

A new species of *Oscarella* (Demospongiae: Plakinidae) from the Western Sea of Japan

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Abstract

Oscarella malakhovi **sp. nov.** is described from the waters of Peter the Great Bay (northwestern Sea of Japan, Russia) at depths between 0.4–4 m from a rocky coast. This is the first record of the genus *Oscarella* from the North-Western Pacific. The new species is characterized by its pinky-beige to yellow color, undulating appearance, lumpy, microlobate surface, soft, slimy consistency, two particular kinds of cells with inclusions (vacuolar and granular cells), and of two kinds of endobiont bacteria. The new species of *Oscarella* is clearly different in cell, endobiotic bacteria content, and external morphology from all previously described species of *Oscarella*.

Key words: Taxonomy, Porifera, Plakinidae, *Oscarella*, new species, Japan Sea, N-W — Pacific, ultrastructure

Introduction

The Homosclerophorida Dendy, 1905 contains one family, the Plakinidae Schulze, 1880. The family was established for several Mediterranean species and now contains seven genera (Muricy & Diaz 2002). All genera have a more or less worldwide distribution with the exception of the genus *Pseudocorticium* Boury-Esanult *et al.*, 1995.

The genus *Oscarella* Vosmaer, 1884 is represented by 8 valid species (Muricy *et al.* 1996; Muricy & Diaz 2002; Muricy & Pearse 2004; Bergquist & Kelly 2004). Most species of *Oscarella* have been described from the Mediterranean, but there are also two Indo-Pacific species (Bergquist & Kelly 2004) and one from the Pacific coast of North America (Muricy & Pearse 2004). One species, *Oscarella lobularis* form the Eastern coast of the former USSR, has been reported by Koltun (1966).

This paper describes *Oscarella malakhovi* **sp. nov.**, the first record of the genus from the N-W Pacific coast.