Zoological Studies **59:**pp (2020)

Diversity of Bvalve Mollusks Associated with Macroalgae on the Continental Shelf of the States of Alagoas, Sergipe and Bahia, Northeastern Brazil

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Received 7 May 2020 / Accepted 6 September 2020 / Published xx October 2020

Communicated by Yoko Nozawa

The phytal environment is a complex system involving the association of marine organisms and macroalgae. In this paper, we investigate the diversity of bivalves associated with macroalgae on the continental shelf between the states of Alagoas and Bahia, including Sergipe, in northeastern Brazil. Macroalgae and associated fauna were collected during two sampling campaigns under the MARSEAL project (February and July 2011 [dry and rainy seasons, respectively]), covering 24 stations and three isobaths (10, 25 and 50 m). The following ecological descriptors were calculated: abundance (N), richness (S), diversity (H') and evenness (J). A total of 1384 individuals from 20 families, 28 genera and 44 species were obtained. Arcidae was the most abundant group, followed by the families Pteriidae and Mytilidae. The most abundant species were *Arca zebra*, *Anadara* sp. 1 and *Pinctada imbricata*, representing 71% of total abundance. The families Arcidae, Corbulidae and Mytilidae were considered constant, as they occurred in more than 50% of the samples. Higher abundance was recorded in the rainy season. No seasonal differences were found regarding S, H' or J. Richness increased with the increase in depth, whereas the other indices (N, H' and J) were not influenced by bathymetry. This reveals that the 50 m isobath has greater support capacity, housing richer, more diverse fauna. The richness and composition of bivalves studied here expands information on mollusk biodiversity associated with the phytal environment on the continental shelf off northeastern Brazil.

Key words: Mollusca, Bivalvia, Phytal, Marine macrophytes, Coastal zone.

Citation: Santos L, Souza JWS, Lima S, Guimarães C. 2020. Diversity of bivalve mollusks associated with macroalgae on the continental shelf of the states of Alagoas, Sergipe and Bahia, northeastern Brazil. Zool Stud **59:**0pp. doi:-.

BACKGROUND

The coastal zone is a dynamic, productive, complex ecosystem composed of a wide variety of habitats, resulting in high faunistic and floristic diversity (Ray 1991; Rodrigues 2001; Ruttenberg and Granek 2011; Balasuriya 2018). Among the habitats in the photic zone of the continental shelf, the phytal environment is dominated by macroalgae and phanerogams (Nascimento and Rosso 2007). This is a complex system of reciprocal ecological associations between marine organisms and macrophytes (Masunari and Forneris 1981; Flynn et al. 1996; Nascimento and Rosso 2007). Marine macrophytes have considerable importance to the epibenthic fauna, serving as substrate, protection, food sources, breeding grounds and nursery as well as attenuating luminosity and hydrodynamic factors (Brawley 1992; Viejo 1999; Nakaoka et al. 2001; Chavanichi and Harris 2002).

Phytal communities composed of marine invertebrates associated with macrophytes are abundant and diversified (Johnson and Scheibling 1987; Taylor and Cole 1994; Jacobucci and Leite 2002; Leite and Turra 2003). Members of the phylum Mollusca are among the most representative marine invertebrates in these communities (Chemello and Milazzo 2002; Jacobucci and Leite 2002; Jacobucci et al. 2006; Leite et al. 2009; Nascimento and Rosso 2007). Gastropods and bivalves are the main groups of mollusks and marine organisms in the metazoan community of the phytal environment (Tararan and Wakabara 1981; Viejo 1999; Jacobucci and Leite 2002; Lacerda et al. 2009; Barros and Rocha-Barreira 2010).

Mollusks of the class Bivalvia are commonly representative components of phytal communities (Masunari 1983; Leite and Turra 2003; Jacobucci et al. 2006; Nascimento and Rosso 2007; Lacerda et al. 2009). A number of studies have demonstrated the ecological importance of bivalves as numerous, frequent metazoans of phytal environments (Masunari 1983; Leite and Turra

2003; Jacobucci et al. 2006; Lacerda et al. 2009; Miloslavich and Huck 2009; Rosenfeld et al. 2017), the abundance and density of which varies significantly among macroalgal species (Johnson and Scheibling 1987).

Greater knowledge is needed on the bivalve community associated with macrophytes on the continental shelf off northeastern Brazil in view of the ecological importance of the group and to assist in the protection and management of coastal biodiversity.

The aim of the present study was to investigate the diversity of bivalves associated with macroalgae on the continental shelf from the southern portion of the state of Alagoas to the northern portion of the state of Bahia in northeastern Brazil.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area

The continental shelf off the state of Alagoas is approximately 220 km long and its width ranges from 20 to 40 km. It is delimited to the south (state of Sergipe) by the mouth of the São Francisco River. The continental slope of Alagoas begins between 60 and 80 m in depth. The shelf is characterized by an uneven, irregular relief involving several environments formed by fluvial sedimentation, Holocene and Pleistocene marine terraces, carbonate sediments, calcareous and chalky sands, sand, mud, algae, coral and sandstone reefs (Araújo et al. 2006; Fontes et al. 2017).

