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(Gastropoda, Mangeliidae) under the magnifying
glass: an exclusive inhabitant of Magellanic waters

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ISSN (imprimé / *print*): 1280-9551/ ISSN (électronique / *electronic*): 1638-9387

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Submitted on 9 April 2024 | Accepted on 26 June 2024 | Published on 18 March 2025

[urn:lsid:zoobank.org:pub:BD3860B6-9ED1-47AC-9922-60A9B3D9F982](https://zoobank.org/pub:BD3860B6-9ED1-47AC-9922-60A9B3D9F982)

Sánchez N. C., Aldea C. & Pastorino G. 2025. — The conoidean genus *Belalora* Powell, 1951 (Gastropoda, Mangeliidae) under the magnifying glass: an exclusive inhabitant of Magellanic waters. *Zoosystema* 47 (8): 125-132. <https://doi.org/10.5252/zoosystema2025v47a8>. <http://zoosystema.com/47/8>

ABSTRACT

Belalora cunninghami (E. A. Smith, 1881) is compared with *B. thielei* Powell, 1951 from Atlantic waters, and *B. striatula* (Thiele, 1912) and *B. weirichi* (Engl, 2008) both from Antarctica. New complete specimens of *B. cunninghami* collected in Chonchi, Chiloé, and Cordes Bay, Strait of Magellan, Chile and off Mar del Plata, Argentina allow the study of shell, radula, penis, operculum and details of the ornamentation of the protoconch. We conclude that the genus *Belalora* encompasses two species *B. thielei*, type species of the genus, and *B. cunninghami* both living in the magellanic region. In addition, the comparison of the radula and shell of “*B.*” *striatula* and “*B.*” *weirichi*, indicate that these Antarctic species belong to a different perhaps undescribed genus. The morphology of the shell of *Fusus sublutus* Gould, 1849 and *Lora equatorialis* Dall, 1919 once included in *Belalora* proof to belong in a different taxon.

KEY WORDS

Argentina,
Chile,
Conoidea,
mangeliid,
Mollusca.

RÉSUMÉ

Le genre conoïde *Belalora* Powell, 1951 (Gastropoda, Mangeliidae) à la loupe : un habitant exclusif des eaux magellaniques.

L'espèce *Belalora cunninghami* (E. A. Smith, 1881) est comparée à *B. thielei* Powell, 1951, des eaux atlantiques, ainsi qu'à *B. striatula* (Thiele, 1912) et *B. weirichi* (Engl, 2008), de l'Antarctique. De nouveaux spécimens complets de *B. cunninghami* collectés à Chonchi, Chiloé, et dans la baie de Cordes, détroit de Magellan, au Chili, ainsi qu'au large de Mar del Plata, en Argentine, nous ont permis d'étudier la coquille, la radula, le pénis, l'opercule et les détails de l'ornementation du protoconque. Nous concluons que le genre *Belalora* englobe deux espèces, *B. thielei*, espèce type du genre, et *B. cunninghami*, vivant toutes deux dans la région magellanique. De plus, la comparaison de la radula et de la coquille de “*B.*” *striatula* et de “*B.*” *weirichi* indique que ces espèces antarctiques appartiennent à un genre différent, peut-être non décrit. La morphologie de la coquille de *Fusus sublutus* Gould, 1849 et de *Lora equatorialis* Dall, 1919, autrefois inclus dans *Belalora*, montre qu'ils appartiennent à un taxon différent.

MOTS CLÉS

Argentine,
Chili,
Conoidea,
mangeliid,
Mollusca.

INTRODUCTION

The family Mangeliidae P. Fischer, 1883, comprising 69 recent genera (WoRMS 2024), is considered one of the most numerous within Conoidea Fleming, 1822. It has been cited in several previous works as inhabiting Argentine waters, however, most, if not all, of these citations involve unconfirmed or erroneous generic assignments. Recently, we reassigned to Mangeliidae *Bela patagonica* (d'Orbigny, 1841), a species inhabiting shallow waters of Argentina previously included in Drilliidae Olsson, 1964 (Sánchez & Pastorino 2022). Additionally, a new genus of Mangeliidae with two new species, *Notopropebela pustulata* Sánchez, Damborenea & Pastorino, 2023 and *N. petu* Sánchez, Damborenea & Pastorino, 2023 were described from deep waters off Argentina.

