

*Beania hexamicorum* Tilbrook, Hayward & Gordon, 2001, p.50, fig.4C,D.

*BEANIA HEXAMICORUM* SP. NOV.

(Fig. 4C,D)

*Beania* sp. Hayward, 1988: 288, fig. 4b.

*Material*

Holotype: NHM 1997.10.6.13, Erakor Island reef flat, 11.11.1992.

Paratypes: NHM 1998.4.7.56–58, Erakor Island reef flat, 11.11.1992.

Other material examined: NHM 1996.4.26.13 (as *Beania* sp.), Tamarin reef front, Mauritius, 5 m; NHM 1996.4.25.1 (as *Beania* sp.), Flic en Flac, Mauritius, 25 m.

*Description*

Colony reticulate, forming thin sheets loosely attached to the substratum; each autozooid connected to its neighbours by six relatively short tubes, equally spaced around the basal periphery. Each autozooid has a single, tubular basal pore just proximal to the most distal connecting tube; frontal wall entirely membranous. Autozooids have five short, straight, distal spines, three on the distal edge and one adjacent to each of the distal avicularia, and six to eight pairs of longer, incurved, lateral spines equally spaced along its margins. The paired frontally facing, pedunculate avicularia lateral to the operculum are attached just basal to the frontal rim; short with a highly domed head and a strongly hooked rostrum; mandible acute triangular. A further six to eight avicularia, similar in shape and form to the others, appear later in astogeny, their peduncles forming as evaginations of the frontal rim, seemingly replacing the marginal spines. No ovicells observed.

*Measurements*

Holotype: means and standard deviations, mm.

Autozooid length  $0.57 \pm 0.03$  ( $n=16$ ); width  $0.31 \pm 0.02$  ( $n=16$ ).

Avicularium length  $0.14 \pm 0.01$  ( $n=15$ ).

*Etymology*

From *hex*, Gr.—six; *amicus*, L.—friend, alluding to the six basal connections to neighbouring autozooids.

*Remarks*

*Beania hexamicorum* is similar to *Beania discodermiae* Harmer, 1926 which, however, only ever has two distal avicularia, with lengths equivalent to about one-third the total autozooidal length, substantially larger than those described above for *B. hexamicorum*.

*Beania petiolata* Harmer, 1926 and *B. hexamicorum* are also very similar and occur in the same cryptic habitats. However, *B. petiolata* has more distal marginal spines than *B. hexamicorum*, six rather than five, and is further characterized by its basal spines and bifurcating marginal spines. *Beania petiolata* has more gracile, squared avicularia as opposed to the domed avicularia with strongly hooked mandible of *B. hexamicorum*, and does not produce the additional marginal avicularia found in the latter.

Hayward's (1988) fragmentary specimens from Mauritius were insufficient to provide a type specimen, or to make adequate comparisons with previously described species, but the more abundant material from Vanuatu, which has been found to be conspecific with the Mauritian specimens, allows this species to be properly characterized.

*Distribution*

Originally described from Mauritius by Hayward (1988) as *Beania* sp., *Beania hexamicorum* was a common species on the underside of coral rubble at Erakor Island, Efate.

