

*Robertsonidra argentea* (Hincks, 1881). Tilbrook, 2006. p.261, pl.57E-F.

**Robertsonidra argentea** (Hincks, 1881)  
Plate 57E-F

*Schizoporella argentea* Hincks, 1881b: 158, pl. 9, figs 6, 6a.

*Rhamphostomella argentea*: Harmer, 1957 (part): 1102.

*Robertsonidra argentea*: Scholz, 1991: 291, pl. 7, figs 3, 4; Ristedt & Hillmer, 1985: 138, pl. 5, fig. 8; Winston & Heimberg, 1986: 27; Ryland & Hayward, 1992: 261, fig. 19b; Liu, Yin & Ma, 2001: 644, pl. 60, figs 1-4.

? *Robertsonidra argentea*: Dumont, 1981: 636.

Not *Robertsonidra argentea*: Powell, 1967a: 167.

Type material      Holotype: NHM 1899.5.1.970, Africa.

Other material examined      SBMNH 365724, 501-87; NHM 1899.5.1.971, Singapore; NHM 1960.2.20.21,22, Formosa Strait, China Sea, 23° 32'N, 119° 35'E, Ma Coll.

Description      Autozooids oval to hexagonal, convex, with distinct sutures (ca 0.65 x 0.45 mm). Primary orifice as long as wide (ca 0.19 x 0.19 mm), with deeply concave sinus, no obvious condyles; two thin spines present in early ontogeny; often a short umbo present. Avicularia of two types, one or both present on a single zooid or completely lacking either: lateral-suboral, opposite umbo, acute to frontal plane, rostrum triangular, hooked distally, directed laterally; or, lateral-suboral, normal to frontal plane, rostrum elongate-triangular, proximolaterally directed. Ovicell spherical.

Remarks      *Robertsonidra argentea* is characterised by its rounded orifice, lacking condyles, its deep sinus, suboral umbo and the suboral avicularium. The presence of a larger avicularium in some zooids is very diagnostic.

*Robertsonidra argentea* can be distinguished from the other species of *Robertsonidra* in the Solomon Islands by its orifice shape and the lack of condyles, and suboral avicularium. Some species, such as *R. porifera*, *R. praecipua* and *R. sutila* have large proximolaterally directed avicularia, but all lack the small suboral avicularium. *R. bacrionis*, on the other hand, while possessing a small suboral avicularium also produces a characteristic distolaterally directed spatulate avicularium.

Ryland & Hayward (1992) noted that Harmer (1957) had based his account of *Robertsonidra argentea* on several species, without having examined either its type material or material of *R. oligopus*, they assumed. Ryland & Hayward (1992) pointed out two undescribed species in Harmer's "Siboga" material, which have been examined as a result of this work and both appear to be new to science. Specimen 399.D from "Siboga" Station 164, W. of the N. end of New Guinea, (NHM 1975.2.24.22-26) appears also to be present in the China Sea (NHM 1892.8.8.14, Macclesfield Bank) and is characterised by its loosely joined autozooids, three oral spines, and pear-shaped primary orifice. This species appears to be similar, if not identical, to the species described by d'Hondt (1986) as *Stylopoma viride trispinosa subspecies novum*, from New Caledonia. Specimen 108.F from "Siboga" Station 144, S. of Halmahera (NHM 1975.2.24.14-18), is characterised by a lack of spines, its oval orifice with U-shaped sinus and short, broadly triangular, lateral suboral avicularium, which is distally directed. All of this material was found encrusting a specimen of *Tropidozoum cellariforme* Harmer, 1957. Other material cited by Harmer under *R. argentea* comes from Pedro Shoal, India (NHM 1936.12.30.100,101, Thornely Coll.) is also a new species. It has an asymmetrical, almost pear-shaped primary orifice, two oral spines, a tall, asymmetrically-placed suboral umbo and dimorphic avicularia, one lateral suboral, acute to frontal plane with a short hooked rostrum, on an inflated cystid, laterally directed, the other, also lateral suboral, normal to frontal plane, the rostrum very long and narrow, almost setiform, with a rounded tip,

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directed distally. This latter avicularian morphotype is unique in the *Robertsonidra* material examined by the author. Much of the remaining material cited by Harmer (1957) has been reassigned here to the species described. The remainder, and other material assigned to *R. argentea* subsequent to Harmer, is either too small, abraded or requires further examination and comparative work, outside the remit of this study (e.g. NHM 1926.10.1.14, Cape Verde Islands or NHM 1963.4.18.33, Mediterranean Sea).

**Distribution**

*Robertsonidra argentea* was originally described from an unknown location off Africa, thought by Ryland & Hayward (1992) to be somewhere on the East African coast. It has been recorded subsequently from the Indo-Pacific and the Great Barrier Reef as well as the Red Sea, however, as Ryland & Hayward (1992) point out, a number of these records are incorrect and require re-examination. But, it is obviously present in the Coral Sea, having been noted in the southern Great Barrier Reef and the Solomon Islands. In the Solomon Islands a single, small colony was found from Anuha Reefs, Florida Islands.

