



# Bryophyte communities of *restingas* in Northeastern Brazil and their similarity to those of other *restingas* in the country

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## ABSTRACT

*Restingas* are a coastal component of the Atlantic Forest. They experience high temperatures and possess soils with a low capacity to retain water, low nutrient content and high salt concentrations. Studies on bryophytes of *restingas* have been mostly conducted in Southeastern Brazil, and so we aimed to characterize the bryophyte flora of seven areas of *restinga* in the Northeastern Region and to establish their floristic affinities with other *restingas* in Brazil. Fifty-five species were found in the studied *restingas*, the vast majority of which are generalist species with life forms of intermediate tolerance to desiccation and of corticolous and terrestrial habitat. The number of species per area is low compared to the species richness of other *restingas* in Brazil. A cluster analysis, although based on low similarity, showed that the bryoflora from the surveyed areas is distinct from those of *restingas* from Bahia, Espírito Santo and Rio de Janeiro, which all form a group, and those of the coast of São Paulo, which also comprised a cluster. The heterogeneous climate, soils and vegetation structure of the studied *restingas*, in comparison those of the Southeast, act as selective filters for the species, thereby contributing to the distinction observed in those communities.

**Keywords:** distribution, diversity, flora, liverworts, mosses

## Introduction

Brazilian *restingas* (a type of tropical coastal vegetation) comprise a diverse set of plant communities that extend discontinuously along approximately 80% (7,110 km) of the Atlantic Coast, from 4°N to 34°S (Suguio & Tessler 1984). *Restingas* are recent formations that originated in the Quaternary as result of regressions and transgressions of the sea, with climatic and, mainly, edaphic factors acting as conditioners (Magnago *et al.* 2013).

The vegetation of Brazilian coastal *restingas* exhibit a wide variety of phytophysiognomies, from open fields

closer to the sea to forest with canopies of up to 20 meters in height. In these forested areas, organic matter tends to accumulate in the soil and light intensity is lower due to shading by the forest canopy (Scarano 2002; Sampaio *et al.* 2005). The woody flora is closely associated with the Atlantic Forest (Pereira 2003).

In general, *restinga* vegetation withstands limiting conditions because the soils are oligotrophic, salty and have low water retention, plus they experience high temperatures, intense sunlight and strong winds (Rizzini 1997).

Floristic, phytosociological, taxonomical, ecological and/or conservation studies have been conducted in areas

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of *restinga* in Brazil for both phanerogams (Assumpção & Nascimento 2000; Almeida Jr. *et al.* 2009; Pires *et al.* 2012; Monteiro *et al.* 2014; Fernandes & Queiroz 2015; Santos-Filho *et al.* 2015) and ferns and lycophytes (Behar & Viégas 1992; 1993; Santos *et al.* 2004; Athayde Filho & Windish 2006).

Present knowledge regarding the bryophytes of *restingas* basically comes from areas concentrated in Southeastern Brazil, thanks to the contributions of Behar *et al.* (1992), Visnadi & Vital (1995) and Silva & Piassi (2010) in the state of Espírito Santo; Costa & Yano (1998), Costa *et al.* (2006) and Imbassahy *et al.* (2009) in Rio de Janeiro; and Vital & Visnadi (1994), Yano & Peralta (2004), Visnadi (2010) and Santos *et al.* (2011) in São Paulo. In contrast, there has been only one study on the bryophytes of *restingas* of Northeastern Brazil, an inventory by Bastos & Yano (2006) for the metropolitan area of Salvador and the north coast of Bahia.

Thus, the present study represents the first investigation into the bryophytes of the *restingas* of the coastline between the states of Rio Grande do Norte and Sergipe in Northeastern Brazil. The goal was to determine the floristic composition and characterize the bryophyte communities of these *restingas*, and to assess their floristic affinities with *restingas* of Southeastern Brazil.