The genus *Belalora* was described by Powell (1951) to include a new species *Belalora thielei* Powell, 1951 (type species) and *Bela striatula* Thiele, 1912, based on the morphology of the shell and protoconch. Powell made no reference to *Pleurotoma cunninghami* E. A. Smith, 1881 previously described from Chile despite its strong morphological similarities with the type species and geographic proximity. In addition, a decade later, he included it as *incertae sedis* (Powell 1960). Egorova (1982) and Hain (1990) illustrated shell, operculum and radula of *B. striatula*, however these pictures significantly differ from the original. Kantor *et al.* (2016) included *Oenopota weirichi* Engl, 2008 in *Belalora* based only in the morphology of the shell and protoconch, as the radula and operculum remain unknown.

New complete specimens identified as *Belalora cunninghami*, allowed us to study the radula and penis for the first time, as well as details of the protoconch and operculum, resolving the right generic assignment. In addition, a comparison with all the species assigned to this genus is presented.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Ten specimens, six complete, of *Belalora cunninghami* (E. A. Smith, 1881) were studied. Two lots were collected in Chile, i.e.: Chonchi, Chiloé, at a depth of 15 m and Cordes Bay, Strait of Magellan, at a depth of 10 m and one was obtained off Mar del Plata, Argentina, at a depth of *c.* 100 m. In addition, material from the invertebrate collections of the Museo de La Plata (MLP) and Fundación Azara (CFA, Buenos Aires) was also revised. Type material from the Natural History Museum (NHMUK), London, the United States National Museum of Natural History (USNM), Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. and the Iziko South African Museum, Cape Town, South Africa, was reviewed. Shells were measured using a digital caliper and protoconch whorls were counted following Bouchet and Kantor's method (Bouchet & Kantor 2004). Shells were examined using a Phillips XL30 Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) and a Zeiss Stereo Discovery V20 Modular Microscope, both at the Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales 'Bernardino Rivadavia' (MACN). The radula was taken from

a preserved specimen and cleaned with commercial bleach and distilled water in a 1:3 ratio (according to Kantor & Puillandre 2012), mounted on glass coverslips, air-dried, coated with gold-palladium, and examined under SEM at the MACN. Penises were dehydrated in graded ethanol series, critical point dried and photographed under SEM as well. All images were digitally processed using Adobe Photoshop Suite software.

ABBREVIATIONS

CFA	Fundación Azara, Buenos Aires;
MACN	Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales 'Bernardino Rivadavia';
MLP	Museo de La Plata;
NHMUK	Natural History Museum, London;
USNM	United States National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

SYSTEMATICS

Superfamily CONOIDEA Fleming, 1822

Family MANGELIIDAE P. Fischer, 1883

Genus *Belalora* Powell, 1951

Belalora Powell, 1951: 171.

TYPE SPECIES. — *Belalora thielei* Powell, 1951, by original designation.

DIAGNOSIS. — Shell small (up to 10 mm), biconic; protoconch globose, paucispiral, of *c.* three whorls, a smooth tip, a whorl with spiral threads and a whorl of spirals crossing axial fine riblets. Spire long, half of total shell length. Teleoconch of convex whorls with concave subsutural ramp. Axial ornamentation of slightly oblique, rounded, ribs; spiral cords over entire surface. Aperture ovate-pyriform, narrow. Siphonal canal short and wide. Anal sinus deep on subsutural ramp. Fasciole bulging. Operculum oval with terminal nucleus. Radula of marginal semi-rolled teeth, with ligament present.

DISTRIBUTION. — Magellanic Region, 3.7-219 m depth.

Belalora cunninghami (E. A. Smith, 1881)
(Figs 1; 2; 3)

Pleurotoma (Bela) cunninghami E. A. Smith, 1881: 27, pl. 4, fig. 1. — Powell 1960: 161. — Tucker 2004: 269.

Bela cunninghami – Tryon 1884: fig. 18; pl. 34, fig. 75.

Bela cunninghami [sic] – Paetel 1888: 74.

Turris cunninghami [sic] – Carcelles & Williamson 1951: 305.

Belalora cunninghami – Castellanos & Landoni 1993: 19, pl. 1, fig. 8. — Linse 1999: 401. — Aldea *et al.* 2020: 10.

