



A new species of *Leiopathes* (Anthozoa: Antipatharia) from the Great Meteor seamount (North Atlantic)

TINA N. MOLODTSOVA

P.P. Shirshov Institute of Oceanology RAS, 36 Nakhimovsky prospect, Moscow 117997 Russia. E-mail: tina@ocean.ru

Abstract

Leiopathes montana, a new species previously reported as *L. glaberrima* (Esper), is described from the plateau of the Great Meteor seamount (North Atlantic) at depth 300–335 m. The new species can be easily distinguished from all other species of the genus by very thin at tips, slightly bended terminal branchlets 0.15–0.2 mm in diameter above the base, rather long in comparison to the size of the colony, small compressed triangular spines 0.02–0.03 mm long and 0.22–0.5 mm apart, and small densely-set polyps (6–9 per centimeter). Eight species assigned to the genus *Leiopathes* represent two distinct groups: (1) sparsely branched forms with longer terminal branchlets (*L. glaberrima*, *L. valdiviae*, *L. acanthophora*, *L. bullosa*, *L. montana*), and (2) forms with sinusoidal stem and branches, and very short branchlets forming flabellate fronds (*L. expansa*, *L. grimaldii*, *L. secunda*). The largest in size syntype of *L. grimaldii* Roule, 1902 collected off the Azores is proposed here as the lectotype, since it is the only full grown and complete specimen and also the only specimen illustrated and described in detail by Roule.

Key words: Cnidaria, Leiopathidae, *Leiopathes montana*, new species, *Leiopathes valdiviae*, new combination, taxonomy

Introduction

The Great Meteor seamount belongs to the Meteor seamounts, one of the most remote groups of seamounts in the Eastern Atlantic, about 1500 km from the mainland and about 600 km from the Azores. The Great Meteor seamount forms a flat plateau of nearly 2000 km² at approximately 300 m depth, surrounded by steep slopes that extend to the abyssal plain. The age of the Great Meteor seamount is estimated to be 11–16 million years (Gofas 2007; Mohn 2010). Fauna of the Great Meteor seamount has been studied in a number of expeditions (summarized by Mironov & Krylova 2006, Mohn 2010). Previous studies of the Great Meteor seamount (Grasshoff 1985; Pasternak 1985) revealed six species of antipatharians, all of them widely distributed in the Atlantic, including one species of the genus *Leiopathes*, *L. glaberrima* (Esper, 1782).

In the course of study of antipatharians collected in the Seamount 2 expedition, I found that all specimens of *Leiopathes* from the plateau of the Great Meteor seamount belong to a new species, which I describe here.

Abbreviations and Acronyms Used

CP—beam-trawl

CSIRO—The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (Australia)

DE—epibenthic dredge

FV—fishery vessel

Ifremer—Institut français de recherche pour l'exploitation de la mer

IORAS—Institute of Oceanology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow, Russia)

MADJ—Jardim Botânico da Madeira Herbário

MOM—Muséum de Oceanographie de Monaco (Monaco)

MNHN—Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle (Paris, France)