

# Four rare and delicate sponges described

September 15 2023

---



*Hamacantha (Vomerula) melliflura* sp. nov. Credit: Ekins & Hooper

Four rare, beautiful and delicate sponges have been described by Queensland Museum scientists.

Found on seamounts off the coast of Queensland and Tasmania that rise from depths of 4 kilometers below the surface of the ocean, these rare

sponges live atop these seamounts roughly 1 kilometer below the surface.

Dr. Merrick Ekins, Queensland Museum Network Collection Manager, Sessile Marine Invertebrates said the sponges had razor-sharp spicules that form nice little rosettes.

"These beautiful [sponges](#) are the first records of the genus *Hamacantha* (*Vomerula*) from the Australian Exclusive Economic Zone," Dr. Ekins said.

These four [new species](#), bring the known [species](#) in the subgenus *Vomerula* to 26. The paper is published in the journal *Zootaxa*.

The new species are:

## ***Hamacantha* (*Vomerula*) *novacula* sp. nov. Ekins & Hooper**

This is a fragile, lace-like, encrusting sponge was found attached to a rock and has a white and translucent look. It was named *Hamacantha* (*Vomerula*) *novacula* in reference to the extra sharp fimbria, which resembles a shaving knife. *Novacula* is a latin for sharp knife.

## ***Hamacantha* (*Vomerula*) *melliflura* sp. nov. Ekins & Hooper**

This is another fragile, lace-like, encrusting sponge but was named *Hamacantha* (*Vomerula*) *melliflura* which means "flowing with [honey](#)," and was named for the flowing nature of the surface and the honeycombed texture of the sponge.

## **Hamacantha (Vomerula) ridleyi sp. nov. Ekins & Hooper**

This fragile, encrusting sponge has a smooth surface without any visible oscules. It was named after Stuart Ridley, who has described many minute deep-water sponge species from the HMS Challenger and HMS Alert expeditions.

## **Hamacantha (Vomerula) levii sp. nov. Ekins & Hooper**

This is a round, thin specimen that has a rough [surface](#). It was named for Claude Lévi, who described many deep-water sponge species from the South Pacific.

**More information:** Merrick Ekins et al, First records of Hamacantha species from seamounts off eastern Australia (Porifera, Demospongiae, Merliida), with description of four new species, *Zootaxa* (2023). [DOI: 10.11646/zootaxa.5318.3.4](#)

Provided by Queensland Museum

Citation: Four rare and delicate sponges described (2023, September 15) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-09-rare-delicate-sponges.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.