Turris cunninghami – Ramírez Böhme 1997: 144.

Oenopota cunninghami – Figueira & Absalão 2010: 475.

MATERIAL EXAMINED. — **Syntypes.** Chile • 4 specimens; Puerto Bueno; 3.7-55 m depth; St. 2, HMS Alert; NHMUK 1879.10.15.2-5 (Fig. 1A-H).



FIG. 1. — *Belalora cunninghami* (E. A. Smith, 1881): **A-H**, *Pleurotoma (Bela) cunninghami* E. A. Smith, 1881, syntypes, NHMUK 1879.10.15.2-5, Puerto Bueno, 2-30 fathoms (3.7-55 m) depth; **I-M**, St. 6, off Mar del Plata, Argentina, 100 m depth, MACN-In44477; **N-P**, E4-R2, Chonchi, Chiloé, Chile, 15 m depth, MACN-In44476; **Q, R**, Sta. IN. 31-25, Cordes Bay, Strait of Magellan, MCPA Francisco Coloane, Chile, 10 m depth, IV.2007, MACN-In44475; **S, T**, *Belalora thielei* Powell, 1951, Holotype, NHMUK 1961613, 48°26'15"S, 61°28'W, NW of Malvinas/Falklands Is., 165-165 m depth. Scale bar: 5 mm.

