



***Hincksella brevitheca*, a new species of hydroid (Cnidaria: Hydrozoa: Syntheciidae) from Cuba**

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Abstract

A new species of hydroid, *Hincksella brevitheca*, sp. nov., is described based on material from off Cayo Largo, Cuba. Though sterile, the available material has hydrothecae almost completely immersed in internodes and thus is easily distinguished from its congeners, all with thecae projecting far beyond the internodes. The syntype of *Sertularella hartlaubi* Nutting, 1904, examined for this study, proved to be a synonym of *H. formosa* (Fewkes, 1881). Brief comments and a comparative table listing the main features of the known species belonging to *Hincksella* Billard, 1918 are provided.

Key words: Cnidaria, Hydrozoa, Syntheciidae, hydroid, *Hincksella brevitheca*, *Sertularella hartlaubi*, *Hincksella formosa*, Caribbean, Cuba

Introduction

Investigations on the hydroids of the Caribbean Sea are limited (e.g. Fewkes 1881, Versluys 1899, Leloup 1935, Fraser 1947, Van Gernerden-Hoogveen 1965, Vervoort 1968, Wedler & Larson 1986, Galea 2008), and its hydrozoan fauna is inadequately known. Discovery of new species in the region is likely. Indeed, a new species of leptothecate hydroid, *Hincksella brevitheca*, sp. nov., is described herein based on material from off Cayo Largo, Cuba.

The genus *Hincksella*, as defined by Billard (1918, 1925), comprises syntheciid hydroids with biseriata, alternate, sessile hydrothecae, provided with a distinct base, a rounded aperture and even rim, slightly everted or not, and invariably without an operculum. Bouillon *et al.* (2006) supplemented this diagnosis to include stem structure (mono- or polysiphonic, branched or unbranched), character of the gonophore (fixed sporosacs), and origin of gonothecae (arising from within the hydrotheca, from below the hydrothecal bases, or from the stolon). Inclusion of *Hincksella* in Syntheciidae Marktanner-Turneretscher, 1890 or Sertulariidae Lamouroux, 1812 should be clarified from the cnidome, as suggested by Peña Cantero & Vervoort (2003a).

The following species of hydroids have edentate hydrothecae and fit the diagnosis of *Hincksella*: *Synthecium alternans* Allman, 1888; *Hincksella corrugata* Millard, 1958; *Sertularella cylindrica* Bale, 1888; *Sertularella echinocarpa* Allman, 1888; *Sertularella fallax* Hartlaub, 1904; *Sertularella formosa* Fewkes, 1881; *Sertularella hartlaubi* Nutting, 1904; *Hincksella indiana* Millard, 1967; *Synthecium projectum* Fraser, 1938; *Synthecium rigidum* Fraser, 1938; *Hincksella sibogae* Billard, 1918; *Sertularella stolonifera* Hartlaub, 1904.

However, Peña Cantero & Vervoort (2003a) showed that *S. echinocarpa* is a sertulariid and should be included in the genus *Staurotheca* Allman, 1888. The Antarctic species *S. fallax* and *S. stolonifera* have both alternate and opposite hydrothecae within the same colony, and probably belong to *Staurotheca* (Vervoort & Watson 2003). Additionally, *H. indiana*, with yet unknown gonothecae, may belong to the same genus, due to