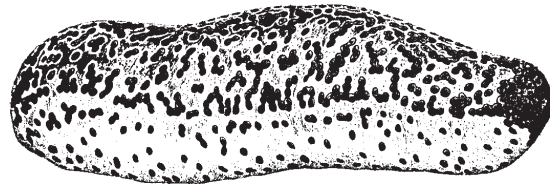


B E C H E - D E - M E R

CORRESPONDENCE


Royal Hawaiian Sea Farms involved in research on sea cucumbers

Dale Sarver from Hawaii (Royal Hawaiian Sea Farms, Inc., P.O. Box 3167, Kailua-Kona, Hawaii 96745) sent a letter to Chantal Conand to ask for information on an Hawaiian sea cucumber species he intends to study. Extracts from this letter are reproduced below.

...I recently received number 5 issue of the Beche de Mer Information Bulletin. It was a very good issue with lots of helpful information.

We were successful in obtaining renewal for our sea cucumber research through the US Department of Agriculture Small Business Innovation Research program. So we will be working for at least another 2 years on growout techniques for Stichopus horrens and possibly others.

There is another Hawaiian species which we intend to look at. It is fairly common in places below 30 meters on fine sand and coral rubble. It gets to 30–40cm and is out feeding during the day. It is similar to S. horrens but somewhat firmer, and does not 'melt' when disturbed or

lifted out of the water. I have not been able to get a name for this animal. It looks like something in between a Stichopus and a Thelenota, and is orange/red. I have enclosed a photo of one which started spontaneously spawning in our tanks a few hours after collection (14:00hrs). It was a male and reared up in the typical position whilst spawning. It stimulated one other male to start spawning too, but the third one did not respond.

We will be trying to spawn this species during the winter. I would be grateful if you could identify this animal for me. This species is interesting to us because it seems hardier in culture conditions, and people prefer it to the S. horrens which is normally eaten here in Hawaii.

Reply from Chantal Conand

'...Thank you very much for your letter and congratulations on the programme. I wish you much success. To identify the species, it is necessary to have spicules prepared. From the photo it looks of course like a stichopodid, but a scientific determination is needed for the species level. I have a few ideas but need the spicule plates from the dorsal and the ventral tegument. If you would like to prepare them and send them to me I shall probably be able to tell you the species.'

Samples sent by W.S. Sommerville for species identification

William S. Sommerville, Managing Director of Asil Group Ltd. (New Zealand) sent a letter and samples of beche-de-mer to Chantal Conand for species identification. Extracts from this letter are reproduced below.

Golden sandfish is a marketing name since buyers in Asia were calling it smooth sandfish and saying it was worth less than traditional sandfish. It is harvested in Tonga.

The snakefish name came from the Western Province in the Solomon Islands and it is used in Papua New Guinea as well. Sorry we do not have a Latin name.

Enclosed please find samples of the golden sandfish and snakefish.

I would certainly be interested to hear any comments you have on these species.



Reply from Chantal Conand

*Thank you very much for the samples you sent me. The golden sandfish is easily determined from the sample as *Holothuria scabra* var. *versicolor*, a variety of sandfish that I described in the FAO review.*

*It has been exploited in New Caledonia and got very good prices at the beginning, but was rapidly overexploited (from the data on catch per unit of effort). Some taxonomists refer to it as *H. scabra*. The snakefish is more difficult and will need a rigorous determination from alcohol-preserved specimens. Anyway it is of little value.*

Sea cucumber pen-culture project set up in the Republic of Maldives

Norman Reichenbach, from the Oceanographic Society of the Maldives, wrote the following letter to Chantal Conand.

'...I have recently read several of your papers on sea cucumbers. Your papers are of particular interest to me since I am working on a development project on pen culture of sea cucumbers in the Republic of Maldives. The project is jointly sponsored by two NGOs, the Oceanographic Society of the Maldives and the Canadian Association of International Community Development Agencies, and the Maldivian Government Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture.

Holothuria nobilis and Thelenota ananas are of particular interest to me since I will begin my pen culture

research on these species. In your recent FAO publication "The fishery resources of Pacific Island countries. Part. 2: Holothurians" you indicated some publications in press that dealt with the above species. If these or other related papers are now available I would greatly appreciate reprints of these papers.

Thank you for considering my request and I look forward to your reply. Please address all correspondence to the address for the Oceanographic Society of the Maldives (H. Giniraahiaage, P.O. Box 2075, Male, Republic of Maldives (via Singapore)).'

Request for information on growth, migration and feeding of some tropical holothurians

Paul Lokani, from the James Cook University of North Queensland, Townsville, Australia writes:

'...I am currently studying at the James Cook University of North Queensland, Townsville. This year, I am doing 1 year of study to qualify to do the Master of Science. I am enrolled with the Marine Biology Department. I would like to study growth, migration (using internal micro tags) and feeding in some species of commercial tropical holothurians. I will decide on the actual species as soon as I confirm which species have been studied.

I would like to know from you which species you studied for growth and migration and if I could have copies of the reports you have written on these. Would you know anybody else that have studied growth, migration and feeding in tropical holothurian species?'