## Material and methods

### Study area

Seven areas of *restinga* were selected for study, most of them being littoral, classified as protected areas and located in the states between Rio Grande do Norte and Sergipe: A1 - Parque Estadual Dunas de Natal/RN (05°48'45"S; 35°11'35"W), A2 - RPPN Mata Estrela/RN (06°22'27"S; 35°00'48"W), A3 - APA de Mamanguape/PB (06°47'06"S; 35°04'48"W), A4 - Praia do Sossego/PE (07°45'04"S; 34°51'27"W), A5 - RPPN Nossa Senhora do Outeiro/PE (08°31'48"S; 35°01'05"W), A6 - Taperaguá/AL (09°44'47"S; 35°49'29"W) and A7 - Reserva Ecológica de Santa Isabel/SE (10°44'37"S; 36°51'41"W).

A standardized sampling effort of five-hours was established in order to explore, by foot, each area as much as possible and to record all vegetation types of each area. Samples were collected from preferred substrates such as live tree trunks (ground level to nearly 2m height), rotting logs and soil. The procedure of collection and herborization of material followed the methodology described by Yano (1989). All voucher material was deposited in the Herbarium UFP Geraldo Mariz of the Federal University of Pernambuco.

Samples were identified with the aid of literature such as Frahm (1991), Reese (1993), Sharp *et al.* (1994), Buck (1998), Lemos-Michel (2001), Gradstein & Costa (2003) and Bordin & Yano (2013). Worldwide geographic distribution

patterns were determined according to this literature and according to the Brazilian phytogeographic domains in <http://floradobrasil.jbrj.gov.br/>. The classification systems adopted were based on Crandall-Stotler *et al.* (2009) for Marchantiophyta and Goffinet *et al.* (2009) for Bryophyta.

Species were classified according to light tolerance (shade tolerant, sun tolerant and generalist species) according Gradstein (1992), Pócs & Tóthmérész (1997), Gradstein *et al.* (2001), Reiner-Drehwald (2000), Alvarenga *et al.* (2010) and Oliveira *et al.* (2011); for life-form in relation to desiccation tolerance (exigent, intermediate and tolerant) according to Gimingham & Birse (1957) and Glime (2013); and for habitat type (corticolous, epixylic and terrestrial).

### Data analysis

Bryophyte floristic composition, species richness (number of species), Shannon diversity index ( $H'$ ) and evenness ( $J'$ ) (Ricklefs 2001) were determined for each area of *restinga*.

Bryophyte floristic composition was compared among areas by calculating similarities using the Sørensen coefficient and UPGMA (Krebs 1989). Cluster analyses were performed using the software Primer 6.0 (Clarke & Warwick 2001) and adopting values of cophenetic relation of clusters above 0.7 as an indication of satisfactory correspondence (Visnadi & Vital 2001).

In order to assess affinities between the bryofloras of the study areas with those reported for *restingas* of Bahia and Southeastern Brazil, a matrix of binary data was built by compiling data from the following: Bahia (Bastos & Yano 2006); Espírito Santo (Behar *et al.* 1992; Visnadi & Vital 1995; Silva & Piassi 2010); Rio de Janeiro (Costa *et al.* 2006; Imbassahy *et al.* 2009); and São Paulo (Vital & Visnadi 1994; Yano & Peralta 2004; Visnadi 2010; Santos *et al.* 2011). This matrix was subjected to the same methodology described for the calculation of floristic similarity.

## Results and discussion

The present work provides the first report of bryophyte species composition, richness and similarity for areas of *restinga* of the coast of Northeastern Brazil. Fifty-five species of bryophytes were recorded (Tab. S1 in supplementary material), among which 27 were mosses and 28 liverworts.

The most-represented families were Lejeuneaceae (24 spp.), Fissidentaceae (eight spp.) and Calymperaceae (six spp.). The high-representation of Lejeuneaceae is common to nearly all floristic surveys of tropical forests, but especially in lowlands up to moderate altitudes (Gradstein *et al.* 2001), including areas of *restinga* (Bastos & Yano 2006; Peralta & Yano & 2008; Imbassahy *et al.* 2009; among others). The genera *Lejeunea* and *Fissidens* had the greatest species richness with 10 and eight species, respectively.