The coast of the state of Sergipe (10º30'–11º40'S, 37º25'–36º10' W) is 168 km long (Guimarães 2010; Lemos Júnior 2011) and involves the continental shelf and the beginning of the continental slope (Guimarães and Landim 2017). It is a depositional environment with a smooth declivity, small width (between 12 to 35 km) and variable depths (mean: 41 m) at the limit between continental shelf and slope (Guimarães 2010; Lemos Júnior et al. 2014; Fontes et al. 2017; Guimarães and Landim 2017). The shelf is strongly influenced by the intense river inputs, especially the estuaries of the São Francisco River to the north, the Japaratuba, Sergipe and Vaza-Barris Rivers and the Piauí-Fundo-Real river complex to the south (Guimarães 2010; Lemos Júnior 2011; Knopper et al. 2018), which give rise to five submarine canyons (Guimarães 2010; Lemos Júnior et al. 2014; Oliveira Junior et al. 2017). This environment is dominated by fine terrigenous sediment, a sandy bottom in the coastal region and a gravel bottom in deeper regions (Guimarães 2010; Fontes et al. 2017; Guimarães and Landim 2017).

The continental shelf off the state of Bahia is the narrowest in the country with an average width of 14 km, with the beginning of the continental slope (in front of city of Salvador) at a depth of about 50 m. The transition from the inner to the outer continental shelf has a marked gradient. The inner continental shelf goes out to the 20 m isobath, while the outer continental shelf is between the 30 m and 50 m isobaths. The shelf has rocky outcrops and hard substrates at the edge, enabling the formation of reef constructions, siliciclastic and bioclast componentes, with the predominance of fragments of coral algae, mollusks, foraminifera and bryozoans in some areas. There is essentially carbonate sedimentation covering part of the consolidated substrate and recesses in the margin where a sharp retreat is found with the deposition of thin sediments (Dominguez et al. 2011).

Sampling design

The bivalve fauna associated with macroalgae considered in this study were collected during oceanographic sampling campaigns carried out in February and July 2011 (dry and rainy seasons, respectively) under the MARSEAL project – Environmental Characterization of Sergipe and Alagoas Basin, coordinated by Petrobras/Cenpes, in the Sergipe-Alagoas Basin, northeastern Brazil. Twenty-four stations were sampled between 10°36' to 11°21'S and 36°32' to 37°05'W. These stations were distributed in eight transects (A to H) along depths of 10, 25 and 50 m (Fig. 1). Each sampling event involved bottom trawls performed using fishing trawlers with net sizes and mesh openings: 50 mm in the sleeve, 40 mm in the body and 26 mm in the drawer (Carneiro and Arguelho 2018). The trawlings were diurnal and lasted approximately 30 min at a speed of 2 to 2.5 knots, carried out in the opposite direction to the prevailing sea current. The coordinates shown (Table 1) represent the midpoint between the start and end coordinates of the drag.

