PONTIFÍCIA UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL
PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM ZOOLOGIA

FILOGEOGRAFIA DO LEÃO-MARINHO-DO-SUL, *OTARIA FLAVESCENS* SHAW 1800

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"Sei que a arte é irmã da ciência
Ambas filhas de um deus fugaz
Que faz num momento e no mesmo momento desfaz..."
Gilberto Gil

ÍNDICE

AGRADECIMENTOS..5

RESUMO..6

ABSTRACT..7

APRESENTAÇÃO..8

ARTIGO: "Philogeography of the Southern sea lion, Otaria flavescens (Otaridae): early Pleistocene divergence between Atlantic and Pacific populations..13

ABSTRACT..14

INTRODUCTION..15

MATERIAL AND METHODS..18

RESULTS..23

DISCUSSION..25

REFERENCES CITED..30

FIGURE LEGENDS..38

FIGURES..39

TABLES..44

CONCLUSÕES GERAIS..48

REFERÊNCIAS 49

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Se sente seguro aquele que sabe que tem o amor incondicional de alguém. Se sente forte aquele que tem por alguém amor incondicional. Eu me sinto seguro e forte.

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Dedico este trabalho ao próximo!

RESUMO

Neste estudo **i**nvestigamos a estrutura populacional do leão-marinho-do-sul (Otaria flavescens), um otarideo amplamente distribuído ao longo das costas dos oceanos Atlântico e Pacífico na América do Sul, e que foi extremamente caçado durante os dois últimos séculos. Apesar de sua ampla distribuição e interações com atividades de pesca, ate o momento poucos trabalhos avaliaram as diferenças genéticas e estruturação ao longo da distribuição da espécie. No presente trabalho, utilizamos marcadores de microssatélites (10 loci) e DNA mitocondrial para avaliar a estrutura populacional e história evolutiva da espécie. Encontramos estruturação significativa entre as populações dos oceanos Pacífico e Atlântico, correspondendo a duas linhagens mitocondriais reciprocamente monofiléticas, separadas desde o início do Pleistoceno, indicando forte filopatria das fêmeas. Também encontramos estruturação genética significativa intra-oceânica entre diferentes sítios de reprodução. A análise dos microssatélites também demonstrou que as populações dos dois oceanos são significativamente diferentes, possuindo diversos alelos exclusivos, apesar de que um pequeno fluxo gênico inter-oceânico através dos machos não pode ser descartado. Nossos dados mostram que a espécie não sofreu recentemente nenhuma redução significativa na sua diversidade genética. Estes resultados indicam fortemente que as populações de *O. flavescens* do Pacífico e do Atlântico são duas unidades evolutivas significativas (ESUs) e que as colônias de reprodução em cada oceano devem ser manejadas separadamente.

ABSTRACT

We investigated the population structure of the Southern sea lion (*Otaria flavescens*), an otariid widely distributed along the Pacific and Atlantic coast of South America, which was heavily harvested during the two last centuries. Despite its wide distribution and interactions with fishing activities, few works evaluated the genetic differences and structuring along the species distribution. Here we used both microsatellite (10 loci) and mtDNA markers to evaluate the population structure and evolutionary history of the species. We found significant structuring between Pacific and Atlantic populations that corresponds to two reciprocally monophyletic mitochondrial lineages separated since early Pleistocene, indicating extreme female phylopatry. We also found significant genetic structure between intra-oceanic breeding sites. Microsatellites analyses also found the populations from the two oceans as significantly different with several private alleles, although very small inter-oceanic gene flow mediate by males could not be discarded. Our results show that the species did not suffer recently any significant reduction of its genetic diversity. Our findings strongly support that *O. flavescens* Atlantic and Pacific populations are two evolutionary significant units (ESUs) and that intra-oceanic breeding colonies should also be managed separately.

APRESENTAÇÃO

O leão-marinho-do-sul, *Otaria flavescens* Shaw 1800, é um dos otariídeos mais amplamente distribuídos ao longo da América do Sul, possuindo colônias reprodutivas tanto na costa Pacífica, desde o sul do Peru até o extremo-sul do Chile, como na costa Atlântica a partir do sul da Argentina até o sul do Brasil (Vaz-Ferreira, 1982), (**Figura 1**). Contudo, registros de indivíduos fora da sua área normal de distribuição são relativamente comuns. Para a costa brasileira há ocorrência em Santa Catarina (Simões-Lopes *et al.* 1995), Paraná, São Paulo e Rio de Janeiro (Pinedo, 1990). Já na costa do oceano Pacífico existem registros para a Colômbia (Mora-Pinto & Muñoz-Hincapie, 1995; Capella *et al*., 2002) e Ilhas Galápagos (Wellington & de Vries, 1976), alcançando até mesmo a costa do Panamá na América Central (Mendez & Rodriguez, 1984).

Apesar do Brasil não possuir nenhuma colônia reprodutiva de lobos ou leões-marinhos, muitos espécimes podem ser observados anualmente nas costas sul e sudeste, entre os meses de outono e primavera quando realizam seus deslocamentos pós-reprodutivos auxiliados pela corrente das Malvinas (Repenning *et al.,* 1971; Carvalho, 1975; Oliveira 1999).

Não existem estimativas populacionais atualizadas precisas da espécie ao longo da América do Sul devido à ausência de estudos recentes. Contudo, estima-se que existam aproximadamente 265.000 espécimes, dos quais 90.000 estariam na Argentina, 3.000 nas Ilhas Falkland, 12 a 15.000 no Uruguai, 100 no Brasil, 5.000 no Peru e 128.000 no Chile (Seal Conservation Society, www.pinnipeds.org).

Esta espécie foi intensamente caçada até o início da década 90, principalmente nas áreas reprodutivas da costa Atlântica, como o Uruguai (Vaz-Ferreira & Bianco, 1998), onde sua exploração

comercial era tida como uma das bases da economia nacional. Centenas de milhares de espécimes do leão-marinho foram mortos entre os séculos XIX e XX, e como resultado várias populações foram quase levadas à extinção. Apesar da proibição da caça em todos os países de sua ocorrência, existem relatos de caça ilegal recente na costa do Peru e de mortalidade da espécie em decorrência da forte interação com atividade de pesca, sendo este atualmente o maior problema de conservação enfrentado pela espécie na América do Sul (Ott *et al*., 1996; Crespo & Dans, 2005).

Uma das maiores polêmicas com relação ao leão-marinho-do-sul é sobre o seu nome específico, ora denominado *Otaria byronia* (de Blainville, 1820), ora *Otaria flavescens* (Shaw, 1800). Os autores têm divergido fortemente, principalmente devido às dificuldades inerentes à busca da identidade correta da espécie devido à inexistência dos holótipos, os quais foram destruídos durante a segunda guerra mundial (King, 1954). Cabrera (1940) argumentou que a descrição original de *O. flavescens* feita por Shaw (tendo como nome original *Phoca flavescens*) com base em material coletado por Pennant no ano de 1793 corresponde a uma pele preparada de um indivíduo juvenil e de coloração amarelada. Apesar da localidade tipo do espécime descrito por Shaw ter sido o Estreito de Magalhães, local onde regularmente existem populações da espécie, não existe até hoje uma identificação positiva e inequívoca para esta pele, uma vez que outros otariídeos também ocorrem regularmente naquela região como o lobo-marinho sul-americano, *Arctocephalus australis*. Além disso, eventualmente pode haver ocorrência de outros lobos-marinhos como *A. gazella* e *A. tropicalis*, este último sabidamente de coloração ventral amarelada, muito semelhante à descrita por Shaw (1800).

Oliva (1988) foi categórica ao afirmar que o epíteto "*flavescens*" está baseado em um "arctocefalíneo não-identificável", e que o holótipo descrito por Shaw não corresponde a um filhote de *Otaria* no comprimento total, no tamanho da orelha e na já referida coloração do pêlo.

Rodriguez & Bastida (1993) apresentaram um conjunto de idéias relacionadas ao comprimento do corpo, tamanho da orelha, coloração e comprimento do pelo que confirmam que o holótipo de Shaw 1800 pode ser um filhote de Leão-Marinho-do-Sul, portanto o epíteto "*flavescens*" seria válido. Os autores argumentam que os filhotes de *Otaria* podem apresentar após a primeira muda uma fase de pelagem mais "clara" que em alguns indivíduos pode ser considerada "amarelada", o que jamais acontece com juvenis de *A. australis*. Vaz-Ferreira (1984) compartilhou dessa opinião apresentando outros casos de pêlos de filhotes de coloração clara e até mesmo a possível ocorrência de albinismo, embora muito rara. Rodriguez & Bastida (1993) consideram "muito improvável" a possibilidade de que se tratasse de um filhote de outro arctocefalíneo como *A. gazella*.