## Bryophyte communities of restingas in Northeastern Brazil and their similarity to those of other restingas in the country

Five geographical patterns of distribution were recognized among the bryophytes sampled. Species with a Neotropical distribution (52.7%) predominated, followed by species with Pantropical (31%), Wide (6%) and African-American (5.3%) distributions. One species (5%), *Fissidens flabellatus* Hornsch, is endemic to Brazil (Bordin & Yano 2013). The sampled species are widely distributed in Brazil, and most have been reported from more than one phytogeographical domain, especially the Atlantic Forest, and none are under threat of extinction (MMA 2008; Martinelli & Moraes 2013).

Generalist species were quantitatively (number of species) and qualitatively (number of samples) more represented, followed by sun tolerant and, finally, shade tolerant species (Tab. 1). Most species have a wide range of ecological tolerance, growing in several forest phytophysiognomies as well as open, semi-arid, plantation and urban areas, such as: *Acrolejeunea* spp., *Bryum coronatum*, *Calymperes afzelli*, *C. palisotti*, *Cheilolejeunea rigidula*, *Lejeunea flava*, *L. laetevirens*, *Octoblepharum albidum*, *Schiffneriolejeunea polycarpa* and *Sematophyllum* spp. (Visnadi & Monteiro 1990; Bastos & Yano 1993; Lisboa & Ilkiu-Borges 1995; Câmara *et al.* 2003; Yano & Câmara 2004; Bordin & Yano 2009). The pronounced representation of these species is consistent with the environmental characteristics of *restingas*, wherein intense sunshine, high temperatures and strong winds, among other factors, limit the growth and development of many plant species and dictate the occurrence of those more tolerant.

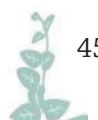
In turn, life-forms with high (tuft and cushion) or intermediate (mat and carpet) tolerance to desiccation were dominant; the former were found colonizing soil or

live trunks, and the latter colonizing live trunks and/or, more rarely, decaying trunks. With respect to sun tolerance, there was greater representation for species with life forms of intermediate desiccation tolerance colonizing live trunks or decayed logs. Shade tolerant species were numerically less abundant and were represented by *Fissidens* spp., which are tufts and have terrestrial habitat, and by the pendant and corticolous *Squamidium nigricans*. Extensive colonization of live trunks and soil undoubtedly reflects the large availability of these types of substrates in the studied environments. Epiphylls were absent, which is not surprising considering the high exposure to solar radiation (Bastos & Yano 2006) and low water retention capacity of leaf surfaces making them an inhospitable substrate for colonization by bryophytes in these environments.

Richness ranged from 12 to 23 species per area, whereas floristic affinity among the seven areas varied between 23 and 66% (Tab. 2). Five out of the seven areas inventoried in this study were protected areas, which seems to be a providential action since these areas are close to major urban centers and are highly susceptible to a wide variety of human impacts. It is noteworthy that the *restinga* with the highest richness of bryophytes in this study (RPPN Nossa Senhora do Outeiro), is located next to an area of intensive tourism, yet is still considered to be of good conservation status (Almeida Jr. *et al.* 2009). The bryophyte floras of the studied *restingas* had low species richness in comparison to other Brazilian *restingas*, and were among the lowest values reported for this type of vegetation (Tab. 3). *Restingas* from Bahia and Southeastern Brazil that were selected for comparative analysis in this study ranged in bryophyte species richness from eight to 175 species.

**Table 1.** Bryophyte communities of *restingas* of Northeastern Brazil according to light tolerance, life-form and habitat. Absolute frequencies are provided in parentheses.

