

***Thairopora calcarata* sp.nov.**
(Figs 6D-F, 7A)

MATERIAL EXAMINED

HOLOTYPE: G304962, on *Sargassum* sp.

PARATYPE: G304967, on *Sargassum* sp.

DESCRIPTION

Colonies developing irregular, unilaminar patches on *Sargassum* leaflets, adjacent lobes occasionally fusing to form short, erect, bilaminar plates. Autozooids more or less rectangular, in regular radiating rows which bifurcate at intervals; each new row commences with a vicarious avicularium. Vertical walls of autozooid form a thin, raised rim around the frontal membrane; beneath it the cryptocyst is flat to concave, and dips distally towards two large, irregularly oval, unequal-sized opesiuoles. Cryptocyst initially thin and smooth, with about 30 minute perforations; proximal end more distinctly nodular in later ontogeny. Opesia terminal, longer than wide, broadly oval; distal two-thirds with a smooth rim, terminating proximally, on each side, with a sharp, upturned condyle; proximal third with a broad rim of nodular, cryptocystal calcification. On each side of the operculum the smooth gymnocystal calcification constituting the distal opesial rim develops an erect tube, 0.4mm high, which expands and divides at its tip to form a branched, club-like process; these form a close lattice over the surface of the colony. Avicularia about half as long as autozooids; rostrum smoothly calcified, in the form of a rounded, parallel-sided hood, projecting almost perpendicularly from frontal plane of zooids; proximal half with a narrow band of cryptocyst underlying the frontal membrane; mandible elongate oval, with elongate sclerites converging at its rounded distal end. Three types of spicule present: bow-shaped compasses of two sizes (0.04mm, 0.08mm), and very long, almost straight calipers (0.19mm).

Measurements (means and standard deviations of 20 values, mm): autozooid length 0.55 ± 0.05 ; width 0.28 ± 0.03 .

REMARKS

Thairopora calcarata is distinguished from other species of the genus by the paired, branched processes flanking the zooid opesia. These interlace above the colony surface forming a regular, reticulate structure, with the meshes situated immediately above the opercula, presumably allowing lophophores to project through them. Numerous colonies were found on *Sargassum* leaflets; the epiphytic habit is characteristic of the genus.

ETYMOLOGY

Latin, *calcaris*, a spur.