Já o holótipo de *Otaria byronia,* apesar de ter sido destruído, se tratava de um crânio sem mandíbula da espécie coletado pela expedição do comodoro John Byron que navegou pelo mundo no final do século XVIII. Este crânio foi depositado no Museu do *Royal College of Surgeons*, em Londres, sob o número 974 (Hamilton, 1934). Blainville foi quem o descreveu originalmente denominando-o de *Phoca byronia*, tendo incluído junto com a descrição um desenho mostrando claramente a extensão do palato secundário, característica diagnóstica dessa espécie. Além do palato expandido a ilustração mostra claramente as cristas nucais e sagital bem desenvolvidas (King, 1954), características essas que, aliadas ao tamanho (aproximadamente 33 cm), remetem a um indivíduo macho adulto de *Otaria*. Hamilton (1934) referiu-se ao espécime como "pertencente a um macho adulto" e, mesmo tendo sido sucinto na sua referência ao espécime sua identificação é confiável, pois ele viu pessoalmente o crânio antes que esse se perdesse durante a Segunda Guerra Mundial. No entanto, a localidade tipo para *Phoca byronia* foi referida como de Ilha Carolina, no Oceano Pacífico, local onde sabidamente não ocorre nem essa, nem nenhuma outra espécie de otariídeo. É sabido,

entretanto, que a mesma expedição do comodoro John Byron explorou o Estreito de Magalhães, e posteriormente, percorreu a referida região do oceano Pacífico. Tal fato da margem um possível erro de catalogação do espécime (Rice, 1998).

Recentemente a Comissão Internacional de Nomenclatura Zoológica se pronunciou a respeito, publicando em seu boletim (ICNZ, 2000) um parecer (Opinião 1962) onde foi regulamentado como válido o epíteto específico "*byronia*" para a espécie *Otaria byronia*. Entende-se por regulamentação a inclusão do nome na Lista oficial de nomes específicos em Zoologia (Opinion, 1962). Essa decisão foi baseada no caso 3058, também publicado no Boletim de Nomenclatura Zoológica e de autoria de Gardner & Robbins (1999).

Os pesquisadores argentinos, Diego Rodriguez & Ricardo Bastida (2008), apresentaram recentemente um pôster na XIII Reunión de Trabajo de Especialistas em Mamiferos Acuáticos de América Del Sur, 7º Congreso SOLAMAC, argumentando a favor do epíteto *flavecens.* No referido trabalho os autores invocam o principio da prioridade (o nome *flavescens* é de 1800, enquanto que o nome *byronia* é de 1820). Eles argumentam que para aceitar o segundo é preciso rechaçar completamente o primeiro, o que de fato ainda não aconteceu, uma vez que nenhum elemento novo (fora os tradicionais argumentos sobre coloração de pêlo, localidade-tipo e todos os outros já apresentados anteriormente) acerca da invalidade destes nomes foi acrescentado. No presente estudo adotamos *Otaria flavescens* como o nome válido para o Leão-marinho-do-sul em acordo com o principio da prioridade e com os argumentos de Rodriguez & Bastida (2008).

Apesar da ampla distribuição geográfica, da caça indiscriminada da espécie, dos problemas de interação com a pesca, raros foram os estudos que buscaram avaliar as possíveis diferenças

populacionais e suas conseqüências para o manejo e conservação da espécie ao longo da América do Sul.

Desta forma, este trabalho teve a intenção de avaliar possíveis diferenças genéticas ao longo da distribuição do Leão-Marinho-do-Sul, buscando entender sua história demográfica e os possíveis eventos e fatores que influenciaram no padrão filogeografico da espécie.

1 **Philogeography of the Southern sea lion, *Otaria flavescens* (Otaridae)*:* early**
2 **Pleistocene divergence between Atlantic and Pacific populations**

3

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23 Running title: Phylogeography of the Southern sea lion

ABSTRACT

We investigated the population structure of the Southern sea lion (*Otaria flavescens*), an otariid widely distributed along the Pacific and Atlantic coast of South America, and heavily harvested during the two last centuries. Despite its wide distribution and interactions with fishing activities, few works evaluated the genetic differences and structuring along the species distribution. Here we used both microsatellite (10 loci) and mtDNA markers to evaluate the population structure and evolutionary history of the species. We found significant structuring between Pacific and Atlantic populations that corresponds to two reciprocally monophyletic mitochondrial lineages separated since early Pleistocene, indicating extreme female phylopatry. We also found significant genetic structure between intra-oceanic breeding sites. Microsatellites analyses also found the populations from the two oceans as significantly different with several private alleles, although very small inter-oceanic gene flow mediate by males could not be discarded. Our results show that the species did not suffer recently any significant reduction of its genetic diversity. Our findings strongly support that *O. flavescens* Atlantic and Pacific populations are two evolutionary significant units (ESUs) and that intra-oceanic breeding colonies should also be managed separately.

46 **INTRODUCTION**

47 The Southern sea lion, *Otaria flavescens* Shaw 1800*,* belongs to the Otariidae or eared
48 seals, which is comprised by Fur Seals and Sea Lions. Despite the limited fossil record, recent
49 evolutionary biogeographic studies corroborated previous ideas about otariids eastern North
50 Pacific origin, at middle Miocene (Déméré et al. 2003; Arnason et al. 2006). The earliest known
51 otariid fossil is *Pithanotaria starri*, found in the Sisquoc Formation of California, USA, from
52 Late Miocene. It is suggested that the acerstors of the actual form of *O. flavescens* have
53 dispersed to southern oceans in a single event, crossing the equator from North to South Pacific
54 via eastern boundary currents, with a posterior colonization of the Atlantic side of South America
55 (Déméré et al. 2003; Arnason et al. 2006). Nevertheless the dates of those events are largely
56 unknown.

57 *Otaria flavescens* is widely distributed along the South American coast (Fig. 1), from
58 southern Brazil to Cape Horn, including Falkland Islands, in the Atlantic Ocean; and from Cape
59 Horn to Peru in the Pacific Ocean (Bastida, *et al.* 2007; Capozzo, 2002;). Besides these
60 reproductive sites, animals are also found sometimes northern of their normal range in both
61 oceans (Bastida *et al*. 2007).

62 The Southern sea lion is the biggest otariid of its region. The males weigh up to 350 kg and
63 measure around 3 m in length and the females weight up to 150 kg and measure about 2.2 m
64 (Capozzo 2002; Bastida *et al*. 2007). Like all eared seals, it is gregarious and polygamous
65 (Hamilton 1934), and from December to March, breeding colonies formed by harem bulls,
66 pregnant cows and newly born pups can be found at several islands as well as in mainland
67 (Capozzo 2002; Bastida et al 2007). The males come first to guarantee territory and wait for

68 females. The number of females per harem depends on the size of the male's territory, varying
69 from 4 to 9 cows for each bull. It cannot be exactly stated when the breeding begins or ends
70 (Hamilton 1934), and the peak of reproduction can vary among colonies. As the end of the
71 summer approaches, they become more spread and solitary. *Otaria flavescens* does not perform
72 mass migrations, although, they can disperse significantly in the water and make seasonal
73 movements (Vaz- Ferreira 1965).

74 For the ancient people of southern South America this species was a very important source
75 of food and heat. They were commonly hunted because of its meat, skin and specially blubber
76 (Bastida *et al* 2007; Capozzo 2002). In the last two centuries, the exploration of this resource was
77 an important economic activity in Uruguay, until the prohibition of hunting, at the beginning of
78 the ninety decade. However, there are some reports of illegal hunting and of death resulted by
79 fishing interactions. Currently, this is the main problem concerning *O. flavescens* conservation.
80 (Ott *et al*. 1996; Capozzo 2002; Crespo & Dans, 2005). Recent studies about population size are
81 rare, but around 250.000 specimens are believed to exist in all distribution range (Seal
82 Conservation Society, www.pinnipeds.org).

83 Despite its wide distribution and interactions with humans, few studies were carried out
84 on their evolutionary history, genetic diversity and population differentiation. Szapkievich *et al.*
85 (1999) used protein electrophoresis to estimate genetic distance between two rookeries in the
86 Atlantic coast, one from southern Argentina and the other from Uruguay. They have not found
87 structure evidence, and these two rookeries seemed to belong to the same population. Comparing
88 other regions from the morphological point of view, Brunner (2004), have performed traditional
89 morphometry of 55 skulls proceeding from Atlantic side mainland and Falkland Islands. She hav

90 found significant differences which placed the specimens into two groups corresponding to their
91 collection site.

92 Recently, two studies compared the Pacific and Atlantic specimens. Drehmer (2005)
93 measured skulls using traditional and geometric morphometry. He found four geographic groups
94 with distinct characteristics, two in each side of the continent. No systematic or management
95 proposal was suggested although. In 2007, Túnez *et al.* were the first to use mitochondrial DNA
96 (mtDNA) sequencing to compare *O. flavescens* populations from two regions of Atlantic coast
97 and the Peruvian coast. They sequenced a fragment of the cytocrome b and found six haplotypes.
98 No haplotypes were shared between the populations of the two sides of the continent. Given this
99 results they proposed two different evolutionary significant units, one in Atlantic and other in
100 Pacific. Nevertheless, only five sequences from Peru were used to compare the population from
101 each ocean and no nuclear markers were analyzed in the study.

