

Electra bellula (Hincks, 1881). Hayward & Ryland, 1995, p. 537, fig. 4A.

***Electra bellula* (Hincks)
(Fig. 4A)**

Membranipora bellula Hincks 1881, 149, pl. 8, figs 4, 4a, 4b.

Electra bellula (Hincks) Cook 1985, 89.

REMARKS

Electra bellula does not seem to have been recorded again from Australia since Hincks' (1881) original account, although Livingstone (1927) regarded Haswell's (1881) *Membranipora cervicornis* as belonging to it. Hincks (1881) described the nominate species and var. *multicornis* from unknown Australian localities, and var. *bicornis* from Ceylon. He also recorded the nominate species from Madagascar, St. Vincent and the Cape Verde Islands. Hastings (1930) described and figured *Electra bellula* var. *bicornis* (Hincks) from the Galapagos Islands; Cook (1985) described West African specimens and reviewed the geographical distribution of the species.

The autozooids are 0.4-0.5mm long, with a smooth gymnocyst bearing medially a long, horny, basally pointed spine, characteristic of the genus. The oval opesia, which comprises half the total autozoid length has two to four flat, variably branched spines along its proximal edge, which are curved over the frontal membrane, forming a closely reticulate shield. There are four or five thin, erect, reflected oral spines, and additional short, thin spines may occur elsewhere on the gymnocyst or along the margins of the autozoid. At Heron Island it occurred only on *Sargassum*, although Cook (1985) reported it encrusting hard substrata. Development of the overarched opesial spines varies between colonies and the varietal distinctions '*bicornis*' and '*multicornis*' are almost certainly without geographical or genetic justification.

