

**MASS OCCURRENCE OF *Synaptula* spp. (HOLOTHUROIDEA: APODIDA) ON SPONGES**

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**ABSTRACT:** Mass occurrence of seven species of *Synaptula* (*S. sp.*, *S. lamperti*, *S. madreporica*, *S. media*, *S. psara*, *S. violacea*, and *S. virgata*) was found on large sponges in the Andaman Sea and Gulf of Thailand. From 1 up to at least 1,000 holothuroids could be found on the pinakoderm of a single sponge, but never in the spongocoel even if it was open and very large. The observed holothuroids remained at the same spot all the time. Sometimes they fed on detritus on the sponge surface. We hypothesize that they also take up nutrients that leak out of the sponge on which they thrive.

**Key words:** Sea cucumbers on sponges, *Synaptula*, symbiosis, Thailand.

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