102 The evolutionary significant unit (ESU) concept has been extensively debated since the
103 term was coined by Ryder 1986. In the *O. flavescens* case*,* the use of only mitochondrial DNA
104 (mtDNA) as a molecular marker to define an ESU should be viewed with caution. Concerning
105 the inheritance of the mtDNA (Avise, 1987) and the strong phylopatric behavior presented by *O.*
106 *flavescens* females (Riedman, 1990; Fabiani *et al.,* 2003), population structuring found through
107 mtDNA analysis could give a partial picture of the gene flow between populations, being
108 necessary the use of biparental markers to have a more complete evaluation of the species
109 population structure. However, such study was not presented so far.

110 We present here the first study of *O. flavescens* comprising two regions of mtDNA
111 (control region and cytochrome b) and ten loci of microsatellites with a broader sampling of both

112 oceans. Our aim is to answer the following main questions: Did the difference between the
113 Pacific and Atlantic populations maintain when much more Pacific, including Chilean, samples
114 are added? Can we find population structuring in nuclear DNA markers? Which is the level of
115 this structuring? Is it in agreement with mtDNA? How old are the divergence in mtDNA? Did the
116 recent depopulation caused by commercial hunting significantly affect the genetic diversity of the
117 populations?
118
119 MATHERIAL AND METHODS
120 *Sample collection and DNA extraction*
121 A total of 76 *O. flavescens* tissues samples were collected: 29 clipped from the hind
122 flippers of live pups in Punta San Juan, Peru; nine in Isla Guafo and two in Isla Chañaral, Chile;
123 27 from dead animals found stranded ashore in Argentina; and 17 in southern Brazilian Coast
124 (Fig. 1). The samples were stored in ethanol 70% or DMSO. Genomic DNA extractions were
125 performed with standard phenol-chloroform (Sambrook *et al.* 2001) and NaCl protocols
126 (Medrano *et al.* 1990) or the DNeasy Tissue Kit (Quiagen). Since most of the samples from
127 Argentina were too degraded to be genotyped, they were excluded from the nuclear
128 microsatellites analyses. However, we were able to obtain mtDNA sequence information from 19
129 of the 27 samples.
130
131 *Miochondrial DNA amplification and analysis*
132 We amplified part of the mtDNA control region and cytochrome b (cyb) gene by PCR
133 using the following primers: R3 (L15926) THR 5´- TCA AAG CTT ACA CCA GTC TTG TAA

134 ACC - 3´ (Kocher *et al*., 1989); TDKD (H16498) 5´- CCT GAA GTA GGA ACC AGA TG - 3´
135 (Meyer *et al.*, 1990) for the control region; and GLUDG-L and CB2-H (Palumbi and Kessing
136 1991) for cyb. Amplifications were carried out in 20µl with the following conditions: 1.5 mM
137 $MgCl_2$, 200 µM of each dNTP, 0.1 µM of each primer, 1 U of Platinum *Taq* DNA polymerase
138 (Invitrogen), 1X PCR buffer (Invitrogen), 0.2% - 0.4% Triton and 2 µl of DNA (approximately
139 50 ng)**.** Thermocycling conditions for control region amplification were: 3min at 94 ºC, and 10
140 cycles of "touchdown", each including 50 s at 94 °C, 50s at 60 °C (-1º/cycle), and 80s at 72 °C;
141 30 cycles of 50s at 94 °C, 50s at 50 °C and 80s at 72 °C; followed by a final extension of 5min at
142 72 °C. The parameters used in the amplification of the cyb were the same of the control region
143 without the first 10 cycles of "touchdown". Amplification products were purified with shrimp
144 alkaline phosphatase and exonuclease I (Amersham Biosciences). The purified were sequenced in
145 both directions using the DYEnamic ET Dye Terminator Cycle Sequencing Kit (Amersham
146 Biosciences) and run in a MegaBace 1000 automated sequencer (Amersham Biosciences).
147 The chromatograms were checked by eye in FinchTV v.1.4
148 (www.geospiza.com/finchtv.html) and a consensus sequence of each individual was generated
149 using Phred-Phrap (Ewing *et al*. 1998). Each consensus sequence was rechecked and edited in
150 BioEdit 7.0.5 (Hall 1999) if necessary. Alignments were performed using ClustalW (Thompson
151 et al. 1994) and corrected by eye. The program Network v.4.5 (www.fluxus-engineering.com)
152 was used to generate a median-joining haplotype network (Bandelt *et al.* 1999) of the cyb, control
153 region, and concatenated sequences (as specified in Table 1). The network of the cyb sequences
154 was rooted with a sequence of *Zalophus californianus*. Networks with the control region were not
155 rooted due the large differences found between the studied species and the outgroup.

156 The *Otaria* cyb sequences were aligned (360 bp) with sequence of other otariids
157 downloaded from Genbank (Table 1) to estimate the times of the most recent common ancestor
158 (TMRCAs) using the uncorrelated lognormal relaxed molecular clock Bayesian approach
159 developed in the software BEAST 1.4.8 (Drummont *et al.* 2006; Drummond & Rambaut 2007).
160 To calibrate the molecular clock we used the confidence interval of the divergence between
161 *Arctocephalus fosteri* and *Zalophus californianus* (1.7 Ma [million years ago] – 6.3 Ma, E.
162 Eizirik, personal communication) as an uniform prior. We used the HKY substitution model with
163 a gamma site heterogeneity with eight categories. A chain with 50.000.000 steps was run, taking
164 into account the stabilization of the traces and the parameters sampling.
165 Population size changes were estimated using the Bayesian Skyline plot (BSP) method
166 developed in BEAST to the control region dataset. This method works through the estimative of
167 the effective population size (Ne) through time (Drummond *et al.* 2005). We used a GTR and
168 gamma + invariant sites model with a relaxed molecular clock as above with a mean rate of
169 0.0368/site/Ma from Tchaika *et al.* (2007). These analyses were run separately for the Pacific and
170 Atlantic populations (see below).
171 Basic statistics and analysis of molecular variance (AMOVA, Excoffier *et al.* 1992) and F-
172 statistics (F_{ST}; Hudson *et al.* 1992) was carried out in Arlequin v.3.11 (Excoffier *et al.* 2005).
173
174 *Microsatellites amplification and analysis*
175 Since no specific microsatellite loci were developed so far, we first evaluated a large
176 number of loci previously developed for other pinnipeds. We finally chose ten loci of
177 dinucleotide short tandem repeats (STR): ZcwB07, ZcwE04, ZcwG04, ZcwF07 and ZcwE12,

178 developed for *Z. californianus*; Hg8.10 and Hg6.3, developed for *Halichoerus grypus*; Pvce and
179 Pv9 described for *Phoca vitulina*; and M11 described for *Mirounga sp.* (Allen et al. 1995;
180 Coltman *et al.* 1996; Gemmel *et al.* 1997; Hoffman *et al.* 2007). Forward primers were 5'-tailed
181 with the M13 sequence (5'-CACGACGTTGTAAAACGAC-3') that was used in combination
182 with a M13 primer marked with fluorescence (FAM, HEX, NED) (Boutin-Ganache et al. 2001)**.**
183 Amplifications were carried out in 10 µL with the following conditions: 1.5 mM $MgCl_2$, 200 µM
184 of each dNTP, 0.5 mM of reverse and M13-fluorescent primers, 0.0333 mM of the M13-tailed
185 forward primer, 0.5 U of Platinum *Taq* DNA polymerase (Invitrogen), 1X PCR buffer
186 (Invitrogen), 0.6% of Trehalose and 1 µl of DNA (approximately 50 ng)**.** Thermocycling
187 conditions for the amplification of the loci ZcwB07, ZcwE04, ZcwG04, ZcwF07, ZcwE12,
188 Hg8.10, M11 and Pvce were the same of the mitochondrial control region (see above). For the
189 Pv9 and Hg6.3 loci the conditions were: 2 min at 94 °C; 25 cycles of 45 s at 94 °C, 45s at 58 °C,
190 50 s at 72 °C; and a final extension of 2 min at 72 °C. The PCR products were genotyped on a
191 MegaBACE 1000 automated sequencer (Amersham Biosciences). The allele size in number of
192 bases was identified with the software Genetic Profiler version 2.2 (Amersham Biosciences).
193 To plot histograms of the allele frequencies, look for private alleles and perform a pairwise
194 principal components analysis (PCA) to population assignment we used the program Genalex.6
195 (Peakal and Smouse 2006). We tested for deviations from Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium (HWE)
196 and linkage disequilibrium (LD) using the program Arlequin 3.11. Significance levels ($\alpha = 0.05$)
197 for departure from HWE and for LD were corrected for simultaneous comparisons with the
198 sequential Bonferroni test (Rice 1989). Expected heterozygosity (He), observed heterozygosity
199 (Ho), *F*-statistics (F_{ST} and ϕ_{ST}), AMOVA analysis were calculated using Arlequin.

