



The presence of the Patagonian seahorse *Hippocampus patagonicus* in Monte Hermoso, southwestern Buenos Aires Province, Argentina

Mariía L. Estalles, María G. Pujol, Juan M. Díaz de Astarloa, Diego C. Luzzatto

Presenting Author: Diego Luzzatto

IIMyC - CONICET, Mar del Plata, Argentina

Seahorses are often difficult to detect in their natural habitats due to their effective camouflage. They can remain virtually immobile for a long time and change colour. In addition, they can present a patchy distribution and occur at low densities, which further complicates their localization in poorly explored areas. The Patagonian seahorse *Hippocampus patagonicus* occurs in the Southwest Atlantic Ocean from southern Brazil to northern Patagonia, Argentina. In Argentina, there are currently only two populations described, one in San Antonio Bay, the type locality of the species, and the other in Mar del Plata dock. Although sporadic records have been reported in the area between these two populations, no other population has been detected so far. Data gathered at interviews with local artisanal fishermen and seahorses collected by them were analyzed to determine the presence of *H. patagonicus* in the coastal area of Monte Hermoso (38° 59' 33"S- 61° 15' 55"W), southwestern Buenos Aires Province, Argentina. The record of the species over the years, the high catches reported and the characteristics of the individuals sampled confirmed the presence of a third population of *H. patagonicus* in the area of Monte Hermoso.

Keywords: Phylogeography, Behavioural ecology, Behavioural ecology