

A new species of antipatharian coral (Cnidaria: Anthozoa: Antipatharia) from the southern California Bight

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Abstract

A new species of antipatharian coral (Anthozoa: Antipatharia) is described from the southern California Bight. The species, *Antipathes dendrochristos* **new species**, forms large, multi-branched, bushy colonies that can reach a height of 2 m or more. The species is characterized by having small branchlets arranged primarily bilaterally and alternately, but in varying degrees of regularity; by small conical spines less than 0.1 mm tall, and by small polyps usually less than 1.4 mm in transverse diameter. The species occurs in colors of white, orange/gold, pinkish-orange, pink, red, and red-brown.

Key words: Coelenterata, Cnidaria, Anthozoa, Antipatharia, Antipathidae, *Antipathes dendrochristos*, new species, eastern Pacific, United States

Introduction

In late 2002 during a series of submersible surveys of rock fish populations on offshore banks in the southern California Bight, scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA Fisheries), and the University of California at Santa Barbara discovered a population of large antipatharian colonies (Fig. 1A), many over 2 meters tall, growing at depths of 100–225 meters. After examining samples of several of the colonies and comparing them to type material of other nominal species, as well as to species descriptions in the literature, it was determined that the California specimens represented at least one, and possibly two, undescribed species. These newly discovered corals occur in various colors ranging from white to orange/gold, pinkish-orange, pink, red, and red-brown. In this paper the new species is described on the basis of colonies that were white in color when alive.