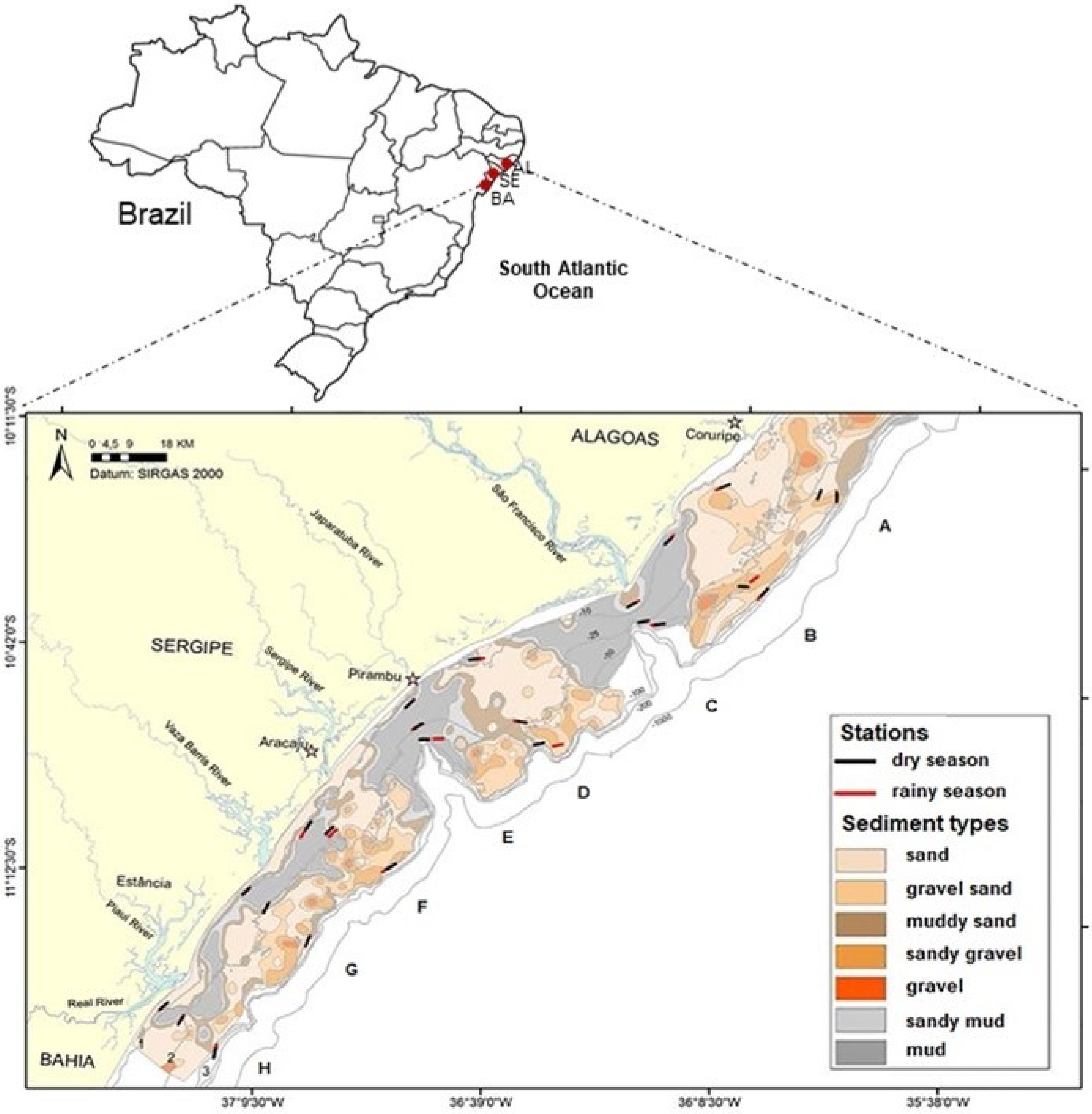

Fig. 1. Map of study area showing sampling stations and transects on the continental shelf between the southern portion of the state of Alagoas (AL) and the northern portion of the state of Bahia (BA), including the state of Sergipe (SE), during oceanographic campaigns conducted in February and July 2011 (Carneiro and Arguelho 2018).

Table 1. Geographic coordinates (SIRGAS 2000) show midpoint between start and end of the trawlings. Oceanographic campaigns carried out in February and July 2011

Station	Coordinates		Depth
	x	y	
A1	807103.72	8862859.78	10 m
A2	830916.53	8862189.55	25 m

A3	835234.61	8860839.75	50 m
B1	795260.13	8849649.61	10 m
B2	815935.95	8840373.82	25 m
B3	818232.21	8836817.84	50 m
C1	787288.88	8833271.62	10 m
C2	789893.64	8828868.86	25 m
C3	792974.52	8828232.73	50 m
D1	749725.19	8817701.98	10 m
D2	760609.30	8802660.27	25 m
D3	770510.18	8797283.35	50 m
E1	733813.90	8805712.77	10 m
E2	735635.38	8800020.33	25 m
E3	740730.52	8797459.45	50 m
F1	709695.25	8772501.83	10 m
F2	716955.40	8772951.71	25 m
F3	730893.14	8764884.31	50 m
G1	697031.20	8757925.49	10 m
G2	701339.44	8752870.67	25 m
G3	711976.07	8745238.54	50 m
H1	677573.24	8727459.93	10 m
H2	682342.64	8724538.79	25 m
H3	691110.92	8716999.39	50 m

Laboratory procedures, identification and analysis

Collected leafy macroalgae and associated fauna were immediately stored in a cold container. All material was sent to the Coastal Ecosystems Laboratory at the Federal University of Sergipe (LABEC/UFS) for washing on a 500 μm sieve and fixation with formaldehyde. Bivalves were separated from other taxa and identified mainly based on Rios (2009), Tunnell Jr. et al. (2010) and Redfern (2013). Juvenile mollusks and individuals with damaged shells were considered only to make up the total abundance of the community. Specimens were preserved in 70% ethanol and deposited at the scientific zoological collection of Federal University of Sergipe (CZUFS), Sergipe, Brazil.

We estimated Bivalvia richness and abundance at each station where macroalgae were to be found. The frequency of occurrence (FO) of each taxon was determined by dividing the total number of stations at which the taxon was found by the total number of stations with bivalves and multiplying by 100. Frequency was classified based on Dajoz (1983): species present in more than 50% of the samples were considered constant; those found between 25 and 50% were considered common; and those found in less than 25% of the samples were classified as rare. Taxa identified on the genus level were considered for the determination of richness when only one species of the genus was found.

The structure of the bivalve community was defined using the following ecological descriptors: abundance (N) - number of individuals present in samples; richness (S) - number of taxa in each sample (Nibbaken 1982); diversity (H′) - calculated by the Shannon-Wiener index, expressed as $H' = -\Sigma\,(pi*\ln pi)$, according to Pielou (1975); equitativity (J) - determined by the Pielou (1969) index using the formula $J = H'/\ln S$, in which H’ is diversity expressed by the Shannon-Wiener index and S is the number of species, with values ranging from 0 to 1. Results close to 1 represent an even distribution of the number of individuals among the species. The relative frequency (Fr) was calculated using the following formula: $Fr = n/N*(100)$, in which n is the abundance of each species divided by N (total abundance) multiplied by 100.

Generalized linear models (GLM) were developed to determine spatial (depth) and seasonal (dry and rainy seasons) variations. For such, all descriptors (N, S, H' and J) were logarithmized by log (x+1) to correct asymmetry in the data due to very large differences between samples, which is a common pattern in biological and count data. Subsequently, the occurrence of *overdispersion* (residual deviance >> residual *d.f.*) or *underdispersion* (residual deviance << residual *d.f.*) was determined using the arm package (Gelman and Su 2018). As a result, quasi-Poisson distribution was considered for abundance, richness and evenness due to *overdispersion* and nonparametric error distribution, and Gaussian distribution was considered for diversity due to *underdispersion* and parametric error distribution (Crawley 2013). The ecological descriptors (N, S, H' and J) were used as a response factor and continuous variables, whereas the dry and rainy seasons and isobaths were treated as explanatory variables, fixed factors and categorical variables. The adequacy of the models was determined using the RT4Bio package (Reis-Jr et al. 2015) in the R software (R Core Team 2017) to determine the adequacy of the error of the response variable regarding the chosen statistical family (quasi-Poisson and Gaussian). Contrast analysis was performed to determine binary (peer to peer) temporal and spatial differences.

