

First record of *Plakortis* Schulze (Porifera: Homosclerophorida) from the Northeast Pacific coast, with the description of *Plakortis albicans* sp. nov.

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Abstract

A new species of *Plakortis* Schulze, 1880 from the Pacific coast of Mexico is described, which constitutes the first record of the *Plakortis* genus in the Northeast Pacific coast, and the first record of Homosclerophorida in the Mexican Pacific coast. *Plakortis albicans* sp. nov. is characterized by its white or ivory color, by a surface sculpted by subectosomic drainage canals, and by the morphological details of its skeleton, such as the presence of diods and triods in one single class, and a tangential alveolar ectosomal skeleton formed mostly by smaller diods. The only species known in the genus *Plakortis* from the East Pacific Ocean is *Plakortis galapagensis* Desqueyroux-Faúndez & van Soest, 1997, which differs from *Plakortis albicans* sp. nov. mainly by having diods in two distinct size classes. So far, *P. albicans* is only known in one locality (Mazatlán Bay), where it is relatively abundant in cryptic habitats such as under rock.

Key words: Taxonomy, Porifera, Sponges, Homosclerophorida, Plakinidae, *Plakortis*, Pacific coast of Mexico

Introduction

The “Systema Porifera” classification (Hooper & van Soest 2002), considers the Plakinidae in the order Homosclerophorida (Class Demospongiae), but recently an analysis of the phylogenetic relationships of the orders of Demospongiae based on 18 rRNA and 28 rRNA, resulted in a clade comprising all demosponges except Homosclerophorida (Borchiellini et al 2004). The molecular data suggests that Homosclerophorids would be better