

DESCRIPTIONS OF TYPES AND OTHER ALCYONACEAN MATERIAL  
(COELENTERATA: OCTOCORALLIA)  
IN THE AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM, SYDNEY

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SUMMARY

Six types of alcyonaceans, previously described by Whitelegge (1897) and Thomson & Mackinnon (1911), have been re-examined. Two new species of octocorals recently collected by Ms Helen K. Larson and a known species collected by Mr Neville Coleman are also described.

INTRODUCTION

During March and April 1977 the authors worked on octocorals in the Roche Research Institute of Marine Pharmacology at Dee Why, Sydney, Australia. During his stay in Australia the senior author (J.V.) was told that Whitelegge's (1897) and Thomson & Mackinnon's type specimens were kept in the Australian Museum, Sydney. He knew there were taxonomic problems with the type collection deserving investigation, especially with the species *Sinularia* ("*Lobophytum*") *densa*.

With the assistance of Dr J.K. Lowry (Australian Museum) we were able to examine all six types of alcyonaceans. We found that in many respects Whitelegge's and Thomson & Mackinnon's descriptions are correct, but in other respects our re-examination led to surprising results: *Lobophytum hedleyi* Whitelegge = *L. crassum* Von Marenzeller; *Sinularia* ("*Lobophytum*") *densa* has foliaceous clubs, which were not recorded by Whitelegge, with all the unpleasant consequences of this; *Spongodes pallida* Whitelegge must be transferred to the genus *Scleronephthya*. In some cases the smallness of the specimens and the paucity of the material prevented us from making more detailed investigations.

At the request of Ms Helen K. Larson, Technical Officer, Australian Museum, the senior author investigated a number of octocorals collected by her near Lizard Island, Great Barrier Reef. In her collection he found two new species, viz. *Sinularia larsonae* sp.n and *Nephthea legipolypa* sp.n. They are kept in the Museum mentioned, and are described below.

Finally, Mr Neville Coleman sent J.V. samples of octocorals from Australian waters. Among them was a specimen of *Dendronephthya* (*Morchellana*) *australis* Kükenthal, 1905. It is redescribed here.

P.A. made the photographs of Whitelegge's and Thomson & Mackinnon's specimens, while Mr G.J. Vrijmoeth made the photographs of other colonies. J.V. made the drawings for the text-figures.