Species richness was compared among the three depths (10, 25 and 50 m) using the number of individuals as the sampling effort. From this, a cut line was defined to standardize the sample size of the three communities (Gotelli and Colwell 2001; Colwell et al. 2012). This analysis was performed using the Past software (Hammer et al. 2001).

RESULTS

A total of 1384 living individuals (276 and 1108 in the dry and rainy season, respectively) were captured in the 24 sampling stations associated with macroalgae. These individuals belong to 20 families, 28 genera and at least 40 bivalve species (Table 2). Most of the bivalves studied were represented by adult individuals. A few taxa belonging to the families Arcidae, Chamidae, Corbulidae, Gastrochaenidae, Limidae, Lyonsiidae, Mytilidae, Ostreidae, Pectinidae, Philobryidae, Spondylidae, Ungulinidae and Veneridae were not identified on the species level due to the poor state of preservation of the shells or the fact that the specimens were juveniles. We found no species of bivalves considered invasive.

The families with the largest number of species were Arcidae (S = 7), Corbulidae (S = 6) and Mytilidae (S = 5) (Fig. 2). These three groups accounted for 42% of all species collected. In contrast, Chamidae, Crassatellidae, Gastrochaenidae, Limidae, Lyonsiidae, Myidae, Noetiidae, Nuculanidae, Ostreidae, Propeamussiidae, Semelidae, Spondylidae and Ungulinidae were the least represented families in the samplings accounting for approximately 23.8% of all species collected.

All bivalves studied here are suspension feeders, except Semelidae, which is a marine bivalve family of deposit and suspension feeders. All taxa identified on the specific level are widely distributed in the Western Atlantic between the coast of North America (states of Massachusetts, North Caroline, Georgia or Florida, USA) to South America (Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina). Among the bivalves in the area studied, very limited information is found for members of the family Lyonsiidae along the Brazilian coast. *Lyonsia* sp. may be a new and endemic species for the coast of Brazil. On the other hand, *Sphenia fragilis* and *Crenella decussata* are species with distribution also in the eastern Pacific and the Arctic circumboreal region.

Arcidae was the most abundant group (N = 905; Fr = 67.68%) (Table 2; Fig. 2). *Arca zebra* was the most abundant bivalve and arcid, with 549 individuals, followed in abundance by *Anadara* sp. 1, with 311 individuals (Table 2; Fig. 3). These species together accounted for 64% of the total abundance of individuals found. Pteriidae was the second most abundant family (N = 123; Fr = 9.19) (Table 2; Fig. 2). *Pinctada imbricata* was the third most abundant bivalve and the most abundant pteriid with a total of 117 individuals collected at 45.83% of the stations (Table 2; Fig. 3). Mytilidae was the third most abundant group (N = 97; Fr = 7%) (Table 2; Fig. 2). These three families together accounted for 84.14% of the total abundance of individuals found.

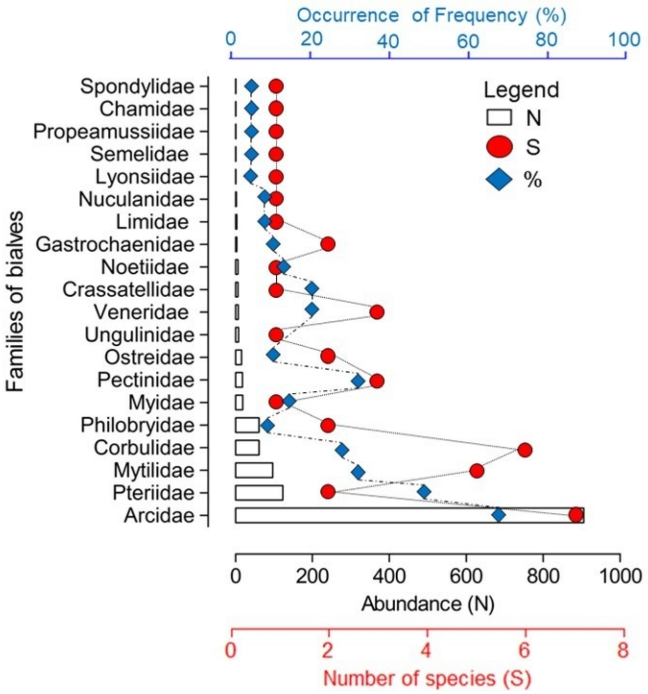

Fig. 2. Abundance (N), number of species (S) and frequency of occurrence (%) per bivalve family associated with macroalgae on the continental shelf between the southern portion of the state of Alagoas and the northern portion of the state of Bahia, including the state of Sergipe, in the dry and rainy seasons.

