

***Cyclacanthia* n.g. (Demospongiae: Poecilosclerida: Latrunculiidae incertae sedis), a new genus of marine sponges from South African waters, and description of two new species**

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Abstract

The new genus *Cyclacanthia* n.g. is erected in the poecilosclerid Family Latrunculiidae for the type species *Latrunculia bellae* Samaai & Kelly, 2003, and two further species, *Cyclacanthia cloverlyae* sp. nov., and *Cyclacanthia mzimayiensis* sp. nov.. The latter species are from the subtropical east coast of South Africa, whereas *C. bellae* has only been found further south in warm temperate Algoa Bay. *Cyclacanthia* n.g. differs from other Latrunculiidae genera in the ontogeny, morphology and structure of the mature microsclere, the isospinodiscorhabd, which has only three major whorls of projections as opposed to the four in species of *Latrunculia* du Bocage. Additional diagnostic characters include the presence of broad swathes of megascleres that diverge from the base of the sponge towards the upper choanosome, where they form loose brushes and the typical wispy reticulation of most Latrunculiidae. The ectosome is composed of a dense tangential layer of megascleres, an irregular palisade of microscleres at the surface, and a permanently encrusting habit. *Cyclacanthia* n.g. is the second new latrunculid genus recently described from shallow subtidal South African waters, following major revision of the family. The presence of species in four of the five known genera in the family, on South African coastlines, suggests a diversity hot-spot for the family in this region.

Key words: Poecilosclerida; Latrunculiidae; isospinodiscorhabd; *Cyclacanthia*; new genus; new species; ontogeny; South Africa

Introduction

Latrunculia bellae Samaai & Kelly, 2003 was first described from the warm temperate