200 To evaluate the genetic structure of the species we also used the Bayesian approach
201 implemented in the program Structure v.2.2 (Pritchard *et al.* 2000). We tested the number of
202 clusters (*K*) using the calculations suggested by Pritchard *et al.* (2000) and Evanno *et al.* (2005).
203 We set from 1 *K* to 6 *K*, carrying out 10 independent runs with 100,000 of burn-in and 100,000
204 replications for each *K*. This burn-in length was used taking into account the stabilization of
205 posterior probability. We ran the Marcov Chain twice, assuming the admixture model with
206 correlated and independent allele frequencies. To identify possible migrants, or an individual that
207 has an ancestor from different clusters, we tested the same set of data switching the admixture
208 model to population information. Another similar analysis was carried out in the program
209 Structurama (Huelsenbeck and Andolfatto 2007). The program uses a particularly efficient
210 variant of MCMC called Gibbs sampling, where each MCMC cycle involves a Gibbs scan of all
211 of the individuals. Hence the total number of MCMC cycles for the analysis of this study is the
212 product of the reported number of MCMC cycles and the number of individuals in the analysis.
213 In this way, to infer the number of clusters and the population genetic structure, we set number of
214 populations to be a random variable, a parameter that uses a Dirichlet process prior (Pella and
215 Masuda 2006). We ran 1,000,000 cycles, with gamma distribution (θ=2, k=3) for the random
216 variable prior of the number of populations. The first 100,000 cycles were discarded as burn-in.
217
218 RESULTS
219 *Mitochondrial DNA*
220 We sequenced and aligned 67 samples for the control region (420 bp) and 63 samples for
221 cyb (402 bp), which resulted in 37 haplotypes and 40 polymorphic sites for control region, and 9

222 haplotypes and 15 polymorphic sites for cyb. As expected given it is non-coding, control region
223 shows higher levels of haplotype (H_d) and nucleotide diversity (*h*) comparing to cyb (Table 2).
224 For the control region, the four sampling regions, as well as the Pacific and Atlantic samples have
225 similar values of high haplotype and relatively low (~0.8%) nucleotide diversity. On the other
226 hand, the specie as a whole has a higher genetic diversity of ~2%.

227 The three mtDNA haplotype networks show two major and highly divergent clades
228 corresponding perfectly to individuals that inhabit each ocean (Figure 2), demonstrating a high
229 inter-oceanic genetic structure. The cyb network, although less informative for intra-oceanic
230 samples, presents seven mutational steps between the two ocean clades (Figure 2C). The position
231 of insertion of the outgroup node, *Z. californianus*, at about the middle of the branch separating
232 the two ocean clades suggests an ancient divergence between these clades. With the use of the
233 more variable control region (Figure 2A,B) the network shows the absence of shared haplotypes
234 between the four sampling regions, whicht demonstrates a clear signal of intra-oceanic
235 geographic structure.

236 The AMOVA analyses show that most of the variance is among ocean groups (Table 3).
237 Apart from the comparison of Brazil and Argentina for cyb, all the pairwise Fst and Φst values
238 between sampling localities are high and significant, being generally much higher (especially for
239 the Φst values) between areas that are located on different oceans (Table 4).

240 The estimated TMRCA of all *O. flavescens* cyb haplotypes, that dates the divergence of the
241 two oceanic clades, goes back to the early Pleistocene, with a mean of 1.78 Ma and a 95%
242 confidence interval from 3.8 Ma to 0.4 Ma. The TMRCA of the Atlantic and Pacific clades were
243 very similar, with a mean around one Ma and the 95% confidence interval between 0.15-2.3 Ma.

244 The mean substitution rate for the cyb fragment estimated for the otariid by BEAST in this
245 analysis was 1.6% /site/Ma, that is very similar to the mitochondrial mean rate described in the
246 literature (Moritz and Hillis 1990). Bayesian Skyline plots from the control region datasets show
247 a weak signal of expansion of the Pacific population since about 100.000 years ago, and no
248 demographic change in the Atlantic population (Figure 3).

249

250 *Microsatellites*

251 We genotyped 53 samples from Peru (29), Chile (9) and Brazil (15) (see Table 1 for
252 details) for 10 microsatellite loci, with only 3% of missing data. With Bonferroni correction, two
253 loci were in linkage disequilibrium: ZcwG04 with ZcwE04 only for Brazilian samples; and three
254 deviated from Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium (Table 5).

255 Both analysis of the number of population clusters suggest the existence of two
256 populations. The number of $K=2$ had the best probability estimated by Structure2.2 in both
257 models, correlated and independent allele frequencies (Pritchard *et al.* 2000; Evanno *et al*. 2005).
258 Structurama also estimated $K = 2$ as having the best probability (P (K/2) = 0.9620). All
259 individuals from Peru and Chile were assigned to belong to cluster 1, while all individuals from
260 Brazil were assigned to belong to cluster 2 by both programs (Figure 4A). Pairwise PCA
261 indicated the existence of two groups comprising individuals from Chile and Peru in one group
262 and other formed by Brazilian specimens (Figure 4B). Only one individual from Chile (C3) was
263 assigned by Structure2.2 as having almost equal probabilities to belong to both clusters. When we
264 reran the analysis switching admixture model to population information this individual was
265 recognized as migrant or descendent of both clusters. These structure based on microsatellite

266 completely agrees with the two major mitochondrial lineages. Private alleles are present in all
267 loci for these two clusters, and in some loci the difference in allele frequencies are visible (Figure
268 5). AMOVA and pairwise Fst and Rst were usually significant and higher between populations
269 from different oceans (Table 3 and 6).

270

271 Discussion

272 *Phylogeographical pattern and population structure*

273 Our mitochondrial results indicate an ancient evolutionary history for the Southern sea
274 lion in South America, with an old (~1.7 Ma) divergence between Pacific and Atlantic
275 populations, which suggests the existence of a long term effective barrier to female migration or a
276 historical event that leaded to a separation between two major oceanic clades. Moreover, the
277 Pacific populations seem to be less structured than the Atlantic populations. The microsatellite
278 analysis agrees with the mitochondrial results, presenting significant structure between Atlantic
279 and Pacific populations and a weak structuring between the two Pacific populations. This
280 situation is similar to that of the Steller's sea lion, which were found concordance between major
281 mtDNA and STR structuring in a somewhat continuous distribution (see Hoffman *et al.* 2006).
282 Recently, Oliveira *et al.* (2008) also found significant differences in allele frequencies in seven
283 microsatellite loci between Peruvian and Uruguayan Southern fur seals (*Arctocephalus australis*).
284 Therefore, there is a clear barrier to gene flow between Atlantic from Pacific populations of *O.*
285 *flavescens*, apparently absolute for the females, that is likely located around the southern tip of
286 South America. A more precise location of the genetic break between the populations would need
287 more exhaustive sampling in this region. The nature of this long standing breakup is not known,

288 but it is likely a combination of ecological barriers with the high female phylopatry of the
289 pinnipeds.
290
291 *Female phylopatry and male biased gene flow*
292 Female natal site fidelity is widely described in pinnipeds and has been demonstrated by
293 molecular techniques in several species, like *Eumetopias jubatus* (Steller's sea lion)*, Mirounga*
294 *leonina* (elephant seal) and *Neophoca cinera* (Australian sea lion) (Bickham *et al.,* 1996; Slade *et*
295 *al.,* 1998; Hoffman *et al,* 2006; Fabiani *et al.,* 2006; Campbel *et al.,* 2008). This behavior could
296 in extreme situations lead to the reciprocal monophyly of mitochondrial haplotypes. Our results
297 point that the Atlantic and Pacific populations of the Southern sea lion were devoid of female
298 gene flow in the last around one million years, suggesting that female phylopatry seems very
299 strong in this species. The absence of shared haplotypes between the main sampling locations
300 corroborate this hypothesis. One possible evolutionary reason that could favor female phylopatry
301 is the reproductive success generated by gregarious mating systems, which promote easy
302 encounter and reduce predation risk, in addition to the increasing of fitness promoted by
303 interaction with relatives and cooperative breeding (Hamilton, 1964; Riedman, 1990). For
304 otariids, diminution of male harassment by the increasing of female aggregation has been
305 proposed as an important factor for the augmentation of the female assembly (Cassini, 2000;
306 Capozzo, 2008). Recently, Grandi *et al.* (2008) studying the social distribution of colonies and
307 how new breeding arise suggested that the new breeding colonies are not established at random,
308 but near colonies where conspecifics breed, another indication of phylopatry. These trends raise

309 difficulties in colonization of distant areas and in female gene flow among breeding colonies,
310 promoting separation of the female stocks.