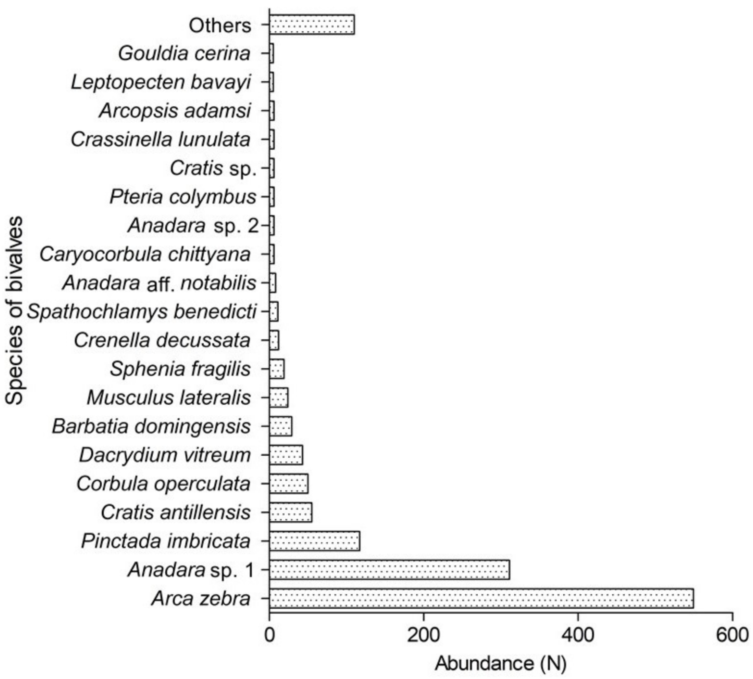

Fig. 3. Total abundance of bivalve species associated with macroalgae on the continental shelf between the southern portion of the state of Alagoas and the northern portion of the state of Bahia, including the state of Sergipe, in the dry and rainy seasons.

Table 2. Checklist of bivalves associated with macroalgae on the continental shelf between the southern portion of the state of Alagoas and the northern portion of the state of Bahia, including the state of Sergipe, collected in the dry and rainy seasons. After the sampling station the numbering indicates isobath 1 = 10 m, 2 = 25 m and 3 = 50 m. The voucher indicates the collection where the specimens were deposited in Brazil. Ab = abundance. Juveniles and individuals without intact shells were not considered

TAXA	STATION AND ISOBATHS																								Ab	VOUCHER
	A1	A2	A3	B1	B2	B3	C1	C2	C3	D1	D2	D3	E1	E2	E3	F1	F2	F3	G1	G2	G3	H1	H2	H3		
BIVALVIA																										
Arcidae																										
Arca zebra Swainson, 1833			13		01	12					04	369						147			01		01	01	549	CZUFS BIV-00035
Anadara aff. *notabilis* (Röding, 1798)											02	04					01				01				08	CZUFS BIV-00044
Anadara sp. 1													01						36	07		255	12		311	
Anadara sp. 2			01	02									01										02		06	
Barbatia domingensis (Lamarck, 1819)												21						08							29	CZUFS BIV-00046
Barbatia aff. *candida* (Helbling, 1779)	01																								01	CZUFS BIV-00047
Fugleria tenera (C. B. Adams, 1845)											01														01	CZUFS BIV-00048
Chamidae																		01							01	
Corbulidae																										
Corbula operculata Philippi, 1848			03									03					41	01			02				50	CZUFS BIV-00028
Corbula sp.												01													01	
Caryocorbula contracta (Say, 1822)																		01							01	CZUFS BIV-00029
Caryocorbula aff. *contracta* (Say, 1822)												01													01	CZUFS BIV-00030
Caryocorbula swiftiana (C. B. Adams, 1852)											01						01								02	CZUFS BIV-00032
Caryocorbula chittyana (C. B. Adams, 1852)								01									05								06	CZUFS BIV-00033
Crassatellidae																										
Crassinella lunulata (Conrad, 1834)					01							01					01	02			01				06	CZUFS BIV-00099
Gastrochaenidae						01																			01	
Lamychaena hians (Gmelin, 1791)			01																			01			02	CZUFS BIV-00105
Limidae						02						03													05	
Lyonsiidae																										
Lyonsia sp.												01													01	
Myidae																										
Sphenia fragilis (H. Adams & A. Adams, 1854)	01																		01			13	04		19	CZUFS BIV-00100
Mytilidae															15										15	
Amygdalum sagittatum (Rehder, 1935)																						02			02	CZUFS BIV-00048
Musculus lateralis (Say, 1822)			01			02						06					05	03				02	05		24	CZUFS BIV-00055
Botula fusca (Gmelin, 1791)																		01							01	CZUFS BIV-00056

Dacrydium vitreum (Møller, 1842)						06						29						08							43	CZUFS BIV-00057
Crenella decussata (Montagu, 1808)			03									07						01			01				12	CZUFS BIV-00062
Noetiidae																										
Arcopsis adamsi (Dall, 1886)	03		01									01						01							06	CZUFS BIV-00109
Nuculanidae																										
Nuculana concentrica (Say, 1824)												01			01										02	CZUFS BIV-00092
Ostreidae																			01			14			15	
Crassostrea sp.	01																								01	
Pectinidae																										
Leptopecten bavayi (Dautzenberg, 1900)	01																02					02			05	CZUFS BIV-00072
Spathochlamys benedicti (Verrill & Bush [in Verrill], 1897)			02			02					01	01						05							11	CZUFS BIV-00069
Lindapecten sp.																	02								02	
Philobryidae																										
Cratis antillensis (Dall, 1881)						06						49													55	CZUFS BIV-00083
Cratis sp.												01						05							06	
Propeamussiidae																										
Parvamussium pourtalesianum (Dall, 1886)												01													01	CZUFS BIV-00093
Pteriidae																										
Pinctada imbricata Röding, 1798	39		02		05	01					03	01						48	01	01		06	10		117	CZUFS BIV-00080
Pteria colymbus (Röding, 1798)	02										04														06	CZUFS BIV-00081
Semelidae																										
Cumingia lamellosa G. B. Sowerby I, 1833											01														01	CZUFS BIV-00090
Spondylidae												01													01	
Ungulinidae																		08							08	
Veneridae			01																						01	
Gouldia cerina (C. B. Adams, 1845)						01					01	01									02				05	CZUFS BIV-00089
Cyclinella sp.												01													01	
Abundance	48	00	28	02	07	33	00	01	00	00	18	504	02	00	16	00	58	240	39	08	08	295	34	01	1342	
Richness	07	00	10	01	03	09	00	01	00	00	09	23	02	00	01	00	08	15	04	02	06	10	06	01		