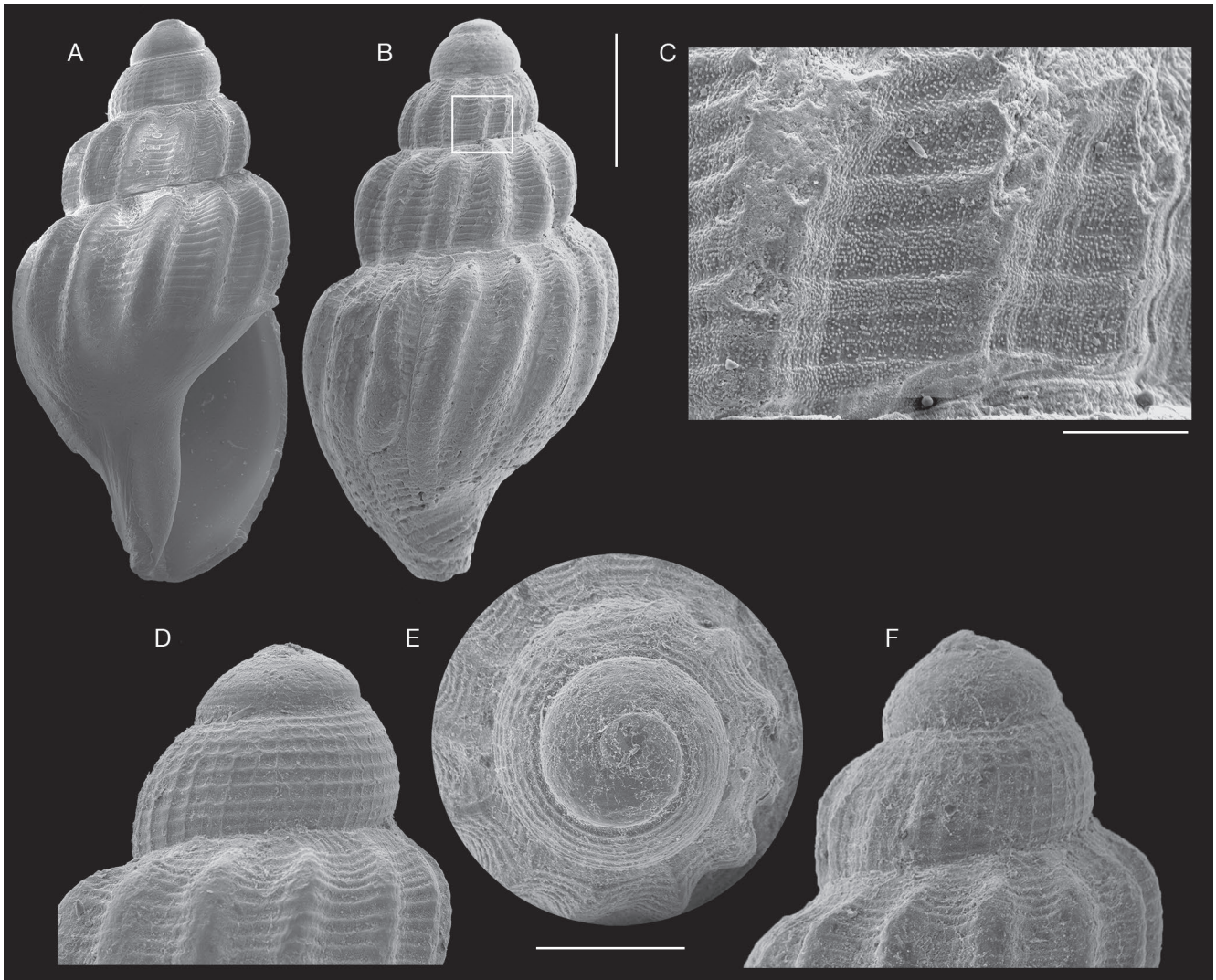


FIG. 2. — *Belalora cunninghami* (E. A. Smith, 1881), MLP-Ma16311, Malvinas/Falklands Is.: **A, B**, two views of the shell; **C**, detail of the same shell showing the pustules on the teleoconch; **D-F**, three views of the protoconch of another specimen, Scale bars: A, B, 1 mm; C, 100 µm; D-F, 500 µm.

OTHER MATERIAL. — **Chile** • 1 complete specimen; Sta. IN. 31-25, Cordes Bay, Strait of Magellan, Marine Coastal Protected Area (MCPA) Francisco Coloane; IV.2007; 10 m depth; MACN-In44475 • 3 complete specimens; E4-R2, Chonchi, Chiloé; VII.2001; 15 m depth; MACN-In44476.

Argentina • 2 complete specimens; off Mar del Plata, 100 m depth, 25.VIII.2000; MACN-In44477 • 3 empty shells; Malvinas/Falklands Is.; MLP-Ma16311 • 1 empty shell; Bridges Island, Tierra del Fuego; CFA-IN-1136.

TYPE LOCALITY. — Puerto Bueno, Chile, 2-30 fathoms (3.7-55 m) deep, St. 2, HMS Alert.

DISTRIBUTION. — Magellanic Region, from Chonchi, Chiloé Is., Chile in the Pacific Ocean, ranging between depths of 3.7 to 55 m, to off Mar del Plata, Argentina in the Atlantic Ocean, at a depth of 100 m. This distribution pattern is usual for Magellanic fauna, where species inhabiting shelf waters in the south reach the north following the cold Malvinas Current despite the apparently absence of free larvae (Carcelles 1944; Pastorino & Griffin 2019; Chiesa *et al.* 2024 and literature cited therein).

DESCRIPTION

Shell

Small (Figs 1A-T; 2A, B), up to 10 mm, yellow, whitish or, opaque chalky; spire long; protoconch (Fig. 2D-F) globose, paucispiral, of *c.* 3 whorls (0.72 × 0.9 mm high and width respectively), first whorl half smooth and then spiral threads, second with spiral threads crossing by axial fine riblets; protoconch-teleoconch boundary somewhat defined; teleoconch of 5½ whorls slightly convex; suture deep; subsutural ramp concave; entire surface covered by pustules (Fig. 2C); axial ornamentation of thick, rounded, prominent ribs, regularly spaced extending throughout sutures, 5-8 on 1st, 8-12 on 2nd, 10-13 on 3rd, 12-13 on 4th increasing up to 15 on last whorl; spiral ornamentation of regularly spaced cords along all surface including subsutural ramp, but not fasciola, 10 on 1st, 13 on 2nd, 15 on 3rd, 20 on 4th increasing to 31 on last whorl. Columella straight, with thick callus. Siphonal canal short and wide. Aperture oval. Anal sinus deep on subsutural ramp.

