

A deep water *Ascidia* (Asciidiidae, Tunicata) from the tropical western Pacific

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Abstract

A single, solitary, free living ascidian, *Ascidia alisea* sp.nov., collected from a sandy substrate on the Austral Ridge (Polynesia) between 120 and 203 meters depth, is ovoid with a layer of sandy debris adhering to the tunic and has distinctive body muscles and neural area and an unusual course of its vas deferens.

Key words: *Ascidia scaevola*, *Ascidia sydneyensis*, *Phallusia polytrema*, vas deferens, dorsal tubercle

Introduction

Ascidia alisea sp. nov. (Fig. 1) is ovoid and coated with particularly coarse adhering debris attached directly to the tunic, which is thin and translucent without external outgrowths. The sandy coat obscures the siphons. The species is distinguished from other *Ascidia* species by its body muscles and by the course of the vas deferens. Some unusual digitations around the margins of the dorsal tubercle may also be characteristic of this species although their exact structure was not determined.

Material

Polynesia, Austral ridge, Neilson reef, 27°03.58'S–146°03.81'W, 120–230m, 11/11/2002, trawled during the IRD-Museum cruise "Benthaus" aboard the N.O. *Alis* (after which the species is named). The holotype MNHN P5 ASC A 357 is the only known specimen.