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THE SPECIES OF MACROCYSTIS
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THOSE
ON SOUTHERN AUSTRALIAN COASTS

BY
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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PUBLICATIONS IN BOTANY
Volume 37, No. 2, pp. 109-132, Plates 8-16, 1 map.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
BERKELEY AND LOS ANGELES
1914
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R. B. B. WOMEWEBST

INTRODUCTION

DURING RECENT YEARS ecological surveys of the coast of Victoria by Bennett and Pope (1933) and of parts of South Australia by the writer have shown that Macrocystis is a distinctive algae of the upper subtidal zone of much of the Victorian coast and of the eastern part of the South Australian coast. Macrocystis is also plentiful around Tasmania, especially on the east and southeast coasts, where extensive deepwater beds occur. Here investigations of its growth rate, extent, and possible economic use are being made by officers of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization.

An examination of collections from southern Australia and Tasmania showed that, on the basis of holdfast characters, two species were present and not one as has been generally thought. This study of the Australian Macrocystis was begun at the University of Adelaide and continued at the University of California at Berkeley, where abundant herbarium material is available from almost the whole world range of its distribution. Macrocystis collections have been examined also in the following herbaria: in the United States in the Chicago Natural History Museum, the Parlow Herbarium, and the New York Botanic Garden; in England in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and the British Museum (Natural History); in Europe in the Botanical Museum in Lund, the Riksmuseum in Stockholm, the Botanical Museum in Copenhagen, the Bibliotheca Botanica in Leiden, and the Laboratoire de Cryptogamie in Paris.

The type specimen of Fucus pyrifrons Linnæus has been seen in the Linnæean Collection, London, and the type specimen of Macrocystis angustifolia Bory and M. integrafolla Bory in the Paris Natural History Museum.

Before naming the Australian species in the field, I have studied the two North American species on the California coast, and have had the benefit of the field knowledge of Professor George F. Parkefuss of the South African plant, and of Dr. Robert F. Seagel of Macrocystis in British Columbia, Canada.

Part of this study, carried out at the University of California and elsewhere in the United States, was made possible by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, to whom acknowledgment is made. Grateful acknowledgment is made to Professor Parkefuss and to Dr. Seagel for reading the manuscript critically, and to the former for use of the algal herbarium and library facilities of the Department of Botany, University of California.

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The map opposite page 113 is based on Goods' Base Map No. 101M by Henry M. Leppard (copyright by the University of Chicago). It is used by permission of the University of Chicago Press.

RECORDED DISTRIBUTION OF MACROCYSTIS IN AUSTRALIA

The earliest record of Macrocystis from Australia is that of Bory (1826, p. 10) who described *M. angustifolia* from a specimen collected by de la Perrière in ‘Nouvelle-Hollande.’ Bory (1828, p. 33) later changed this name to *M. angustifo- lia* and figured the plant (1828, pl. 5). Therecord in this figure is very like those of plants from Robe in South Australia, but not the holdfast. However, Bory states that he received the holdfast from Lamooyous, with “mère australis” as the locality. This specimen could not be located in the Paris Museum, but in the Riksmuseum, Stockholm, there is a specimen with a good holdfast and a label “Lamournia pyrifera angustifolia (Lamournous) Mère australis.” The following passage, possibly in Bory’s handwriting, is added: “Il est douteux que les raies divisées comme en le voit sur l’atypie de Lamournous comme celle de l’angusti- frome aient les mêmes. Nous les crains celles du commun...” Quand l’habitant du复印 être Valparaiso venant probablement du capitaine Thomas.” As the collection place of the holdfast is so very vague, and Bory himself stated the holdfast may be that of another species, it seems best to disregard completely the hold- fast in Bory’s figure of *M. angustifolia*. The holdfast of the Riksmuseum specimen is characteristic of *M. pyrifera* as understood in this paper.