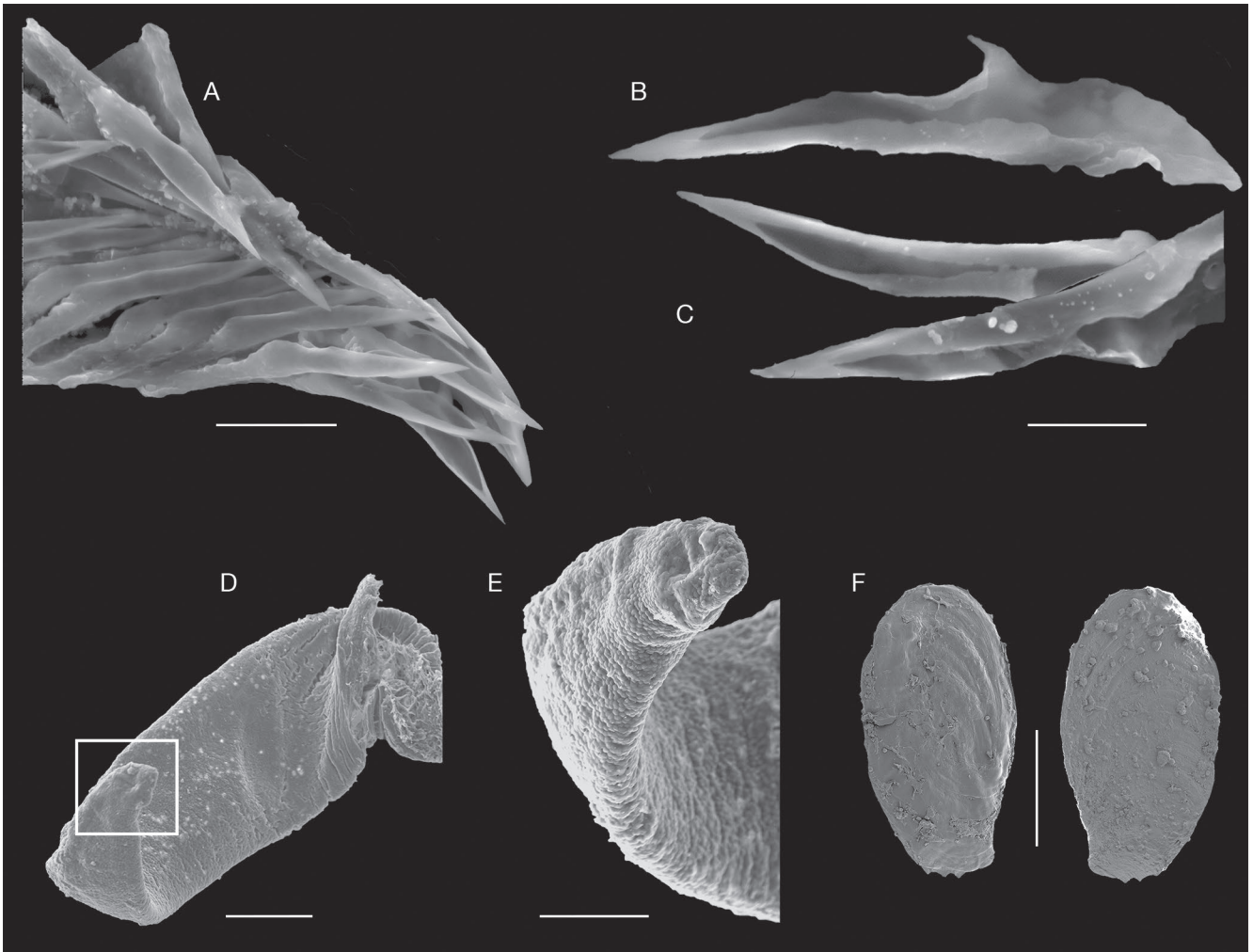


FIG. 3. – *Belalora cunninghami* (E. A. Smith, 1881). MACN-In44477, off Mar del Plata, Argentina, to 100 m depth: **A**, radula; **B**, detail of a tooth; **C**, detail of the end of the teeth; **D**, penis; **E**, detail of the penis tip. E4-R2, Chonchi, Chiloé, Chile, 15 m depth, MACN-In44476; **F**, operculum, internal and external views. Scale bars: A, 20 μ m; B, C, 10 μ m; D, 200 μ m; E, 100 μ m; F, 500 μ m.

Radula (Fig. 3A)

Of approximately 45 rows of marginal semi-rolled teeth. Tooth (Fig. 3B, C) short, *c.* 52 μ m long. Ligament present. Subradular membrane absent.

Penis (Fig. 3D, E)

Long (1.4 mm for a shell height of 7.9 mm), flat.

