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Porites decasepta: a new species of scleractinian coral (Scleractinia, Poritidae) from Oman

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Abstract

A new species of scleractinian coral, *Porites decasepta* spec. nov. (Scleractinia, Poritidae) is described from the Bar Al-Hikman reef complex along the Arabian Sea coast of the Sultanate of Oman. *Porites decasepta* spec. nov. forms encrusting, bright blue colonies rarely exceeding 7 cm in diameter. Corallites, about 1mm in diameter, have only 10 septa: the two lateral septa of the ventral triplet typical of *Porites* septal arrangement are missing or strongly reduced.

Une nouvelle espèce de scleractiniaire, *Porites decasepta* spec. nov. (Scleractinia Poritidae) est décrite du complex récifal de Bar Al-Hikman situé le long de la côte de la mer d'arabie du Sultanat d'Oman. La nouvelle espèce forme de petites colonies encroûtantes, de couleur bleu-violet, ne dépassant guère 7 cm de diamètre. Les corallites d'à peu près 1mm de diamètre n'ont que 10 septa: les deux septa latéraux du triplet ventral étant le plus souvent manquants ou fortement réduits.

Key words: Cnidaria, Scleractinia, *Porites*, Poritidae, new species, Arabian Sea, Oman

Introduction

The Bar Al-Hikman reef complex, located along the Arabian Sea Coast of the Sultanate of Oman (Fig. 1), is one of the few true reefs of the Sultanate of Oman. The complex is composed of a string of large (tens of km) reefs aligned parallel to the southern tip of the Bar Al-Hikman Peninsula and West of the Island of Masirah. The framework of these reefs consists of a single species of a yet unidentified folicaeous *Montipora* sp. The south facing fore reef shows a well defined spur and groove structure in which a more diverse scleractinian coral community develops. In the deeper part of this fore reef, around 4–7 m in depth, numerous small colonies of an unidentified poritid coral were observed in the field and photographed. Collected specimens were then compared to corals of congeneric species; they appeared to belong to a new species with distinctive skeletal characters.

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