



DENSITY AND EXTRACTIVE POTENTIAL OF 'UÇÁ'-CRAB, *Ucides cordatus* (LINNAEUS, 1763) IN MANGROVES OF THE 'TODOS OS SANTOS' BAY, BAHIA, BRAZIL

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Ucides cordatus (Linnaeus, 1763) is one of the main fishery resources of the 'Todos os Santos' Bay (BTS), state of Bahia, Brazil. This study evaluated the population structure, crab density (ind.m⁻²), abundance and fishery potential of this crab species in nine mangrove areas of BTS, during the dry and rainy seasons. Five sample quadrats (5x5 m) were randomly arranged in fringe zone of the mangroves studied, recording inside each of them the number and diameter of active burrows (open with biogenic activity and closed ones), variables related with tree species (diameter at breast height and density) and flood level. Crab density was indirectly estimated by counting open and closed galleries. The diameter of open galleries was converted into carapace width (CW) to characterize the *U. cordatus* population structure. The percentage of galleries in the dry period (58.4%) was significantly higher than in the rainy period (41.6%). Crab density ranged from 0.32 to 2.63 ind.m⁻² (mean ± sd: 1.3 ± 0.7 ind.m⁻²) with a higher mean during the dry period (t = 0.02; p < 0.05). Mean density differed significantly among mangrove sampling areas, regardless seasonal period. Mean body size (CW) in BTS was 52.4 ± 16.7 mm, with specimens significantly larger during dry period (t = 0.01; p < 0.05) and significant differences among areas (F = 4.57; p = 0.001). Non-commercial size animals (CW < 60.0 mm) were more abundant (65.7%) in BTS than those with commercial size (34.3%). The density and flood level presented a negative correlation (r = -0.51; p < 0.05). On the other hand, significant positive correlation were verified between flood level and CW (r = 0.40; p < 0.05). *Ucides cordatus* population parameters differed significantly among BTS sampling sites due to the heterogeneity of the mangroves. This study represents the first assessment of 'uçá'-crab population in BTS mangroves, and demonstrates the need for the adoption of management practices as indicated by the National Management Purpose for the Sustainable Use of 'Uçá'-Crab in Brazil.

Keywords: crab, fishery, management, population.

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