Operculum

Oval with terminal nucleus (Fig. 3F).

Eyes

At the base of short cephalic tentacles (0.62 mm for a shell height of 7.9 mm).

REMARKS

Tryon (1884: 222, pl. 33 *in error*, pl. 32, fig. 18) considered *Fusus sublutus* Gould, 1849 with unknown locality in the genus *Bela* and commented that *B. cunninghami* is possibly

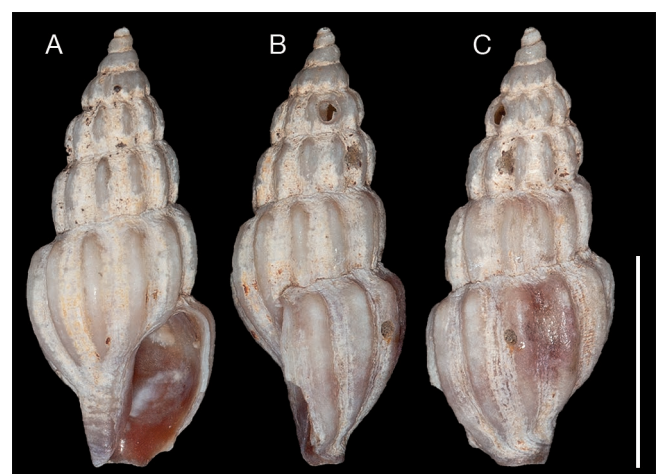


FIG. 4. – *Fusus sublutus* Gould, 1849: **A-C**, holotype, USNM 5684, unknown locality, three views of the shell. Scale bar: 5 mm.

