Madrepora

Classification :

Kingdom : Animalia

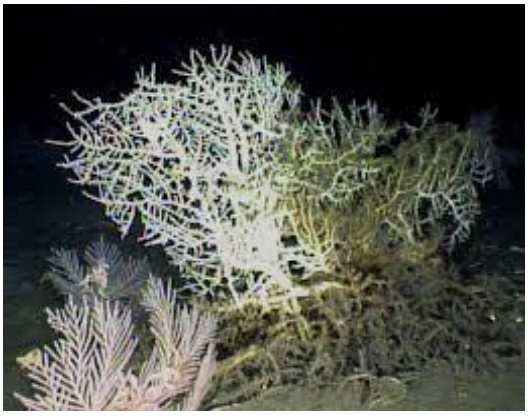
Phylum : Cnidaria

Class : Hexacorallia

Order : Scleractinia

Family : Oculinidae

Genus : Madrepora



For further details, Link

Characteristics :

- Madrepora is a genus of branched stony corals known as "horn corals," characterized by their porous skeletons and prominent polyp cups.
- These hermatypic corals grow in tropical and deep-sea habitats worldwide, except the polar regions. They are significant reef-builders, supporting marine biodiversity, and reproduce by broadcasting gametes into the water.
- An interesting fact is that the term "madrepora" historically referred to all stony corals due to their common feature of having many pores in their skeletons.
- Also called, Acropora, it is a colonial coral.
- Colony is highly branched, partly porous or reticulate.
- Branching is less towards periphery.
- The branches bear numerous small polyps in elevated cups separated by perforated coenosteum.
- Polyps appear flower-like.
- Terminal and lateral polyps contain six and twelve tentacles, respectively.
- Corallite is made up of calcium carbonate and is secreted by the basal disc of polyp.
- Corallite is without any central columella.
- Colony increases in size by growth and budding of polyps.
- The skeleton of Madrepora is very hard and it thus, plays an important role in coral reef formation. It is thus, also called hermatypic coral.

- **Structure:** Madrepora colonies are characterized by their highly branched, often irregular or bushy structures, resembling antlers or stag horns.
- **Polyps:** Small polyps are housed in cylindrical cups made of calcium carbonate, which is secreted by the coral's basal disc.
- **Tentacles:** The terminal polyps have six tentacles, while the lateral polyps have twelve, giving them a flower-like appearance.
- **Coenosteum:** The spaces between the corallites (the polyp cups) are filled with a perforated, porous tissue called coenosteum.
- **Skeleton:** They have a hard skeleton, which contributes significantly to the formation and stability of coral reefs.

Habit and Habitat

- **Habit:** Madrepora corals are colonial, meaning they grow as large, interconnected colonies of polyps.
- **Habitat:** They are typically found in tropical and sub-tropical waters, forming reefs and islands. Species like Madrepora oculata are deep-sea corals found in waters from 50 to 1500 meters deep, worldwide.

Interesting Facts

- **Name Origin:** The genus name "Madrepora" comes from the Spanish "mother of pores," referring to the porous nature of the coral skeleton.
- **Reef Builders:** Madrepora plays a critical role in the formation of coral reefs, providing structure, habitat, and food for other marine species.
- **Economic Importance:** The contribution of Madrepora to the structure and health of coral ecosystems makes it economically important for humans as well.
- **Diversity:** Despite being relatively few species, Madrepora is one of the most widely distributed and abundant reef-building corals globally.