

e-Taxonomy of Bryozoans

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Bryozoans are important as potential habitat forming organisms, indicators of environmental health, known sources of biomedical compounds and amongst the top taxa that contribute to fouling. The available literature indicates that at present 296 bryozoan species are known from South Africa. The majority of these species have been described during the last century with sampling effort focused on the deep-waters of the south-east coast and shallow waters of the west coast of South Africa (see Florence et. al., 2007). More recently, research by partner institutions and programmes such as DEA, DAFF, SAEON, SANBI and ACEP has been focused on broadening sampling effort and focusing on deeper water benthic invertebrate indicator taxa in order to gain an understanding of the patterns of diversity of the entire region and from deeper bathymetric ranges. However, beyond the capacity of the current applicant no appropriate tools exist for the biodiversity applied researcher to identify bryozoan species (or more specifically those bryozoan species of interest). This project aims to provide modern e-taxonomy tools that include online image rich keys, genetic barcodes and high quality specimen occurrence data of South African bryozoan species that are collated from local and international natural history collections.