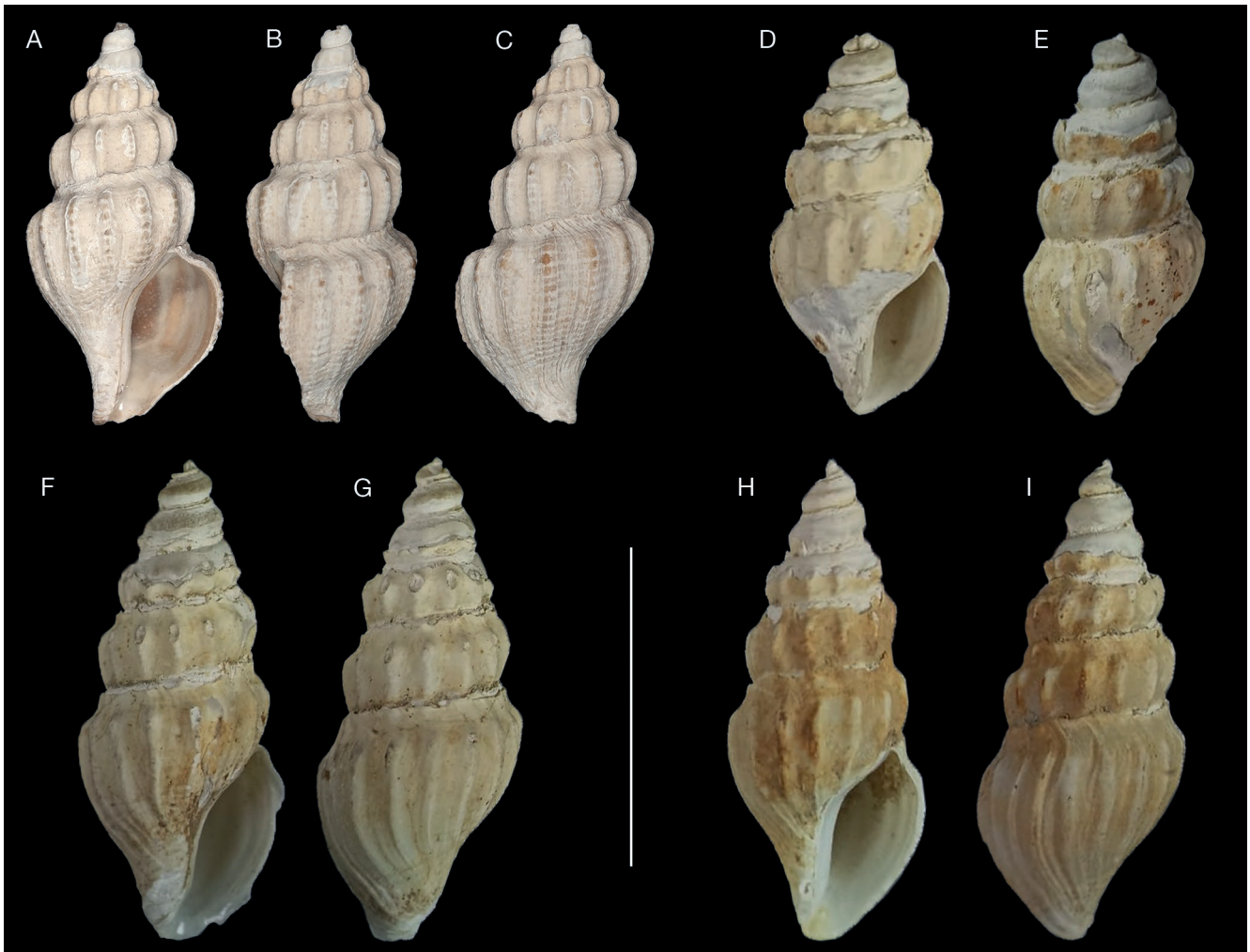


FIG. 5. — *Lora equatorialis* Dall, 1919: **A-C**, syntype, USNM 97092, Sta. 2783, 51°43'34.3"S, 72°30'21.6"W, Reina Adelaida Archipelago, Strait of Magellan, West mouth of Straits, 122 fathoms (223 m), three views of the shell; **D-I**, USNM 97070, Sta. 2792, 0°37'0.12"S, 81°W, West of Manta Bay, Ecuador, 401 fathoms (c. 733.8 m). Scale bar: 1 cm.

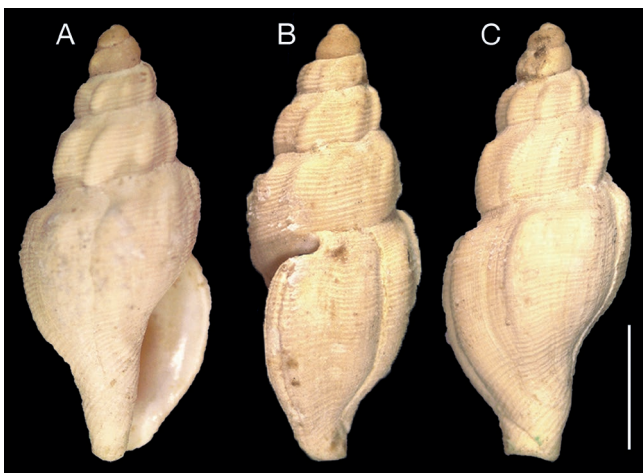


FIG. 6. — *Drillia spiralis* Barnard, 1958: **A-C**, holotype, A8583, off Cabo St. Blaize, South Africa, 125 fathoms (c. 228.7 m). Scale bar: 2 mm.

a synonym (Tryon 1884: 222, pl. 34, fig. 75). In the same paragraph, he also indicated that this shell exhibits “the peculiar appearance of the Magellanic molluscan fauna”, including *F. sublutus* in this region without any clear proof. The holotype of *F. sublutus* housed at USNM 5684 and illustrated here (Fig. 4) show more similarities with a buccinoidean than a conoidean. We agree with WoRMS (2024) and considered it *taxon inquirendum*.

Grant & Gale (1931: 531) in a general catalogue of Quaternary marine molluscs from California (USA) synonymized *Pleurotoma cunninghami* and *Lora equatorialis* (Dall, 1919) with *Lora subluta* (Gould, 1849), with no reason. There are two lots of *Lora equatorialis* Dall, 1919 in the USNM collection: USNM 97092 (illustrated here in Fig. 5A-C) from Reina Adelaida archipelago in the Strait of Magellan and USNM 97070 (some of them illustrated here in Figure 5D-I) from Manta, Ecuador, not included in Dall’s original description. As far as can be seen, both lots undoubtedly belong to two different species. McLean (1971a: 712, fig. 1667) illustrated the Magellanic syntype and assigned the species to the genus

Leucosyrinx Dall, 1889 with doubts. In a different work, he illustrated the radula of one specimen (McLean 1971b: 120, fig. 38) from USNM 97070 (from Manta, Ecuador) and, this time, truly assigned it to *Leucosyrinx*. This radula dissected by McLean and the shells of the USNM 97070 identified by him as *Leucosyrinx equatorialis* are very different from the material here included in *Belalora*. In addition, Dall's syntype (USNM 97092, Fig. 5A-C) of *Lora equatorialis* is not a conoidean but a Buccinoidean of the genus *Pareuthria* Strebel, 1905 (probably *P. atrata* (E. A. Smith, 1881)).