311 In several mammals and mainly in pinnipeds there are indications of male biased gene
312 flow, a trait of highly polygynous mammals (Greenwood, 1980; Dobson, 1982; Fabiani *et al.*,
313 2003). In polygynous mammals, young males are more prone to disperse (Dobson, 1982). In *O.*
314 *flavescens*, young males are usually outside from the center of breeding areas and tend to stand in
315 the periphery (Grandi *et al.*, 2008; Capozzo *et al.,* 2008). Their reproductive strategy consists to
316 harass females away from an adult domain male (Trillmich and Trillmich, 1984). Without a
317 domain, young males and adults that could not get harems, are free to disperse and visit neighbor
318 colonies, increasing their chances of female harassment and territory establishing. This lead to
319 some male gene flow between neighbor colonies. Another possibility is that males disperse for
320 long distances among breeding colonies helped by marine currents. This possibility was already
321 pointed out for two pinniped species. Using molecular methods, Fabiani *et al.* (2003) identified a
322 possible male of Southern elephant seal that can have traveled to breed in a colony 8,000 km
323 away from its birth site. Ferreira *et al.* (2008) also used molecular markers to identified putative
324 vagrant males of Amsterdam fur seals (*Arctocephalus tropicalis*) found in Brazilian coast. Their
325 results show that these males came from different breeding areas, an evidence of male dispersion
326 for long distances. The *Otaria flavescens* has a costal foraging behavior, feeding of several
327 species and performing flatter dives (Bastida *et al.* 2007). This makes neighboring dispersion
328 more likely in this species in absence of genetic barriers. These agree well with our results for
329 the microsatellites, despite our limited sampling sites, since the Fst divergence between the
330 Chilean and Peruvian populations were very small and between these two and the Atlantic

331 population were high and significant, although the distance between the Atlantic populations and
332 the Chilean is not much greater than between the latter and the Peruvian. However, the Chilean
333 C3 sample seems to be of mixed Atlantic-Pacific ancestry, suggesting that rare inter-oceanic male
334 gene flow may also occur.
335
336 *Demography*
337 Our results indicate the existence of large historical population sizes of Southern sea lion
338 from both Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Therefore, despite the population decreasing caused by
339 commercial and illegal hunt, our results show that none of these events were able to reduce
340 significantly the effective population size and reduce genetic diversity of that populations. Only a
341 very drastic reduction of the effective population size during some generations or a not so drastic
342 reduction during several generations can decrease significantly the genetic diversity of one
343 species (Frankham *et al.* 2002). The high female phylopatry and the consequent genetic
344 structuring may have contributed significantly to the maintenance of the overall high diversity of
345 these two oceanic regions. Interestingly, both the Atlantic and Pacific populations show very
346 similar TMRCA (~ 1 Ma) and effective population sizes for the mtDNA data, as seen by the
347 Bayesian skyline plots (Fig. 3). The weak expansion around 100,000 years ago from a little
348 smaller size found for the Pacific population may be related to the severe climatic changes in the
349 Pacific coast during most of the Pleistocene. It has been reported that the El Niño Southern
350 Oscillation (ENSO) cause reduction of pinnipeds population in Peruvian region throughout
351 changes the sea water temperature, reducing the food availability (Majluf 1998). The several
352 successive ENSOs during the evolutionary history of the species could cause a reduction-

353 expansion population dynamic that shaped the mitochondrial pattern of the Pacific, mainly the
354 Peruvian population.
355
356 *Conservation implications*
357 Our results suggest that the Atlantic and Pacific populations should be treated as different
358 evolutionary significant units (ESU), based on the concordance between the mtDNA and nuclear
359 DNA datasets, indicating the inexistence of female migrations between the oceans and male
360 migration may occur but is a rare event. The extinction of the Southern sea lion in Atlantic or
361 Pacific coast would imply a loss of half the genetic diversity of the species and a very ancient
362 mitochondrial clade. Due the high female phylopatry detected here, which would highly difficult
363 colonization of new areas, each intra-oceanic breeding colony should also be managed separately,
364 specially in the Atlantic coast, where a stronger structuring is evident and the breeding colonies
365 are better defined (Túnez *et al.* 2007, Túnez *et al.* 2008). This also implies the necessity of more
366 studies and a better definition of the Pacific breeding colonies.
367

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155

FIGURE LEGENDS

Figure 1: Distribution of the Southern sea lion and sampling localities.

Figure 2: Haplotype networks of mtDNA sequences. The circles are proportional to the frequency of the haplotypes. Branches are proportional to the number of mutational steps. The lines indicate the number of mutational steps of branches that present more than one mutation. (A) haplotype network of the concatenated sequences (822bp). (B) haplotype network of the control region fragment (420bp). (C) haplotype network of the cyb fragment (402bp).

Figure 3: Bayesian skyline plot showing the effective population size fluctuation throughout time. Recent time is on the right side (red line is the median estimation; black lines are the confidence interval). (A) Pacific, (B) Atlantic

Figure 4: (A) Structure bar plot. Each bar is one individual and each color represents the probability of the individual to belong to determinate cluster, the arrow shows the individual identified as a possible migrant or a descendent of both clusters. (B) Pairwise population assignment through PCA among sampling localities.

Figure 5: Allele frequencies for each locus in each cluster. Yellow bars represent the frequencies in Atlantic cluster, green bars represent the frequencies in Pacific cluster.