Chamidae, Crassatellidae, Gastrochaenidae, Limidae, Lyonsiidae, Noetiidae, Nuculanidae, Ostreidae, Propeamussiidae, Semelidae, Spondylidae and Ungulinidae composed about 33% of the bivalve richness found (although part of the taxa was not identified on the species level) and approximately 3.81% of the individuals associated with macroalgae.

The bivalves associated with macroalgae were widely distributed on the three areas of the continental shelf studied (southern Alagoas, Sergipe and northern Bahia). However, only Arcidae (FO = 66.6%) was considered constant occurring in more than 50% of the samples. The families Pteriidae (FO = 45.83%), Mytilidae (FO = 33.3%), Pectinidae (33.3%) and Corbulidae (FO = 29.1%) were considered common (FO ≥ 25% ≤ 50%), while most families (S = 14) were considered rare (FO ≤ 25%) (Fig. 2). No species was considered constant, but *Pinctada imbricata* (FO = 45.8%), *Arca zebra* (FO = 37.5%) and *Musculus lateralis* (FO = 29.1%) were common. Most species (S = 33) occurred in less than 25% of the samples and were therefore considered rare.

Regarding the variation in ecological descriptors, abundance varied significantly (p = 0.01) between seasons, with higher abundance in the rainy season (N = 1108 individuals). In contrast, no significant seasonal differences were found regarding richness (p = 0.1), diversity (p = 0.6) or equitativity (p = 0.6).

The variation in bivalve fauna among isobaths was significant for richness (p = 0.03), with an increase in species richness directly correlated with the increase in depth to the 50 m isobath (greatest depth sampled). No significant differences among isobaths were found for abundance (p = 0.2), diversity (p = 0.1) and equitativity (p = 0.4).

Among the predominant taxa, *Anadara* sp. 1 (Fr = 73%), *Corbula operculata* (Fr = 33%) and *Arca zebra* (Fr = 67%) were well represented at depths of 10, 25 and 50 m, respectively. *Pinctada imbricata* was well distributed at all depths, whereas a considerable part of the taxa was not representative in each bathymetric zone (Fig. 4). When standardizing the sampling effort using the number of individuals, the rarefaction curves indicate no variation in the number of species among the isobaths (Fig. 5), differing from the pattern found in the analysis weighted by the number of samples used in the GLM.

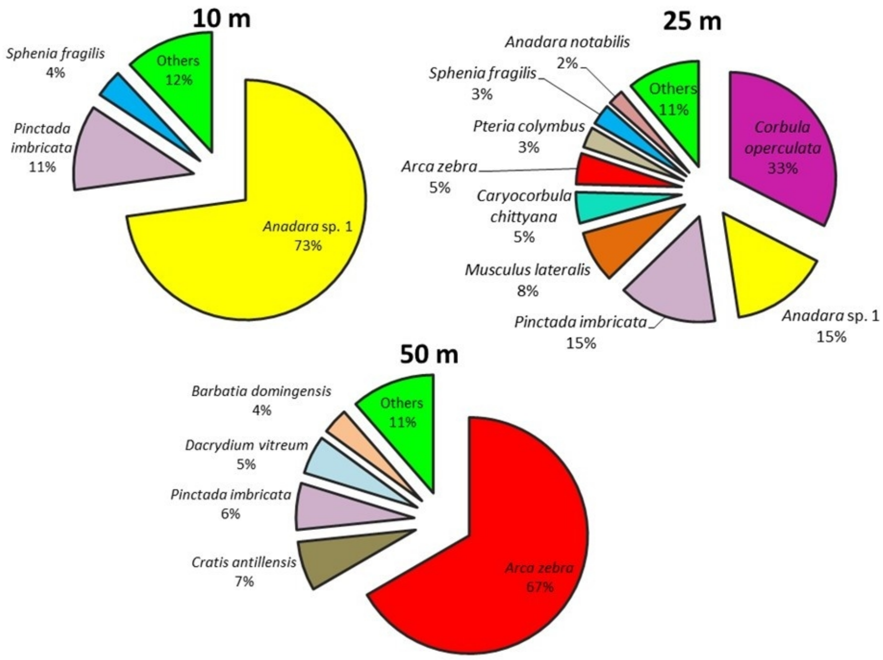

Fig. 4. Percentage abundance of bivalve species associated with macroalgae on the continental shelf between the southern portion of the state of Alagoas and the northern portion of the state of Bahia, including the state of Sergipe, at 10 m, 25 m and 50 m isobaths in the dry and rainy seasons.