Light tolerance	Life-form/ desiccation tolerance	Habitat type
Generalist	Turf/ tolerant	<b>Terrestrial:</b> <i>Archidium ohioense</i> (3), <i>Bryum coronatum</i> (8), <i>B. leptocladon</i> (4), <i>Calymperes lonchophyllum</i> (1), <i>Fissidens hornschurchii</i> (8), <i>F. submarginatus</i> (1), <i>Hyophiladelphus agrarius</i> (5), <i>Rosulabryum billardieri</i> (1) <b>Corticolous:</b> <i>Calymperes afzelli</i> (4), <i>C. erosum</i> (2), <i>C. palisotii</i> (87), <i>Fissidens radicans</i> (1), <i>Octoblepharum albidum</i> (44), <i>Pilosium chlorophyllum</i> (7)
	Mat/ intermediate	<b>Corticolous and/or epixylic:</b> <i>Archilejeunea fuscescens</i> (1), <i>Cheilolejeunea adnata</i> (1), <i>C. discoidea</i> (4), <i>C. rigidula</i> (25), <i>Entodontopsis leucostega</i> (19), <i>Frullanoides corticalis</i> (2), <i>Lejeunea caespitosa</i> (3), <i>Lejeunea caulicalyx</i> (3), <i>L. controversa</i> (1), <i>L. flava</i> (1), <i>L. lepida</i> (7), <i>L. phyllobola</i> (3), <i>L. trinitensis</i> (1), <i>Metalejeunea cucullata</i> (1), <i>Microlejeunea bullata</i> (19), <i>M. epiphylla</i> (12), <i>Sematophyllum subpinnatum</i> (1), <i>S. subsimplex</i> (19), <i>Taxithelium planum</i> (14)
Sun tolerant	Turf/ intolerant	<b>Terrestrial:</b> <i>Campylopus gardneri</i> (1), <i>C. savannarum</i> (3)
	Mat/ intermediate	<b>Corticolous and/or epixylic:</b> <i>Acrolejeunea emergens</i> (17), <i>A. torulosa</i> (1), <i>Caudalejeunea lehmanniana</i> (1), <i>Frullania dusenii</i> (6), <i>F. gibbosa</i> (7), <i>F. kunzei</i> (1), <i>F. nodulosa</i> (1), <i>L. laetevirens</i> (50), <i>Lejeunea magnoliae</i> (1), <i>Pycnolejeunea contigua</i> (2), <i>Schiffneriolejeunea polycarpa</i> (4)
Shade tolerant	Turf/ tolerant	<b>Terrestrial:</b> <i>Fissidens angustifolius</i> (5), <i>F. flabellatus</i> (2), <i>F. flaccidus</i> (1), <i>F. goyaziensis</i> (2), <i>F. pellucidus</i> (2) <b>Corticolous and/or epixylic:</b> <i>Syrrhopodon ligulatus</i> (1)
	Mat/ intermediate	<b>Corticolous and/or epixylic:</b> <i>Cololejeunea diaphana</i> (1), <i>Lejeunea boryanna</i> (1)
	Pendant/intolerant	<b>Corticolous:</b> <i>Squamidium nigricans</i> (1)





**Table 2.** Comparison of bryophyte species richness, similarity and diversity of *restingas* from Northeastern Brazil. Bold = number of species per area; normal font = number of species shared between areas; italics = Sørensen similarity index; underlined = Diversity ( $H'$ ); and gray stripe = Equitability ( $J'$ ). A1 - Parque Estadual Dunas de Natal/RN; A2 -RPPN Mata Estrela/RN; A3 - APA de Mamanguape/PB; A4 - Praia do Sossego/PE; A5 -RPPN Nossa Senhora do Outeiro/PE; A6 - Taperaguá/AL; A7 - Reserva Ecológica de Santa Isabel/SE.

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7
A1	<b>23</b>	0.40	0.29	0.38	0.57	0.40	0.33
A2	8	<b>14</b>	0.42	0.29	0.33	0.38	0.23
A3	7	5	<b>20</b>	0.29	0.32	0.26	0.24
A4	6	4	7	<b>13</b>	0.43	0.50	0.66
A5	10	5	5	5	<b>12</b>	0.53	0.33
A6	11	8	5	6	6	<b>18</b>	0.51
A7	6	9	4	3	4	8	<b>13</b>
$H'$	<u>3.9</u>	<u>3.2</u>	<u>3.7</u>	<u>3.3</u>	<u>3.1</u>	<u>3.3</u>	<u>3.2</u>
$J'$	0.86	0.86	0.87	0.89	0.86	0.81	0.88