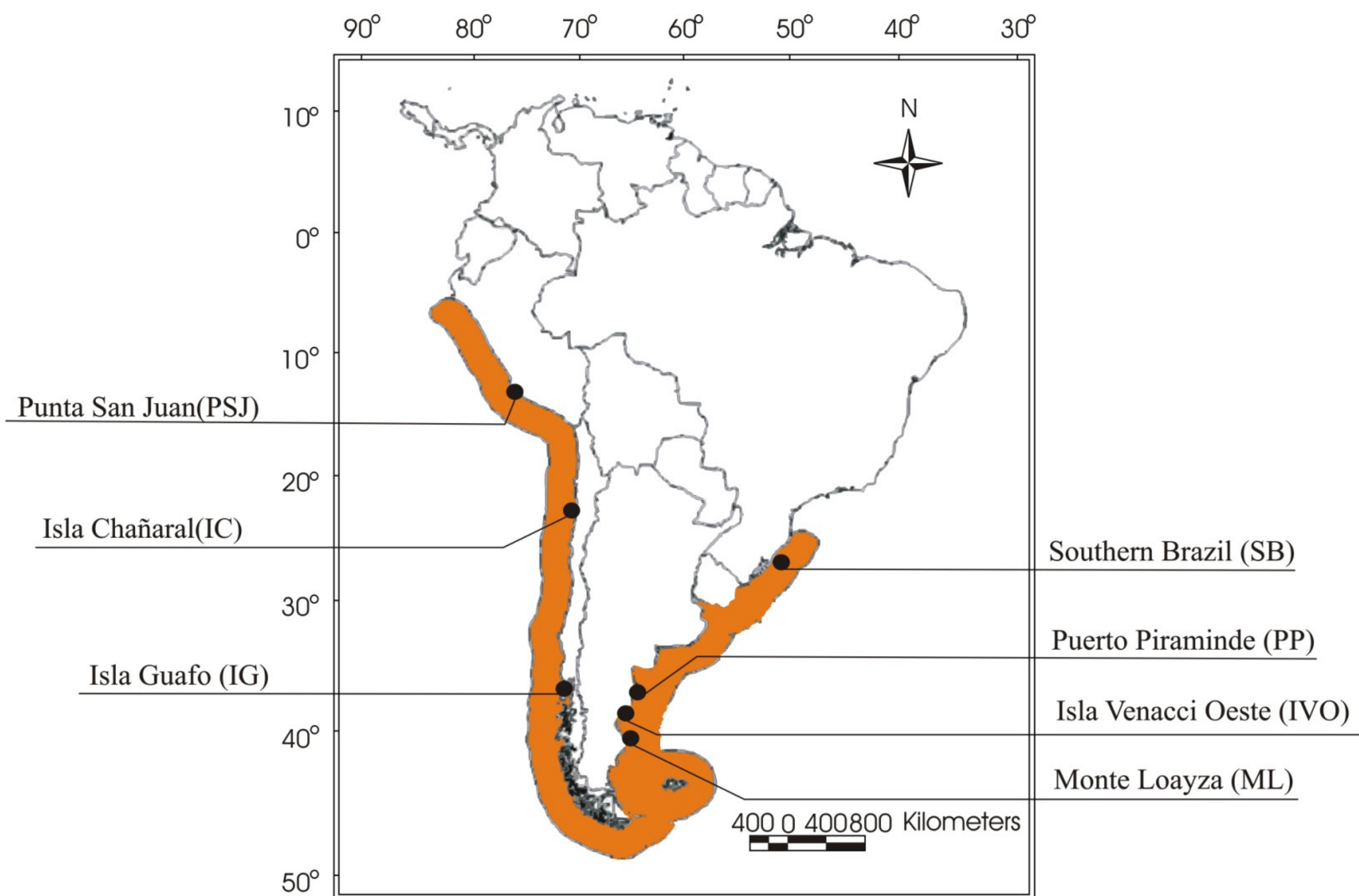


Figure 1

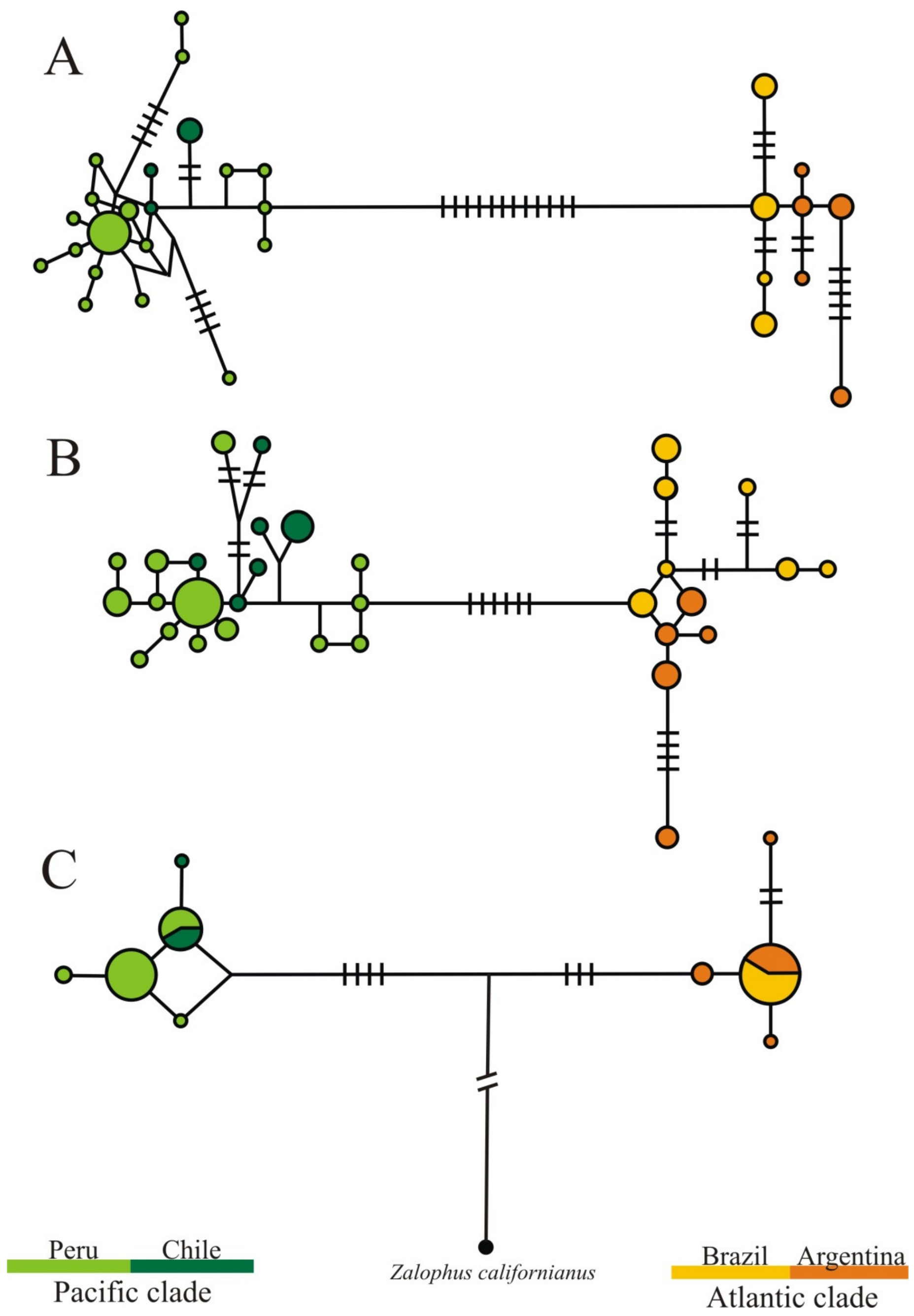
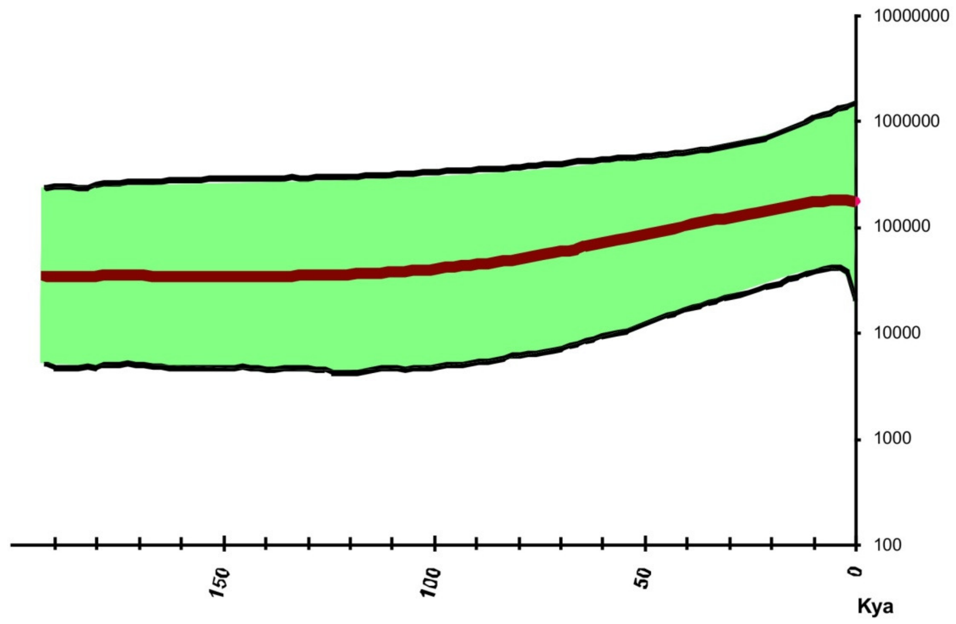


Figure 2

A



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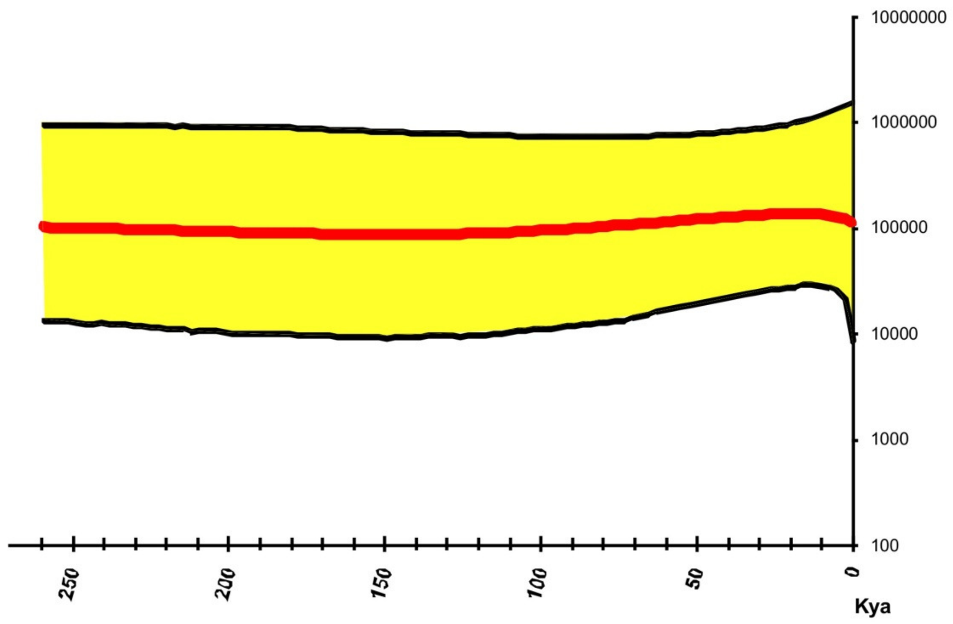
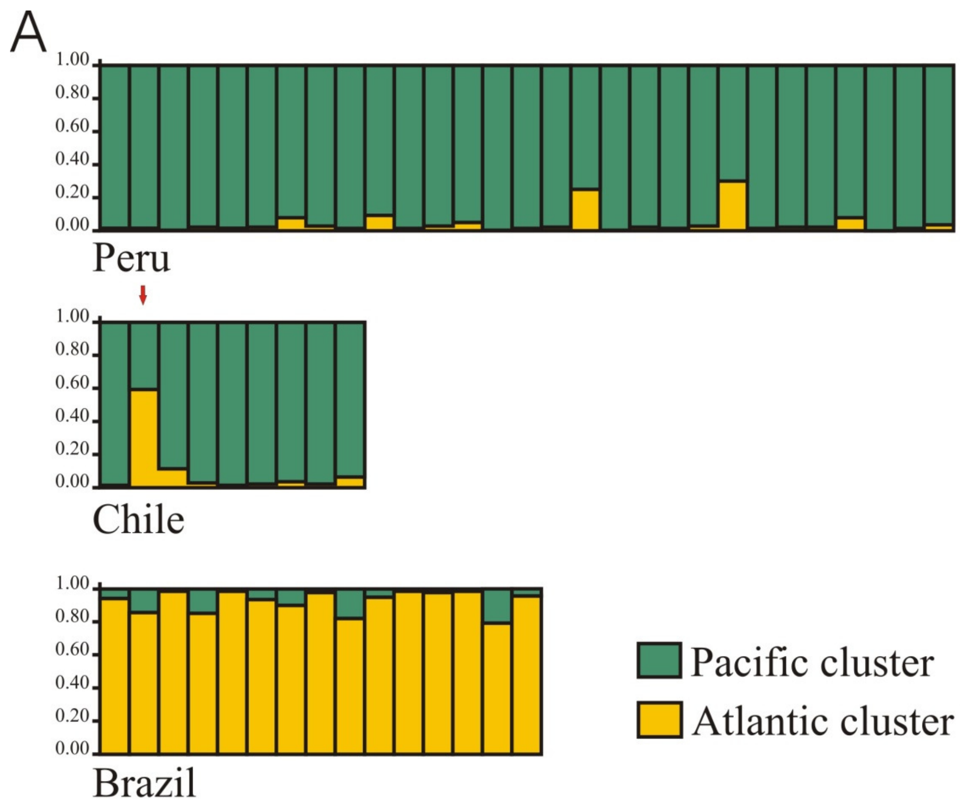


