to low conductivity and salinity in the water. Conversely, previous studies in the easternmost area of Patagonia have shown different fauna such as *Penthesinelula incae* (Delachaux, 1928), *Potamocypris smaradigma* (Vávra, 1891), *Ilyocypris ramirezi* Cusminsky and Whatley, 1996, *Limnocythere patagonica* Cusminsky and Whatley, 1996, *Eucypris fontana* (Graf, 1931), *Kapcypridopsis megapodus*

Cusminsky *et al.* 2005 and *Limnocythere rionegroensis*, Cusminsky and Whatley, 1996 living in comparatively higher conductivity (CUSMINSKY *et al.*, 2011). The latter suggest that the decreasing precipitation trend towards eastern Patagonia is reflected in the distribution of different ostracod fauna association. On the other hand, new distributions of cosmopolitan species are present, spreading out their geographical distribution to the Neotropical region (MARTENS *et al.*, 2008). Some of the species such as *C. pubera*, *E. virens* and *B. fuscata* have been also described in the Neartic region, suggesting that birds could be responsible to their dispersion. However, the mode of dispersion of *T. lutaria* in this region is still an open question.

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*Authors' Addresses* — C. COVIAGA, G. CUSMINSKY, A.P. PERÉZ, Department of Ecology, INIBIOMA - Comahue University, Quintral 1250, San Carlos de Bariloche (Argentina); e-mail: corinacoviaga@gmail; gcusminsky@gmail.com; perezfotolab@gmail.com; A. DÍAZ, Department of Invertebrate Zoology II, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Museum, La Plata University, Paseo del Bosque s/n, B1900FWA, La Plata (Argentina); e-mail: ostracodiaz@fcnym.unlp.edu.ar.; A. SCHWALB, Institute of Geosystem and Bioindication Technical University of Braunschweig, Langer Kamp 19c, D-38106 Braunschweig (Germany); M. ALPERIN, Department of Statistics, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Museum, La Plata University, Calle 64 N°3 (e/Diag. 113 y 120), 1900 La Plata (Argentina); e-mail: alperin@fcnym.unlp.edu.ar; F. VIEHBERG, Institute of Geology and Mineralogy, University of Cologne, Zùlpicherstrasse 49a, D-50674 Köln (Germany); R. WHATLEY, Department of Geology, Institute of Earth Studies, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, Cardiganshire, SY23 3DB (UK); D. ARIZTEGUI, Section of Earth & Environmental Sciences, University of Geneva, Rue des Maraichers 13, 1205, Geneva (Switzerland); V. MARKGRAF, INSTAAR, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309-0450, and Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ 86001 (U.S.A.).