**Table 3.** Bryophyte species richness for areas of Brazilian *restinga* used for comparative analysis in this study.

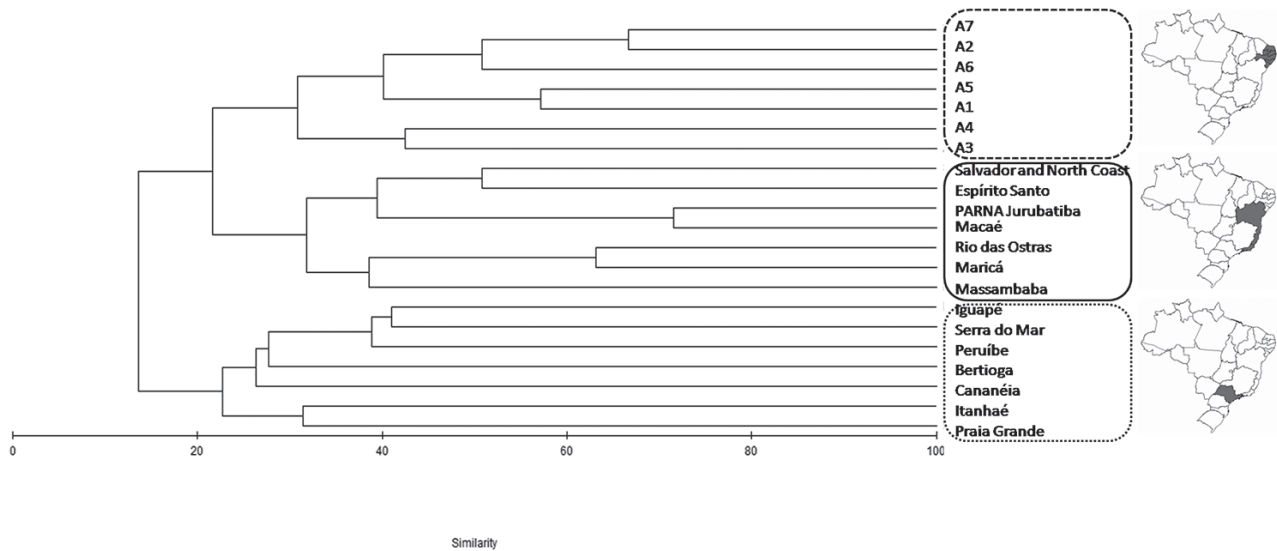
Brazilian State	Restinga localities	Number of species	Reference
Rio Grande do Norte	Parque Estadual Dunas de Natal	12	This study
	RPPN Mata Estrela	20	This study
Paraíba	APA de Mamanguape	13	This study
Pernambuco	Praia do Sossego	14	This study
	RPPN Nossa Senhora do Outeiro	23	This study
Alagoas	Taperaguá	18	This study
Sergipe	Reserva Ecológica de Santa Isabel	13	This study
Bahia	Salvador e litoral Norte	29	Bastos & Yano (2006)
Espírito Santo	Setiba, Guarapari	38	Behar <i>et al.</i> (1992); Visnadi & Vital (1995); Silva & Piassi (2010)
Rio Janeiro	Jurubatiba, Carapebus	41	Imbassahy <i>et al.</i> 2009
	Macaé	36	Costa & Yano (1998); Costa <i>et al.</i> (2006)
	Massambaba	19	Costa <i>et al.</i> (2006)
	Rio das Ostras	11	Costa <i>et al.</i> (2006)
	Maricá	8	Costa <i>et al.</i> (2006)
São Paulo	Floresta de Restinga de Juréia, Peruíbe	59	Vital & Visnadi (1994)
	Floresta de Restinga da Serra do Mar, Ubatuba	175	Santos <i>et al.</i> (2011)
	Cananéia	43	Visnadi (2010)
	Itanhaé	40	Visnadi (2010)
	Bertioga	26	Visnadi (2010)
	Praia Grande	11	Visnadi (2010)
	Barra do Ribeira, Iguapé	69	Yano & Peralta (2004)