Figure 3



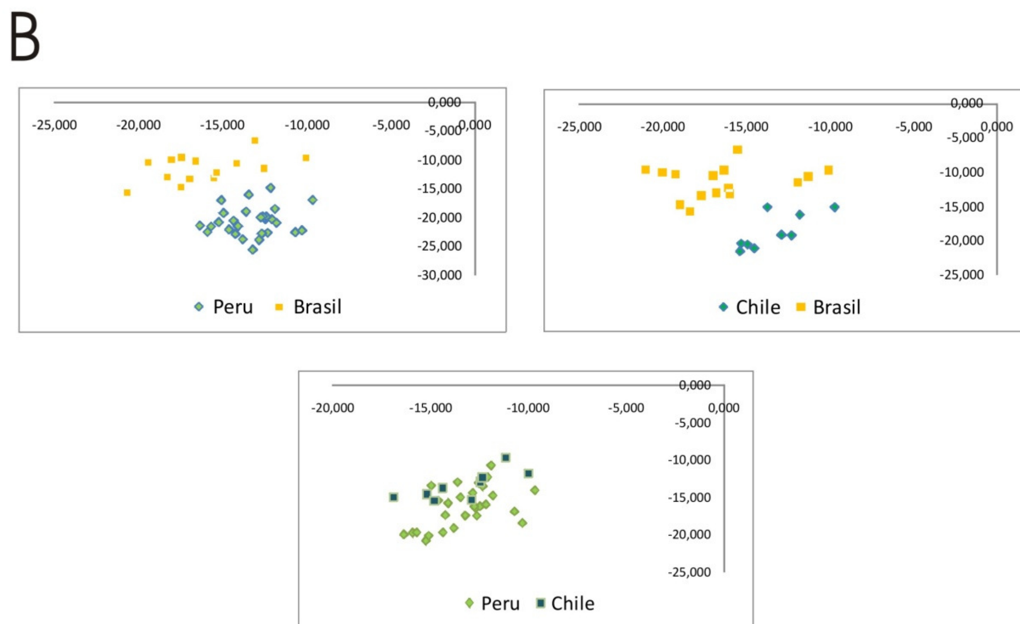


Figure 4

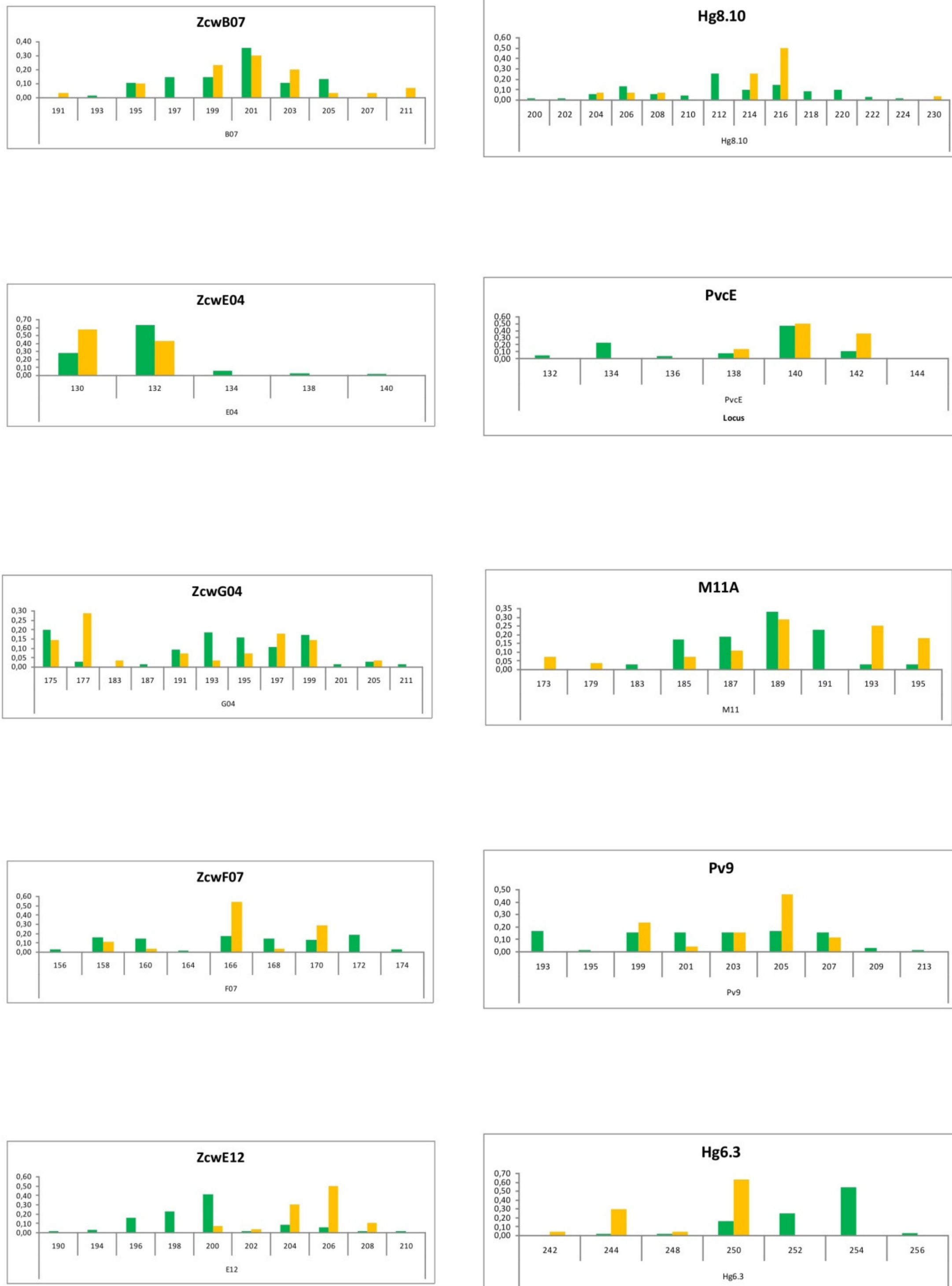


Figure 5

Table 1: List of samples with the respective locality, molecular marker used and Genbank acessment (The gen bank colun will be complited after the submision of the sequences generated for each sample to the NCBI web page)

Sample	locality	DNA marker used: Cyt-b	Control Region	STR
P01	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P02	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P03	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P04	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P05	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P06	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P07	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P08	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P09	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P10	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P11	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P13	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P14	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P15	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P16	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P17	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P18	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P19	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P20	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P21	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P22	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P23	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P24	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P25	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P26	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P27	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P28	Punta San Juan		x	x
P29	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
P30	Punta San Juan	x	x	x
NC15	Isla Chañaral		x	
NC28	Isla Chañaral		x	
C1	Isla Guafo		x	x
C3	Isla Guafo		x	x
C4	Isla Guafo	x	x	x
C5	Isla Guafo	x	x	x
C6	Isla Guafo	x	x	x
C7	Isla Guafo	x	x	x
C8	Isla Guafo	x	x	x
C9	Isla Guafo			x
C10	Isla Guafo	x	x	x
IVO1	Isla Venacci Oeste		x	
IVO2	Isla Venacci Oeste	x	x	
IVO3	Isla Venacci Oeste	x	x	
ICO4	Isla Venacci Oeste		x	
IVO5	Isla Venacci Oeste		x	
IVO6	Isla Venacci Oeste	x		
IVO7	Isla Venacci Oeste	x	x	
IVO8	Isla Venacci Oeste	x		
IVO10	Isla Venacci Oeste	x	x	
ML1	Monte Loayza	x		
ML2	Monte Loayza	x	x	
ML3	Monte Loayza		x	
ML6	Monte Loayza	x		
ML7	Monte Loayza	x	x	
ML8	Monte Loayza	x		
ML10	Monte Loayza	x		
PP5	Puerto Piramide	x	x	
PP6	Puerto Piramide	x	x	
PP7	Puerto Piramide	x	x	
G516	Southern Brazil		x	x
G517	Southern Brazil	x		x
G553	Southern Brazil	x	x	x
G554	Southern Brazil	x	x	x
G555	Southern Brazil	x		x
G658	Southern Brazil		x	x
G667	Southern Brazil	x	x	
G809	Southern Brazil	x	x	x
G812	Southern Brazil	x	x	x
G813	Southern Brazil	x	x	x
G822	Southern Brazil		x	x
G868	Southern Brazil	x		x
G967	Southern Brazil	x	x	x
G992	Southern Brazil	x	x	x
G1178	Southern Brazil	x	x	x
G1189	Southern Brazil	x	x	x
Gordo	Southern Brazil	x	x	
Zalophus californianus		AM422163.1		
Eumetopias jubatus		DQ145021.1		
Neophoca cinerea		AF380913		
Phocarctos hookeri		AF380919		
Arctocephalus australis		AY712974.1		
Arctocephalus forsteri		X82293.1		
Arctocephalus gazella		X82292.1		
Arctocephalus philippii		AF380893		
Arctocephalus pusillus doriferus		AF380918		
Arctocephalus pusillus pusillus		APU18454		
Arctocephalus townsendi		AF380897		
Arctocephalus tropicalis		AF380883		

Table 2: Genetic diversity of each locality for the different mitochondrial regions. (N) number of individuals analyzed, (*h*)number of haplotypes, (H_d) haplotype diversity, (π)nucleotide diversity.

