

A new genus of soft coral (Octocorallia: Alcyonacea: Clavulariidae) from Chile

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Abstract

Incrustatus comauensis n. gen. & n. sp. (Octocorallia: Clavulariidae) is described from Chile. It occurs in shallow water from Concepción to the southern fjord region. The genus forms stolons on mytilid shells and rocks, or encrusting sheets on *Crepidula* shells (Gastropoda), polychaete tubes, gorgonians, and other substrata. The sclerites of the new taxon are 8-radiates and derivatives of these. The polyps are unarmed or possess a few irregularly arranged spindles. The new genus is compared with another taxon that forms encrusting sheets or stolons.

Key words: Coelenterata, Cnidaria, Octocorallia, Alcyonacea, Clavulariidae, benthos, *Incrustatus*, new genus, new species, Chile

Introduction

The shallow water soft coral fauna of the Chilean coast is still almost completely unknown. To date one stoloniferous species has been described from Chile, *Clavularia magelhaenica* Studer, 1878, from the Straits of Magellan. From 1997 onwards, Verena Häussermann and Günter Försterra investigated the anthozoan fauna of Chile, with a focus on the South Chilean fjord region, and collected many specimens. This soft coral collection includes several undescribed species of *Alcyonium*, a species of *Renilla*, and some possible clavulariids, among which was an as yet undescribed new genus that is the subject of this paper.

Based on colony form and sclerites it was obvious that the Chilean material represented a new genus. Therefore one specimen was sent to Dr. Catherine S. McFadden (Harvey Mudd College, Claremont, USA) for molecular study using the *msh1* gene. She