



Phylogenetic regionalization of marine plants reveals close evolutionary affinities among disjunct temperate assemblages



Barnabas H. Daru^{a,b,*}, Ben G. Holt^c, Jean-Philippe Lessard^{d,e}, Kowiyou Yessoufou^f, T. Jonathan Davies^{g,h}

^a Department of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology and Harvard University Herbaria, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138, USA

^b Department of Plant Science, University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20, Hatfield, 0028 Pretoria, South Africa

^c Department of Life Sciences, Imperial College London, Silwood Park Campus, Ascot SL5 7PY, United Kingdom

^d Quebec Centre for Biodiversity Science, Department of Biology, McGill University, Montreal, QC H3A 0G4, Canada

^e Department of Biology, Concordia University, Montreal, QC H4B 1R6, Canada

^f Department of Environmental Sciences, University of South Africa, Florida campus, Florida 1710, South Africa

^g Department of Biology, McGill University, Montreal, QC H3A 0G4, Canada

^h African Centre for DNA Barcoding, University of Johannesburg, PO Box 524, Auckland Park, Johannesburg 2006, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

While our knowledge of species distributions and diversity in the terrestrial biosphere has increased sharply over the last decades, we lack equivalent knowledge of the marine world. Here, we use the phylogenetic tree of seagrasses along with their global distributions and a metric of phylogenetic beta diversity to generate a phylogenetically-based delimitation of marine phyloregions (phyloregions). We then evaluate their evolutionary affinities and explore environmental correlates of phylogenetic turnover between them. We identified 11 phyloregions based on the clustering of phylogenetic beta diversity values. Most phyloregions can be classified as either temperate or tropical, and even geographically disjunct temperate regions can harbor closely related species assemblages. Geographic differences in sea surface temperatures account for more phylogenetic turnover than either water salinity or bathymetry. We also found a strong temperate-tropical gradient in evolutionary distinctiveness, with temperate phyloregions being the most evolutionarily unique. Our results highlight differences between the marine and terrestrial worlds, and suggest that the interplay between long-distance dispersal and phylogenetic niche conservatism played a central role in determining the contemporary distributions of seagrasses worldwide.

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1. Introduction

Our knowledge of marine biodiversity lags far behind that of terrestrial regions. For instance, it is estimated that more than 60% of marine species remain undescribed (Appeltans et al., 2012), yet many marine species are affected by human-induced pressures (Roberts et al., 2002). Such threats tend to be highest in coastal areas with lesser impacts in the open oceans (Halpern et al., 2008). There is therefore an urgent need to better understand the distribution and structure of coastal marine biodiversity, and to identify regions harboring unique sets of species (i.e. high species endemism) and evolutionary lineages (i.e. high phylogenetic endemism) if we wish to preserve their taxonomic and phylogenetic diversity. By grouping species assemblages into biogeographic units using information on their shared evolutionary histories (Holt et al., 2013), we can gain insight into the evolutionary and ecological processes shaping

species geographical distributions and develop a guide for prioritizing conservation efforts (Winter et al., 2013).

Previous attempts to define marine or oceanic biogeographic regions (e.g. Forbes, 1856; Hayden et al., 1984; Longhurst, 1998) have variously relied on expert opinion, patterns of species richness or endemism, climatic zones, and political boundaries, limiting our ability to infer processes from patterns. A recent synthesis of marine ecoregions by Spalding et al. (2007) represents the most comprehensive biogeographic regionalization of coastal and shelf areas to date. Spalding et al. (2007) divided coastal waters into 12 realms that coincided broadly with the continental plates. In a separate analysis, Short et al. (2007) delimited six phyto-geographical zones that separate into temperate and tropical regions. Recent developments in phylogenetic techniques, and the increased availability of genetic data, provide an opportunity to expand upon these efforts by incorporating information on species evolutionary relationships.