Barnard (1963: 606) pointed out some similarities between *Drillia spiralis* Barnard, 1958 from Cape St. Blaize, South Africa, and *Belalora thielei*, however, he decided to maintain *D. spiralis* as a valid name. After observing a photograph of the holotype of *D. spiralis* (herein Fig. 4G-I), we concluded that this is a different species with no relation with *Belalora*.

Castellanos & Landoni (1993) mentioned that *B. thielei* would be a synonym of *B. cunninghami*. Both species have a similar shell with sympatric distribution. However, as far as it can be seen in the holotype, the only specimen available for comparison, the main difference appears to be the wider shell and lower spire of *B. thielei*.

Forcelli (2000: 111, fig. 331) and Forcelli & Narosky (2015: 204, pl. 6, fig. 2) referred to *Oenopota cunninghami* and *B. thielei* as synonyms, although the specimen they illustrate does not correspond to either species.

DISCUSSION

The genus *Belalora* was described by Powell (1951) to include the type species *B. thielei* from the Malvinas/Falkland Is. and *Bela striatula* Thiele, 1912 from the Davis Sea, Antarctica, based on the resemblance of their shells and protoconchs. Despite the notable similarities in their shells and the geographic closeness Powell (1951) did not mention *Pleurotoma cunninghami* described by Smith (1881) from Puerto Bueno, Chile although he referenced other species from Smith's paper. Later (Powell 1960) he included *P. cunninghami* as "generic location uncertain" in his catalogue of Antarctic and subantarctic molluscs.

Egorova (1982: 92) and Hain (1990: 172, pl. XXVI, fig. 7) illustrated two different radulae attributed to *B. striatula* Thiele, 1912 (described from Gauss Station, Davis sea, Antarctica). The morphology of these radulae and also the operculum noticeably differs among them and from those of *B. cunninghami* illustrated here for the first time.

The shell and protoconch of *B. cunninghami* and *B. thielei* are very similar and along with their close geographical distribution, lead us to conclude that they belong to the same genus. In addition, according to the morphology of the radula, quite distinctive, the Antarctic species *B. striatula*, should be assigned to a different genus. Kantor *et al.* (2016) included *Oenopota weirichi* Engl, 2008 in *Belalora*; however, the radula is unknown, and the operculum is absent, while in the type specimens of *B. cunninghami* and *B. thielei* it is present as far as it can be seen deep inside the shell, which was in the latter

case held in hand. Unfortunately, all materials mentioned by Powell in the original description of *B. thielei* from other stations than the type locality were not found at the NHMUK. Nevertheless, Powell (1951) mentioned a vestigial operculum in the description of *Belalora*. Both species are undoubtedly close so until more information, perhaps molecular data, be available, we prefer to maintain both species, *B. cunninghami* and *B. thielei*, as valid.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to A. Salvador and P. Crabb (NHMUK), E. Strong (USNM), R. Adams (Iziko South African Museum), A. Tablado and M. Romanelli (MACN), D. Gutiérrez Gregoric (MLP) and S. Bogan (CFA-UMAI) who kindly gave access to or sent material from malacological collections under their care. F. Tricárico (MACN) assisted with the operation of the SEM. Two reviewers kindly helped with constructive comments to improve the original manuscript. We acknowledge funding by the Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET) of Argentina, to which GP belong as members of the Carrera del Investigador Científico and NCS as a fellow. Cristian Aldea acknowledges the projects "Diagnosis of Macrobenthos in the Francisco Coloane MCPA" (BIP N° 30061434-0) and "Articulated System of Research on Climate Change and Sustainability in Coastal Zones of Chile" (PFUE-RED21992) of the Chilean Government.

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Submitted on 9 April 2024;
 accepted on 26 June 2024;
 published on 18 March 2025.