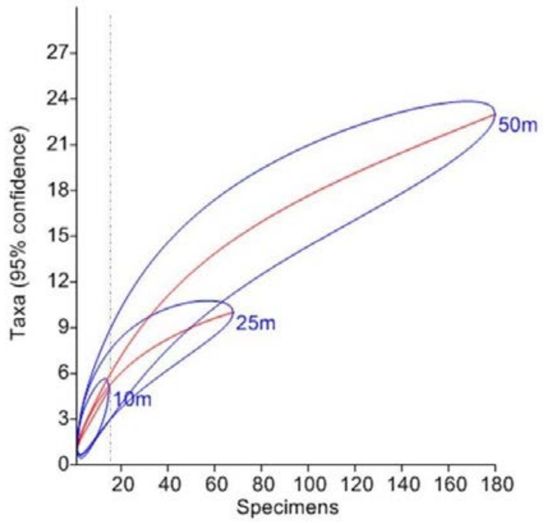

Fig. 5. Rarefaction curves representing number of bivalve species associated with macroalgae on the continental shelf between the southern portion of the state of Alagoas and the northern portion of the state of Bahia, including the state of Sergipe, at the 10 m, 25 m and 50 m isobaths in the dry and rainy seasons. Red solid lines are rarefaction curves and blue polygons are 95% confidence intervals calculated from variance. Vertical dashed line represents the comparison of species among communities, standardizing the number of individuals at 17, which was the lowest abundance recorded among the three depths.

DISCUSSION

The present study provides important insights regarding the composition of bivalves associated with macroalgae in shallow areas of the continental shelf between the southern portion of the state of Alagoas and the northern portion of the state of Bahia, with a greater sampling effort on the continental shelf off the state of Sergipe. The richness of bivalve taxa found in this study was higher in comparison to a number of studies. Rocha and Martins (1998) found nine families and 24 species associated with calcareous algae on the continental shelf off the state of Ceará. Jacobucci et al. (2006) recognized seven families and six species associated with *Sargassum* spp. off Queimada Pequena Island, on the southern coast of the state of São Paulo. Lacerda et al. (2009) identified seven families and 10 species associated with three different species of algae off Caiobá beach in the state of Paraná. Cunha et al. (2013) found four families and only three species associated with brown algae of the genus *Dictyota* spp. in the Sebastião Gomes Reef and Abrolhos Archipelago of the state of Bahia. In contrast, Soares-Gomes and Pires-Vanin (2003) found greater bivalve richness (31 families and 59 species) compared to the present investigation and previous studies collecting specimens using a dredger and beam trawler. Soares-Gomes and Fernandes (2005) also found high bivalve richness (27 families and 44 species) on the continental shelf off Cabo Frio in the state of Rio de Janeiro, which is similar to the richness found in the present study. However, substantial differences are seen regarding species composition between the study conducted by Soares-Gomes and Fernandes (2005) and the present investigation. It is noteworthy that all these studies were conducted in habitats with distinct algal species and/or substrate types, sample sizes and sampling efforts and employed different collection methods. The lack of standardization with regards to sampling explains the differences in richness and abundance among invertebrates associated with macroalgae (Nascimento and Rosso 2007).

In the bivalve fauna of the areas studied, there was a predominance of the families Arcidae, Corbulidae and Mytilidae. The latter two have stood out in some studies due to the richness found on macroalgae along the Brazilian coast and other ecoregions of the Western Atlantic (Jacobucci et al. 2006; Lacerda et al. 2009; Miloslavich and Huck 2009; Rodríguez and Campos 2013). A high abundance of taxa of the family Mytilidae has also been reported in studies on mollusk assemblages associated with the phytal environment off Caiobá Beach in the state of Paraná (Lacerda et al. 2009) and with seagrasses off Guayacán beach in Venezuela (Miloslavich and Huck 2009). Families with low richness and abundance (*e.g.*, Chamidae, Crassatellidae, Gastrochaenidae, Lyonsiidae and Spondylidae) in this study and other surveys of phytal bivalves (Rocha and Martins 1998; Jacobucci et al. 2006; Lacerda et al. 2009; Miloslavich and Huck 2009; Cunha et al. 2013; Rodríguez and Campos 2013) may be related to the unusual association between the individuals and macroalgae (*i.e.*, lyonsiids are mostly known as infaunal bivalves and unusual in algal holdfasts; spondylids are more diverse on hard substrate (Mikkelsen and Bieler 2008); and limids are frequent in small rocky crevices and uncommon on algae/algae-covered rocks (Redfern 2013)), aspects inherent to the structural complexity of macroalgae (Chemello and Milazzo 2002), hydrodynamic features as well as physical and environmental constraints (*i.e.,* chamids are epifaunal bivalves, most are stenohaline and intolerant to water turbidity conditions), predation rate (*i.e.*, crassatellids are preyed on by vertebrates and other invertebrates and likely have a higher predation rate compared to other bivalves), sampling difficulty due to the restricted habitat (*i.e.*, gastrochaenids are endolithic bivalves that construct calcareous tubes in hard substrate (Mikkelsen and Bieler 2008)), the lack of different sampling methods, etc.

