

***Psammocora albopicta* sp. nov., a new species of Scleractinian Coral from the Indo-West Pacific (Scleractinia; Siderastreidae)**

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Abstract

A new scleractinian coral species, *Psammocora albopicta*, is described. The species forms encrusting colonies which can attain large sizes and has very small corallites with a styliform columella. Calice and columella diameter, colline shape and corallite density on the skeleton surface are the morphological characters that separate the species from the other species in the genus. A high degree of variation in septa shape and ornamentation, as well as collines development can be found within the same specimen. Living colonies are dark brown to dark green and present white patterns on all, or part, of the surface. Type material was collected in the Arabian Gulf, additional specimens were collected in the Gulf of Aden, and the study of museum collections allows extension of the species distribution to the western Indo-Pacific.

Keywords: Cnidaria, Anthozoa, Scleractinia, *Psammocora albopicta*, new species, Indo-Pacific

Introduction

The Indo-Pacific coral genus *Psammocora* Dana, 1846 has never been revised. Twenty-three extant nominal *Psammocora* species have been described. Many of those have been put in synonymy by various authors (Veron & Pichon, 1976; Scheer and Pillai, 1983; Cairns *et al.*, 1999; Sheppard and Sheppard, 1997), but a detailed and comprehensive study is needed. Eleven *Psammocora* species are listed in Cairns *et al.* (1999), and Veron (2000) retains twelve species, but species synonymies are not indicated or discussed in either publication. Original descriptions and type materials of all described species to date have been analyzed, but none of the available species name covers the material which is herein recognized as a new species.