
Organisms associated with gorgonians at Mu Ko Thale Tai, Surat Thani and Nakhon Si Thammarat

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From a previous study of diversity and distribution of gorgonians at Had Khanom – Mu Ko Thale Tai National Park, it was found that the azooxanthallae gorgonians group, which do not require sunlight for survival, were the most abundant gorgonians, particularly in deeper areas where strong currents and greater turbidity occurred. In this study, the organisms associated with gorgonians were investigated. Three different genera were chosen as representatives of each colony shape, *i.e.* fan shape (genus *Verrucella*), bushy form (genus *Dichotella*), and sparse form (genus *Subergorgia*). The surveys were conducted at 3 water depths, *i.e.*, shallow water (< 5 m depth), mid-depth (5 – 10 m), and deep water (> 10 m depth), in 3 areas, Ko Tan, Ko Mat Sum, and Ko Rab, using the SCUBA diving technique. The results showed that more than 10 groups of animals were associated with gorgonians. Brittle stars (or snake stars), allied cowries, wing oysters, and delicate-looking shrimps were found on all colony shapes. In addition, hydroids, barnacles, algae, sponges, and bryozoa were found settled on gorgonian colonies. Moreover, flat worms, nudibranches, synatid sea cucumbers, and small fishes were recorded. However, in shallow water (< 5 m depth), *Subergorgia* was the only genus found, and brittle stars were the most abundant organisms on *Subergorgia*.