

**A NEW SPECIES OF *ABERTELLA* (ECHINOIDEA: SCUTELLINA)
FROM THE LATE EARLY MIOCENE – EARLY MIDDLE MIOCENE OF THE
RÍO NEGRO PROVINCE, ARGENTINA**

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Abertella Durham was described with *Scutella aberti* Conrad as the type of the genus. Other species that have been referred as belonging to *Abertella* are: *S. floridana* Cooke from Florida; *S. cazonesensis* Kew from California; *S. habanensis* Sanchez Roig from Cuba; *Echinarachnius sebastiana* Jackson from Puerto Rico; *A. palmeri* Durham from Guatemala; *A. kewi* Durham from Chiapas, Mexico; and *A. complanata* Brito, found in Miocene strata of northeastern Brazil. Another specimen of what is unquestionably an *Abertella* was found in the same beds in 1958, long before Brito's species was named, but had been described as a representative of a new genus and species of monophorasterid, *Karlaster pirabensis* Marchesini Santos. In fact, all these exemplars belong to a single species that should take the name *Abertella pirabensis* (Marchesini Santos). *Abertella* was therefore widely distributed in the Miocene in the mid-Atlantic and southeastern Coastal Plains of the United States, Central America, islands in the Gulf of Mexico, and in Brazil, South America. Recently, we have found and described a new, second South American species of *Abertella* that extends the known geographic range of the genus almost 5,000 km to Argentina, and helps to circumscribe some of the interspecific variation seen within this surprisingly poorly known taxon. The new species is characterized by an unusually pronounced distal extension of the ambulacral plates that join the first post-basicoronal plates in the posterior interambulacrum, a shallow but sharply defined posterior notch, and narrower oral interambulacra that are not as widely disjunct as in other members of the genus. The specimens occur in sediments of the Gran Bajo del Gualicho Formation that crop out in the Gran Bajo del Gualicho and Salinas del Gualicho areas of Río Negro Province, Argentina.