

A new species of *Pacifigorgia* (Coelenterata: Octocorallia: Gorgoniidae) from Panamá

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Abstract

Pacifigorgia rubinoffi, a new shallow water species of the family Gorgoniidae from the Pacific Panamá, is described and illustrated. Known from several localities around the Gulf of Chiriquí, it is patchy in distribution, ranging from 1-5 m in depth. The colony is characterized by multiple fans, closed meshwork, lack of distinct midribs, a deep orange color of both colony and sclerites, low occurrence of spindles with acute and bent ends, large asymmetric rods, and the occurrence of barrels. The new species is illustrated in detail with scanning electron micrographs, photomicrographs and color photographs.

Key words: Cnidaria, Coelenterate, eastern Pacific, gorgonians, Gorgoniidae, octocorals, *Pacifigorgia*, Panamá, sea fans, soft corals, Taxonomy

Introduction

Gorgonians are commonly found along the Pacific coast of Panamá, ranging widely in distribution and depth. The first reports that exist of this fauna came from Valenciennes (1855), Verrill (1866, 1868), Hickson (1928), and Stiasny (1943). These authors recorded around 48 species comprising the genera *Pacifigorgia*, *Leptogorgia*, *Eugorgia*, *Psammogorgia*, *Muricea*, and *Heterogorgia*. With the exception of *Pacifigorgia*, the other genera occurring in the eastern Pacific are in need of revision. The genus *Pacifigorgia* has been subject to revision in the course of current research (Breedy & Guzmán 2002). In addition to the 9 species of *Pacifigorgia* reported for Panamá, we have observed five more species of the genus. Recent expeditions carried out in the Gulf of Chiriquí revealed that the genus *Pacifigorgia* is highly represented in terms of abundance and diversity. In this paper, we describe a new shallow water species of *Pacifigorgia* with detailed illustrations of multiple specimens collected at several localities.