

A new species of *Haliclona* (Demospongiae: Haplosclerida) living in association with *Geodia media* Bowerbank (Mexican Pacific coast)

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**Postgrado en Ciencias del Mar y Limnología, UNAM.*

Abstract

Haliclona (*Haliclona*) *sonorensis* **sp. nov.** (Haplosclerida, Chalinidae) is described from different shallow water localities from the Mar de Cortés (Mexican Pacific coast). The new species is characterized by its thickly incrusting form, scarce and slightly elevated oscules, and pinkish violet color in life, in conjunction with internal characteristics such as an ectosomal skeleton formed by tangential isotropic unispicular reticulation and a regular choanosomal skeleton of unipaucispicular primary lines interconnected by unispicular secondary lines. Spicules are short and robust oxeas. Both the choanosomal skeleton and typical oxeas morphology are characteristic of the subgenus *Haliclona*. The new species has always been found growing in a mutualistic relationship with the sponge *Geodia media* Bowerbank, 1873.

Key words: Taxonomy, Sponges, *Haliclona*, mutualistic association, *Geodia*, Mar de Cortés, Pacific coast of Mexico.

Introduction

The genus *Haliclona* Grant, 1836 is one of the largest and important groups of the Order Haplosclerida (Demospongiae) (Laubenfels 1954, Wiedenmayer 1977), with a large number of species known around the world (Laubenfels 1954, Soest 1980, Desqueyroux-Faúndez 1984, Fromont 1993, 1995, Weerdt 1986, 2000, Campos *et al.* 2005, among others). However, taxonomical identification of this genus is extremely difficult, due to the simplicity of morphological characters and skeletal organisation (Bergquist & Warne 1980), and by the fact, that most of the taxonomic characters are subject to high variability even in specimens of a same species (Weerdt *et al.* 1999).