	Cyt-b				Control region				Concatenated			
	N	*h*	Hd	π	N	*h*	Hd	π	N	*h*	Hd	π
Atlantic	29	4	0.3128 +/-0.1062	0.000993 +/-0.001057	27	15	0.9544 +/-0.0185	0.009669 +/-0.005536	20	9	0.9105 +/-0.0323	0.004804 +/-0.002808
Brazil	13	1	0	0	14	8	0.9121 +/-0.0486	0.008914 +/-0.005353	11	4	0.7818 +/-0.0749	0.003350 +/-0.002164
Argentina	16	4	0.5167 +/-0.1324	0.001741 +/-0.001552	13	7	0.8974 +/-0.0537	0.005725 +/-0.003732	9	5	0.8611 +/-0.0872	0.004566 +/-0.002890
Pacific	34	5	0.6078 +/-0.0568	0.001787 +/-0.001525	38	22	0.9317 +/-0.0290	0.008301 +/-0.004789	33	21	0.9072 +/-0.0441	0.005593 +/-0.003128
Chile	6	2	0.3333 +/-0.2152	0.000829 +/-0.001092	10	7	0.8667 +/-0.1072	0.007511 +/-0.004783	5	3	0.7000 +/-0.2184	0.005048 +/-0.003518
Peru	28	4	0.5370 +/-0.0862	0.001487 +/-0.001362	28	15	0.8889 +/-0.0497	0.007329 +/-0.004354	28	18	0.8783 +/-0.0595	0.004948 +/-0.002827
Overal	63	9	0.7445 +/-0.0314	0.012872 +/-0.007004	65	37	0.9692 +/-0.0108	0.019090 +/-0.009941	53	30	0.9521 +/-0.0181	0.016102 +/-0.008159

Table3: AMOVA analyses for each sequence fragment and microsattelites, each ocean corresponds to one group.

Source of variation	Percentage of variation				
	ϕst-parewise differences			FST	RST
	Control region	Cyt-b	Concatenated	STR	
Among groups	64.18	92.66	74.95	8.81	6.43
Among populations within groups	11.03	2.39	8.77	1.70	8.18
Within populations	11.03	4.95	16.28	89.49	85.39

Table 4: Pairwise *F*-statistics among sampling localities and between Atlantic and Pacific oceans for each mitochondrial fragment. $*P < 0,05$

		Cyt-b					Control region					Concatenated			
		Brazil	Arg	Chile	Pacific		Brazil	Arg	Chile	Pacific		Brazil	Arg	Chile	Pacific
Argentina	Fst	0.15				Fst	0.09*				Fst	0.18*			
	ϕst	0.05				ϕst	0.37*				ϕst	0.40*			
Chile	Fst	0.90*	0.54*			Fst	0.11*	0.12*			Fst	0.25*	0.20*		
	ϕst	0.99*	0.93*			ϕst	0.74*	0.79*			ϕst	0.86*	0.84*		
Peru	Fst	0.66*	0.47*	0.40*		Fst	0.10*	0.11*	0.12*		Fst	0.16*	0.12*	0.18*	
	ϕst	0.96*	0.93*	0.49*		ϕst	0.73*	0.77*	0.24*		ϕst	0.83*	0.83*	0.32*	
Atlantic	Fst				0.53*	Fst				0.06*	Fst				0.09*
	ϕst				0.94*	ϕst				0.70*	ϕst				0.80*

Table 5: Genetic diversity of each locus per locality, per cluster and overall. (A) number of alleles, Ho observed heterozygozity, (He) expected heterozygozity.* Loci that deviated from H-W equilibrium after Bonferroni correction.

Locus	Peru			Chile			Brazil			Pacific			Atlantic			Overall		
	A	Ho	He	A	Ho	He	A	Ho	He	A	Ho	He	A	Ho	He	A	Ho	He
ZcwB07	6	0,83	0,8	6	0,55	0,73	8	0,6*	0,8	7	0,76	0,79	8	0,6	0,8	10	0,72	0,81
ZcwE04	5	0,59	0,54	3	0,44	0,36	2	0,29	0,49	5	0,55	0,52	2	0,29	0,49	5	0,48	0,54
ZcwG04	9	0,93	0,84	6	0,55	0,72	9	0,71	0,83	11	0,84	0,85	9	0,71	0,83	12	0,81	0,87
ZcwF07	7	0,86	0,84	7	0,78	0,82	5	0,43	0,62	9	0,84	0,85	5	0,43	0,62	9	0,73	0,83
ZcwE12	9	0,79	0,71	6	0,44	0,8	5	0,33*	0,64	10	0,71	0,75	5	0,33*	0,64	10	0,60*	0,81
Hg8.10	13	0,79	0,88	7	0,89	0,8	6	0,79	0,67	13	0,82	0,87	6	0,79	0,67	14	0,81	0,86
Pvce	7	0,27*	0,7	4	0,63	0,67	3	0*	0,6	7	0,35*	0,7	3	0*	0,6	7	0,25*	0,7
M11	7	0,79	0,78	5	0,71	0,73	7	0,79	0,8	7	0,77	0,77	7	0,79	0,8	9	0,78	0,81
Pv9	8	0,9	0,84	5	0,86	0,76	5	0,62	0,7	9	0,89	0,85	5	0,62	0,7	9	0,82	0,84
Hg6.3	5	0,41*	0,61	4	0,75	0,65	4	0,5	0,52	6	0,49	0,62	4	0,5	0,52	7	0,48*	0,72

Table 6: Parewise F-statistics among sampling localities and between clusters. *P<0,05*

		STR		
		Peru	Chile	Atlantic
Chile	Fst	0.02		
	Rst	0.09*		
Brazil	Fst	0.11*	0.11*	
	Rst	0.17*	0.06	
Pacific	Fst			0.10*
	Rst			0.13*

CONCLUSÕES GERAIS

Os resultados do presente trabalho demonstram uma antiga e forte separação entre as populações dos oceanos Atlântico e Pacífico. Esta forte estruturação indica a influência contínua de eventos geológicos e/ou geoclimáticos na história evolutiva da espécie que possivelmente geraram o padrão de separação encontrado até hoje entre os oceanos. Tal padrão pode ser compartilhado por outras espécies de distribuição semelhante. Desta forma, trabalhos futuros de filogeografia de outras espécies que tenham distribuição ao longo da costa atlântica e pacífica, como *Arctocephalus australis*, ajudarão a definir melhor quais eventos geológicos e/ou ecológicos podem ter influenciado na história evolutiva e estruturação da espécie. As diferenças encontradas nos resultados dos diferentes marcadores indicam filopatria de fêmeas e fluxo gênico mediado por machos, um padrão já descrito para otarideos e característico de um comportamento reprodutivo poligínico.

Apesar de ter sido extremamente caçada nos últimos séculos, nossos resultados mostram que a caça não diminuiu a diversidade genética da espécie. Na verdade, o Leão-marinho-do-sul vem evoluindo com tamanho efetivo constante desde a era pleistocênica até os dias atuais. Existe ainda a possibilidade de eventos climáticos sucessivos, como o *El niño,* terem influenciado na dinâmica populacional da população do Pacífico, como vem sendo proposto por outros pesquisadores. No entanto, o grande tamanho populacional e a ampla distribuição fazem com que eventos estocásticos regionais tenham pouca influencia na espécie como um todo. Estas características possibilitam manejo controlado da espécie sem que haja riscos genéticos.

Certas questões interessantes como a quantificação do padrão de dispersão de machos ainda precisam ser respondidas. Particularidades nos padrões filogeográficos dentro de cada oceano e localização mais exata da barreira entre os stocks são igualmente relevantes. Além disso, do ponto de vista taxonômico, nossos resultados demonstram a existência de duas unidades evolutivamente significativas (ESU) dentro da espécie, e talvez merecessem ser tratadas como subspécies. Para responder todas essas questões é necessário amostrar áreas no extremo sul do continente americano e talvez utilizar ainda outros marcadores nucleares, como íntrons e/ou regiões intergênicas e marcadores do cromossomo Y.

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