

Egg capsules of *Atlantoraja cyclophora* (Regan, 1903) and *A. platana* (Günther, 1880) (Pisces, Elasmobranchii, Rajidae)

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Abstract

Egg capsules of *Atlantoraja cyclophora* and *A. platana* are asymmetrical, dorsally convex and ventrally flat, with longitudinally striated faces. Those of other rajoid genera occurring in Cassino Beach (Rio Grande do Sul State, Brazil), *Psammobatis*, *Sympterygia* and *Rioraja*, are equally convex in lateral view, and have smooth faces. In *Atlantoraja* the egg capsules are laterally keeled while in *Sympterygia* a lateral flange exists. Mean egg capsule length and width are 68 and 39 mm in *A. cyclophora*, and 69 and 45 mm in *A. platana*. Egg capsules of *A. platana* are significantly wider than those of *A. cyclophora* with anterior and posterior horns significantly longer. The outline of the velum is convex in dorsal view in *A. cyclophora* and slightly convex in *A. platana*.

Key words: Rajidae, egg capsule, western South Atlantic, *Atlantoraja*, taxonomy, morphology

Introduction

Skate egg capsules, both empty and bearing embryos, are often found in temperate and tropical waters (Gomes & Carvalho 1995). The capsules are fairly distinct and can be identified to genus and occasionally to species, providing information on the distribution and reproductive biology of skates. Egg capsules have been described for some skates of the continental shelf of the western South Atlantic (Mabragaña *et al.* 2002; Oddone & Vooren 2002). The egg capsules of two additional continental shelf species, *Atlantoraja cyclophora* and *A. platana*, are described in this manuscript.

Materials & methods

Thirty-seven egg capsules of *A. cyclophora* and 19 of *A. platana* were obtained from female specimens captured by bottom trawl during August-September 2001 and March-April 2002 off southern Brazil. The specimens were captured between latitudes 30°40'S