Biogeographic regionalizations that treat all species as being equally related fail to account for a substantial amount of the biological variation among different regions. Early biogeographers recognized the value of considering higher taxonomic relationships when delimiting biogeographical regions, and modern biogeographical analyses have

* Corresponding author at: Department of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology and Harvard University Herbaria, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138, USA.
E-mail address: barnabas_daru@fas.harvard.edu (B.H. Daru).

attempted to make processes underlying such delimitations transparent and repeatable (Kreft and Jetz, 2010). Integrating phylogeny into biogeographic regionalization may reveal the history of diversification and/or dispersal events (Wu et al., 2016) within and between regions (Graham and Fine, 2008; Holt et al., 2013; Daru et al., 2016). Importantly, a phylogenetic approach allows us to quantify similarities among species assemblages even when they share no species in common (Graham and Fine, 2008), helps identify centers of evolutionary radiations (Holt et al., 2013), and provides a guide for prioritizing conservation efforts aimed at preserving evolutionary history (Rosauer et al., 2009; Jetz et al., 2014).

We focus our analysis on seagrasses, a major aquatic vegetation type, and the only widespread marine angiosperm taxon. Seagrasses are a group of flowering plants belonging to the monocot order Alismatales, comprising 70 species widely distributed in the estuarine or marine environment, and have a completely submerged life cycle (Hemminga and Duarte, 2000). The group represents an important component of the seascape's natural history, playing a critical role in sediment accumulation and carbon storage. Seagrass meadows also support high rates of secondary productivity; they host algae that support diverse and productive food webs that include fish and birds (Orth et al., 1984), and directly provide food for many marine herbivores including the endangered green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), manatee (*Trichechus* spp.) and dugong (*Dugong dugon*) (Green and Short, 2003; Larkum et al., 2006). Seagrasses also serve as nursery ground for many fish and invertebrate species (Beck et al., 2001). While seagrasses represent only one of the many types of marine coastal ecosystems, we have good data on their spatial distribution and DNA sequences (Daru and Yessoufou, 2016) for reconstructing their phylogenetic relationships. Our analysis thus provides an illustration of the novel insights that can be gained from applying phylogenetic regionalization, but it should be considered as only a first step in generating a comprehensive phylogenetic assessment of coastal marine plant diversity.

Here, we use Simpson's phylogenetic beta dissimilarity metric (Holt et al., 2013) along with data on the global distribution of seagrass species to generate the first phylogenetic regionalization of the coastal regions of the world. First, we group geographical regions into 'phyloregions' based upon phylogenetic similarity among assemblages of seagrass species. We then investigate the effect of oceanographic factors in shaping phylogenetic membership within phyloregions using a suite of environmental variables.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Taxon sampling and species distributions

We included all 70 currently recognized species of seagrasses worldwide (Green and Short, 2003). Species names were checked for synonyms using The Plant List (www.plantlist.org). Distribution data for all 70 seagrasses are expert-based extent-of-occurrence range maps downloaded from the IUCN Red List website at <http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/spatial-data> (accessed June 2014). The IUCN range maps are regularly updated and represent the best current estimate of seagrass distribution. We overlaid the maps onto a Berhmann-projected equal area grid in ArcMAP v.10.0 at a resolution of $1.0 \times 1.0^\circ$, totaling 6655 cells. We obtained DNA sequences (*rbcL*, ITS and 18S) for all species that were available from GenBank/EBI (55 of 70 seagrasses). Information on DNA sequences (retrieved from GenBank/EBI) and geographical ranges are presented in S1 Table in Supporting Information in the online version of this paper.

