THE DECAPOD FAUNA OF THE REMOTE OCEANIC ARCHIPELAGO TRINDADE & MARTIN VAZ, SOUTH ATLANTIC OCEAN

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The oceanic islands Trindade and Martin Vaz (TMV) are the aerial parts (3–3.5 and 1–1.5 my, respectively) of a submarine volcanic chain, and thus much younger than the South American and African shores, which originated some 130–120 mya. TMV are 1200 km away from Brazil and 4200 km from Africa. Therefore, the benthic invertebrates of TMV appears to be mainly a result of dispersal of larvae, which may travel across wide distances and establish local populations. Determining patterns of species distribution and faunistic composition is central to the understanding of the relationships and connections between TMV, the WA and EA shelves and other South Atlantic oceanic islands, and their possible causes. Six campaigns conducted between 2012–2017 resulted in vast material of decapod crustaceans. Sampling consisted of 222 scuba diving down to 30 m and numerous snorkeling dives and intertidal collecting. Specimens were collected by flipping and breaking up clumps of coralline algae and coral rocks, from soft and mixed sediments and from marine invertebrates and algae, and from artificial reef substrates placed for 12–15 months between 10–20 m. Based on current taxonomic knowledge, the decapod fauna of TMV appears to be a mosaic of WA, EA, amphi-Atlantic, central Atlantic (insular), endemic and circumtropical species. The benthic decapods of TMV are chiefly derived from the tropical WA edges, despite the dominance of the westward flowing trans-Atlantic South Equatorial Current, which brings warm waters from west Africa and should therefore facilitate the migration of EA species westward.

Keywords: biodiversity, taxonomy, oceanic island.

Funding: CNPq.