Most bivalves sampled in this study typically occur in shallow coastal habitats, while a few taxa have also been recorded in deeper areas of the continental shelf, including the upper continental slope. In the present survey, the greatest richness and abundance of arcids, corbulids and mytillids was found at depths of 50 m. The taxa identified are usually collected on the inner continental shelf (Rios 2009; Tunnell Jr. et al. 2010; Redfern 2013), with some rarely found on the outer continental shelf and slope (Rios 2009; Tunnell Jr. et al. 2010).

The bivalves co-occurring with the macroalgae in the area studied were mainly members of the genera *Arca*, *Anadara* and *Barbatia* (Arcidae); *Corbula* and *Caryocorbula* (Corbulidae); *Musculus*, *Dacrydium* and *Crenella* (Mytilidae). The association with arcids, corbulids, mytilids and other groups is recurrent in ecological studies (Soares-Gomes and Pires-Vanin 2003; Soares-Gomes and Fernandes 2005; Lacerda et al. 2009; Miloslavich and Huck 2009; Rodríguez and Campos 2013). Among the bivalves found in the present investigation, very limited information is found on members of the genus *Lyonsia* and in association with macroalgae along the Brazilian coast. Species of this genus usually live in shallow areas of the continental shelf with sandy bottoms (Mikkelsen and Bieler 2008; Tunnell Jr. et al. 2010). We did not identify any invasive bivalves in this survey.

The study area has well-defined dry and rainy seasons (greater rainfall in winter) and is strongly influenced by the variation in rainfall throughout the year. The bivalve fauna was ≅ 4-fold more abundant in the rainy season (N = 1108) compared to the dry season (N = 276). Studying the structure and dynamics of the benthic megafauna of the coast of Sergipe, Guimarães (2010) found temporal variability in the mollusk fauna, with higher abundance in the rainy season. However, Cocentino et al. (2018) found no significant difference for the occurrence of the macroalgae that housed the Bivalvia used in this present study between the dry and rainy periods.

The richness of bivalves associated with macroalgae differed significantly among the bathymetric zones (10, 25 and 50 m), with the greatest richness found for the 50 m isobath. This is the same pattern obtained by Concentino et al (2018) for both richness and biomass of the macroalgae. This is in agreement with data reported by Soares-Gomes and Pires-Vanin (2003), who also found a significant difference in bivalve fauna among the isobaths studied on the continental shelf off Ubatuba in the state of São Paulo and reported higher bivalve diversity values in the bathymetric range of 50 m. Soares-Gomes and Fernandes (2005) also found a very well-structured bivalve taxocenosis along the depth gradient studied on the continental shelf off Cabo Frio in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

The GLMs revealed greater species richness for the 50 m isobath. This may be related to the greater water transparency and the occurrence of thicker, poorly selected sediments capable of creating a more heterogeneous environment in the middle area of the continental shelf (Guimarães 2010; Lemos Júnior 2011), which enables the development of a larger amount of algae (Pereira et al. 2014; Cocentino et al. 2018) and consequently provides more habitats available for colonization.

Soares-Gomes and Pires-Vanin (2003) also estimated greater bivalve richness for the 50 m isobath on the inner continental shelf off Ubatuba, Brazil using rarefaction analysis. The authors attributed this greater richness mainly to the physical factors of the habitat, such as changes in sediment characteristics and hydrological events, which cause bioturbation and make such environments unstable, contributing to increased richness and diversity. In addition to these factors, the heterogeneity of the bottom also contributes to greater shellfish diversity, as evidenced by Absalão (1991) on the continental shelf off southern Brazil. In the state of Sergipe, the continental shelf has greater environmental heterogeneity beginning with the 25-m isobath, which translates to greater resource availability (Souza 2018) as well as greater richness, abundance and diversity of biological groups (Lemos Júnior et al. 2014; Pereira et al. 2014; Santos et al. 2017; Alcântara and Siqueira 2018; Cocentino et al. 2018; Guimarães et al. 2018; Mendonça et al. 2019a b; Vieira and Lemos Júnior 2018). Among the groups studied in the region only the meiofauna does not follow the bathymetric pattern, but follows the bottom type pattern (Pinto et al. 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

The present study expands the knowledge on the richness and composition of bivalves associated with the phytal environment over an extensive area of the continental shelf off northeastern Brazil. It can be concluded that richness of bivalves had a direct relationship with the depth, having a smaller number of species in the shallower areas sampled and richer and consequently greater harboring capacity in the deepest zone of the continental shelf of the studied area. Unlike S, H' or J, abundance varied significantly between seasons, with higher number of bivalves collected in the rainy season. The study recorded a taxon of the family Lyonsiidae and genus *Lyonsia* which may be a new and endemic species for the coast of Brazil.

Acknowledgments: The authors are grateful to PETROBRAS S.A. (Brazilian Petroleum Co.) for making the collection and study of material possible; the team of the Coastal Ecosystems Laboratory of the Federal University of Sergipe for processing the material and making the data available for study; to Dr. Ivan C. Lemos Júnior (UFS) for help with the obtaining literature; to CNPq (Proc. nº 870361/1997-0) and FAPESP (Proc. nº 19/20108-7) for the PhD scholarship granted to JWSS; and the anonymous reviewers for their contribution to the revision of the manuscript.

Authors' contributions: CPG conceived the research ideas and designed the study. LS, SL, JWSS and CPG performed data analysis. All authors wrote and approved the final manuscript.

Competing interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Availability of data and materials: All the data are provided within the manuscript.

Consent for publication: Not applicable.

Ethics approval consent to participate: Not applicable.

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