Since this first record, most subsequent authors have referred all Australian specimens to *Macrocystis pyrifera*, usually recognizing only this one species within the genus. Harvey (1862, pl. 292) record a M. pyrifera from “east of Cape Northumberland, and in Tasmania,” and Lucas (1906, p. 17; 1936, p. 95) reported it from the south and southeast coasts of Australia and Tasmania. May (1930, p. 298) records it from as far north as Boodji in New South Wales, and it may also occur on Lord Howe Island (Lassell, 1855, p. 213). Probably the New South Wales records are of drift plants, since Dubois, Bennett, and Pope (1945) did not record *Macrocystis* during their ecological survey of the coast, and Bennett and Pope (personal communication) found it only as far east as Walkerville (west of Wilson’s Promontory) in Victoria.

*Macrocystis* probably occurs in suitable localities westward along the Victorian coast from Walkerville. It was recorded from Port Phillip by Wylie (1853, p. 161), and Pope and Bennett (1936, p. 136) found it in most exposed localities where they studied recently. The western distribution probably ends at Robe in South Australia, where it grows from just below low-water level to 20 feet (or more?) in depth. Fragments of plants, however, have been collected from the drift at Encounter Bay, Pensington Bay on Kangaroo Island, and at Stansbury and Port Vincent on Yorke Peninsula. Since the prevailing current along southern Australia is from west to east, these drift plants may have originated from smaller upwelling patches, or these localities, or they may have traveled longer distances from subantarctic localities in the current of the subantarctic gyre which flows along southern Australia. *Macrocystis* is known to travel such great distances in the west-wind drift of the subantarctic regions (Hooker, 1847, p. 461).
that little importance can be given to drift plants in the geographical distribution of the genus. Macrocystis appears to be widely distributed around Tasmania. Harvey (1860, p. 289) records M. pyrifera as occurring “all around the coast.” Mr. Alan Cribb (personal communication) states that Macrocystis forms extensive beds on the east and southeast coasts, and probably occurs around most of Tasmania, though it may be rare or absent on parts of the north coast.

Thus the known distribution of Macrocystis in Australia is around Tasmania and from Walkerville in Victoria to Sobe in South Australia, in suitable habitats, whereas drift plants and possibly outlying patches may occur farther east and west.

Specimens occur in the Australian herbaria (those in Adelaide, Melbourne, and Sydney have been examined) from within this range, but with few exceptions are inadequate for specific determination, and will not be cited here.

WORLD DISTRIBUTION OF MACROCYSTIS

The main distribution of Macrocystis (Setchell, 1932, p. 466, pl. 63) is circum-antarctic from about 60°S to 40°S latitude. It is particularly plentiful around most subantarctic islands and the southern tip of South America, and extends up the west coast of South America almost to the equator (Howe, 1914). In South Africa (Passenfuss, 1942, p. 21) Macrocystis is limited to the southwest part of the Cape Province, extending from the Olifants River in the north to Cape Point in the south. Dassen Island, however, may be the northernmost locality for attached plants. The distribution of Macrocystis in Australia has been discussed above; in New Zealand it occurs in suitable localities in the South Island and near Wellington in the North Island (Moore, 1941, p. 22).

In the northern hemisphere, Macrocystis is known only from the west coast of America, from about Magdalena Bay on the coast of Baja California northward to near Sitka in Alaska.

The distribution of the individual species of Macrocystis, as recognised in this paper, is given later with the taxonomic descriptions, and is shown on the accompanying map.

TYPE LOCALITY OF THE TYPE SPECIMEN

The type of Macrocystis is Fucus pyriformis Linnaeus (1771, p. 311), which was described from material collected by Esmig in "Cosmis Antartici" during a voyage from Europe to India. Setchell (1932, p. 454) believed this locality to be "somewhere among the Antarctic Islands (Kerguelen, Crozet, etc.)," but Passenfuss (1940, p. 7) has pointed out that the same "Cosmis Antartici" applies on old maps to the Atlantic Ocean off Africa, from the coast of Guinea southward. Although several old atlases (such as Huygens' Cosmographia, fourth book, 1656) give the Antarctic Ocean in the general region of the Gulf of Guinea, Hahn's Universal Geography (1858, map opposite p. 100) refers to the "Sibiopic or South Atlantic Ocean." Hooper (1947, p. 463) interpreted the type material as from "the seas of the Cape of Good Hope."

In considering the place of origin of the type material of Fucus pyriformis,