NOTES AND NEWS

A NEW DISTRIBUTIONAL RECORD OF ASTROPECTEN POLYACANThUS MULLER AND TROSChEL, 1842 (ECHINODERMATA: ASTEROIDEA) FROM THE COASTAL WATERS OF PAKISTAN

Qaseem Tahera
Marine Reference Collection and Resource Centre, University of Karachi, Karachi-75270, Pakistan; e-mail: qaseem_tahera@yahoo.com

Previously an Asteroid starfish Astropecten indicus has been described by Tahera (1996), and another species of the genus Astropecten i.e. A. polyacanthus Muller and Troschel, 1842 has been collected from the subtidal region of a sandy shore of Clifton (24° 47' 42''N 66° 59' 6''E), Karachi. The latter species is here reported for the first time from the Pakistan Coast of the northern Arabian Sea and fills the gap in the known distribution. The species is briefly described and illustrated (Fig. 1A-C).

Fig. 1. Astropecten polyacanthus, Muller and Troschel, 1842; A, oral view; B, ventral view; C, Superomarginal plate.

It is commonly known as comb sea star. The species is well described by Price (1983) and our collected specimens agree well with the description.
This species is easily distinguished from *A. indicus* by having reduced and spineless second and third superomarginal plates. There are prominent white spines along the margin. The major radius is \( R=22.0-48.0 \) mm while the minor radius is \( r=4.0 \) mm-9.0 mm. The ratio \( R/r=1:5.2-5.3 \) mm. The specimens are housed in the Marine Reference Collection and Resource Centre (MRCC, Cat.No.ECHI. 57).

**Ecology:** Lieske and Myers (2004) indicated that this species is found on sandy bottoms near coral reefs, at depths of 1 to 60 m; buried by day, active at night. The animal can bury itself quickly. The species seems to be occurring in the subtidal sandy area.

**Colour:** Colour in life is grayish brown with dark markings on the arm.

**Distribution:** According to Price (1983), the species is distributed from islands of the west Indian Ocean to the Arabian Gulf and from the Maldives area eastwards to the Hawaiian Islands. Now the present record from Pakistan fills the gap in the distribution of the species.

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**REFERENCES**


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