Extensive heterogeneity in bryophyte species richness among *restingas* has been noted previously, such as for the Parque Nacional da *restinga* de Jurubatiba, Rio de Janeiro (Imbassahy *et al.* 2009) and the Parque Estadual Paulo César Vinha in Espírito Santo (Silva & Piassi 2010). The authors of these studies considered ecotonal factors and dissimilarities of vascular communities to be determinants in the differentiation of the non-vascular flora. With regard to the phanerogamic flora, Zickel *et al.* (2004) also found striking differences in species composition and representativeness between *restingas* of Southeastern and Northeastern Brazil due to their geomorphological differences. However, more recent work on the vascular flora of *restingas* of Northeastern Brazil (CS Zickel unpubl. res.) found that geomorphology and abiotic factors were not significant.

Although based on a relatively low degree of similarity (between 22-30%), cluster analysis (cophenetic correlation 0.85) revealed the existence of three groups of *restingas* based on bryophyte flora: the first is comprised of the *restingas* of the present study in Northeastern Brazil; the second clusters the *restingas* from Bahia, Espírito Santo and Rio de Janeiro; and the third group contains exclusively the *restingas* from São Paulo (Fig. 1). Some species stand out as being reported, to date, only from the Northeastern *restingas*, although they are common in other vegetation formations, such as *Calymperes lonchophyllum*, *Campylopus gardneri*, *Fissidens goyazensis*, *Lejeunea trinitensis* and *Metalejeunea cucullata*. On the other hand, the absence of representatives of Metzgeriaceae, Plagiochilaceae and Radulaceae is remarkable, since they are common in the



## Bryophyte communities of restingas in Northeastern Brazil and their similarity to those of other restingas in the country



**Figure 1.** Dendrogram showing similarities (Sørensen index) among *restinga* bryofloras from Northeastern, Bahia and Southeastern Brazil. Captions: A1 - Parque Estadual Dunas de Natal/RN; A2 - RPPN Mata Estrela/RN; A3 - APA de Mamanguape/PB; A4 - Praia do Sossego/PE; A5 - RPPN Nossa Senhora do Outeiro/PE; A6 - Taperaçuá/AL(09°44'47"S; 35°49'29"W); A7 - Reserva Ecológica de Santa Isabel/SE; SSA – Salvador and North Coast/BA; Setiba + Guarapari/ES; Macaé/RJ; Rio das Ostras/RJ; Maricá/RJ; Massambaba/RJ; Iguapé/SP; Ubatuba/SP; Peruíbe/SP; Bertioga/SP; Cananéia/SP; Itanhaé/SP; Praia Grande/SP.

Southeastern *restingas* (e.g., Costa *et al.* 2006; Imbassahy *et al.* 2009; Visnadi 2010) and relatively widely distributed in remnants of Atlantic Forest in the Northeast. One of factors that may be responsible for limiting the species of these families from occupying the studied *restingas* may be their more severe limitation of moisture. *Restingas* of the Southern and Southeastern regions of Brazil have longer periods of soil flooding, which in turn favors increased water content of the soils of these environments due to, mainly, the topography, the depth of the water table, and the proximity of water bodies (Silva 1999). These factors, based on recent studies, influence the distribution of the phanerogamic flora in the *restingas* of the Southern and Southeastern regions (Assis 2011; Marques *et al.* 2011).

On the other hand, studies that seek to empirically determine what environmental factors affect the spatial distribution of bryophyte species in *restingas* are absent. Due to their structural and physiological characteristics, bryophytes respond more significantly to microenvironmental than to macroenvironmental variables (e.g. Alvarenga *et al.* 2010), and so it is reasonable to consider the importance of microenvironmental variables in the distribution of these plants in *restingas*.

The heterogeneous environmental conditions, geomorphology, soil and vegetation structure and composition of the areas of *restinga* studied in Northeastern Brazil, compared to those of the Southeast, represent selective filters for the species, and contribute to the observed differences in communities. Moreover, stochastic events, such as dispersion, human interference or other biotic or abiotic variables that were out of the scope of the present study, may be acting on bryophyte composition and must be taken into account in future studies.

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## Bryophyte communities of restingas in Northeastern Brazil and their similarity to those of other restingas in the country

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