

Beania petiolata Harmer, 1926. Tilbrook, Hayward & Gordon, 2001, p.48, fig.4E,F.

BEANIA PETIOLATA HARMER
(Fig. 4E,F)

Beania petiolata Harmer, 1926: 416, pl. 28, figs 18, 19.

Material

Holotype: NHM 1928.3.6.243, South of Halmahera (Djilolo), Indonesia, 45 m.

Other material examined: NHM 1928.3.6.244, west of north end of New Guinea, 32 m; NHM 1997.10.6.14, NHM 1998.10.19.2–4, Erakor Island reef flat, Efate, Vanuatu.

Description

Colony reticulate, forming thin sheets loosely attached to the substratum; autozooids equally spaced and connected by six relatively short tubes to its neighbours. Each autozooid has a single, tubular basal pore proximal to the most distal connecting tube; frontal wall entirely membranous. Autozooids have six short, straight, distal marginal spines, four on the distal margin and one bifurcating spine adjacent to each distally placed avicularium; there are two longer distally directed basal spines, and five to six pairs of generally equally spaced, longer, bifurcating lateral marginal spines, each with one ramus incurved over frontal membrane, the other ramus at approximately 45° to the first, directed frontolaterally. The paired frontally facing avicularia lateral to the operculum are attached just basal to the frontal rim; short with a squared head; rostrum slightly hooked; mandible triangular. No ovicells observed.

Measurements

Means and standard deviations, mm.

Holotype ($n=18$): Autozooid length 0.64 ± 0.05 ; width 0.29 ± 0.10 .

NHM 1928.3.6.244 ($n=30$): Autozooid length 0.75 ± 0.13 ; width 0.33 ± 0.03 .

NHM 1997.10.6.14 ($n=30$): Autozooid length 0.59 ± 0.03 ; width 0.28 ± 0.02 .

Avicularium length ($n=15$): 0.08 ± 0.01 .

Remarks

As noted by Harmer (1926), the presence of distal basal spines, branching lateral marginal spines, and the shape and size of the avicularia are the most distinctive characters of this species. He gave no measurements with his description of this species, but part of the type material, from south of Halmahera (Djilolo), and another of Harmer's specimens, from New Guinea, were measured (above) and appear to have slightly larger autozooids than the specimens from Vanuatu (also above). This slight difference may be a result of preservation, however: Harmer's specimens were mounted in Canada balsam on slides, while the Vanuatu material was dried. The species is easily overlooked in its cryptic habitat on pieces of coral rubble, and is almost transparent when dry; it has very small colonies of fewer than 100 zooids, covering less than 20 mm².

Distribution

Originally found in Malaysia and New Guinea, this is only the second record of *Beania petiolata* which was quite common at Erakor Island, Efate.