2.2. Phylogenetic reconstruction and divergence time estimation

Sequences were aligned using Multiple Sequence Comparison by the Log-Expectation algorithm (MUSCLE v.3.8.31; Edgar, 2004) and manually edited in PAUP v.4.0b.10 (Swofford, 2003). The combined data set

was comprised of 1137, 930, and 1671 base pairs for *rbcL*, ITS and 18S, respectively. We performed a maximum likelihood (ML) analysis on the combined data set using RAXML (Stamatakis et al., 2008) and enforcing a backbone constraint using the DNA-based system of flowering plant classification developed by the Angiosperm Phylogeny Group (APG III, 2009), implemented in Phylomatic v.3 (Webb and Donoghue, 2005; updated on 23 August 2012). In our study, this system provides an initial phylogeny used to constrain the topology of our seagrass phylogeny. Branch lengths were then calibrated in millions of years using a Bayesian Markov chain Monte Carlo (hereafter MCMC) approach implemented in BEAST v.1.7.5 (Drummond and Rambaut, 2007). First, the RAXML starting tree was adjusted so that branch lengths satisfied all secondary calibration points, using PATHd8 v.1.0 (Britton et al., 2007). Second, we used the GTR + G + I substitution model based on the result of AIC from Modeltest v.2.3 (Nylander, 2004) and an uncorrelated lognormal relaxed molecular clock model selected in BEAST v.1.7.5 (Drummond and Rambaut, 2007). We used six calibration points obtained from the literature: Alismatales crown node 128 Ma; Cymodoceae crown node 61 Ma, Zosteraceae crown node 17 Ma, Hydrocharitaceae crown node 75 Ma, and Tofieldiaceae crown node 100 Ma (Janssen and Bremer, 2004); and *Alocasia* crown node 19.28 Ma (Nauheimer et al., 2012). We then ran two replicates of the MCMC analyses in BEAST, each for 100 million generations, sampling every 1000 generations. The MCMC log files were assessed for convergence using the effective sample size (ESS) analysis in Tracer v.1.5 (Rambaut et al., 2013). The resulting tree files were combined in LogCombiner v.1.7.5, discarding the first 25% trees as burn-in. The maximum clade credibility (MCC) tree, with means and 95% highest posterior density (HPD) intervals, was generated with TreeAnnotator v.1.7.5. Fifteen species did not have DNA sequences available and were placed on the MCC tree by grafting them in a multichotomy to the node from which their closest relatives descended based on their taxonomic classification using the R library PASTIS (Thomas et al., 2013). This approach has recently been used, for example, to assemble a complete phylogeny for birds (Jetz et al., 2012) and fruitflies (Yassin et al., 2008). The placement of taxa in the absence of DNA sequences could potentially impact the delineation of phyloregions. To examine sensitivity of our results, we therefore re-ran the analysis of phyloregions (see below) excluding these species. We then compared $p\beta_{sim}$ values with those observed when only species with DNA sequences were used and showed a strong correlation with the full dataset ($r = 0.99$, $P = 0.001$; from Mantel test using 999 permutations). We present here results including all species.

2.3. Clustering phyloregions

We evaluated phylogenetic dissimilarity among all possible pairs of grid cells using Simpson's beta dissimilarity metric (β_{sim}) and its phylogenetic equivalent ($p\beta_{sim}$) following Holt et al. (2013). The phylogenetic Simpson's index reflects the number of shared phylogenetic branch lengths found between two species assemblages and is quantified as the proportion of shared branches in the least diverse assemblage. We define phytogeographic regions based on the phylogenetic similarity between all pairs of grid cells. To identify the best algorithm to cluster grid cells we evaluated the performance of seven hierarchical clustering algorithms on both $p\beta_{sim}$ and β_{sim} using cophenetic correlation (Kreft and Jetz, 2010). We determined the optimal number of clusters using the elbow method of Salvador and Chan (2004) implemented in the R package GMD (Zhao et al., 2011). When a phyloregion corresponded closely to a recognized biogeographic region (as defined by Spalding et al., 2007 or Short et al., 2007), we identified this phyloregion using Short et al. (2007) or Spalding et al.'s (2007) terminologies.

We estimated the evolutionary distinctiveness of each phyloregion as the mean $p\beta_{sim}$ value between each focal phyloregion and all other phyloregions (see Holt et al., 2013). Broadly speaking, this approach identifies regions that enclose radiations of species that are restricted to a given region. As such, the geographic trend in evolutionary

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