

## *Stenoplax circumsenta* Berry, 1956, in the Gulf of California

BY

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(1 Plate)

THE SAND FLATS west of Isla Concha, Scammon's Lagoon (lat.  $27^{\circ}50'N$ ; long.  $114^{\circ}20'W$ ), Baja California, were considered as type locality for *Stenoplax circumsenta* Berry, 1956. The holotype bears the number 13 602 in the Berry collection, and paratypes have the number 13 627 in the same collection.

The Puritan-American Expedition of 1959 collected two more specimens from the east side of Isla Concha (Station P-5, at a depth of 4 feet [1.2 m]) which, preserved in alcohol, now bear the number 10 056 in the A. G. Smith collection at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco.

To date, the species has never been illustrated. KEEN (1958, 1971) makes no mention of this species in either edition of "Sea Shells of Tropical West America."

On October 25, 1970, at Bahía de San Gabriel (lat.  $24^{\circ}26'N$ , long.  $110^{\circ}21'W$ ), Isla Espíritu Santo, in the Gulf of California, I came across, on the underside of a rock in some 3 feet [90 cm] of water, a specimen of *Stenoplax* decidedly different from the rather common *S. limaciformis* (Sowerby, 1832). The specimen was brought to the attention of Mr. Allyn G. Smith, Associate Curator, Department of Invertebrate Zoology, California Academy of Sciences, who identified it as *Stenoplax circumsenta* Berry, 1956. This particular specimen measured in the dried state  $25 \times 9 \times 4$  mm. The shell valves were a mottled dark gray; the girdle was characterized by the presence, in addition to minute scales, of numerous translucent spinelets of triangular outline, sharply pointed, which give the girdle a rather rough appearance.

On July 11, 1971, two more specimens of *Stenoplax circumsenta* were found, again under stones in two feet [60 cm] of water at Pichilique (lat.  $24^{\circ}15'N$ , long.  $110^{\circ}17'W$ ) some 17 km east of La Paz, Baja California. Once dried, their sizes were  $26 \times 11$  mm and  $27 \times 10$  mm, respectively.

At this point it became tempting to speculate that *Stenoplax circumsenta* was to be found only at shallow depths and in calm and very protected waters – the common features of the localities: Scammon's Lagoon,

Bahía de San Gabriel, Pichilique, where the species had so far been found.

The validity of this theory was put to a test on a subsequent collecting trip to La Paz and the Gulf of California. On September 1, 1971, an attempt was made to collect the species again in the Bahía San Gabriel (Isla Espíritu Santo), and in Pichilique and adjacent coves. But an effort equivalent to 8 man-hours of search under rocks (mostly snorkeling) did not turn up any specimen of *Stenoplax circumsenta* among more than 200 chitons sighted.

However, a few days later, while on a fish collecting expedition with the Steinhart Divers for the California Academy of Sciences aboard the R/V *Marisla II* a specimen of *Stenoplax circumsenta* was found unexpectedly. Alone, under a turnable stone in 50 feet [15 m] of water, the specimen measured, when dried,  $19 \times 9$  mm. The locality was the reef that stretches out from the southwest corner of Isla Partida (lat.  $24^{\circ}32'N$ , long.  $110^{\circ}24'W$ ), some 20 nautical miles N of La Paz, Baja California. The waters over the reef, although calm and serene at the time of collecting, in no way evoked the image of being "protected" in the way it could be said of Scammon's Lagoon, Bahía San Gabriel, or Pichilique; and the depth at which the specimen was located was certainly much greater than for the specimens previously collected.

The colors of the specimens reported here are varied: two specimens are creamy, speckled with brown and gray; one is mostly a rusty brown with minute whitish specks; another is a dark gray variously suffused with white. Inside, the valves are intensely pink and blue in 3 specimens; in the other specimen the inner surfaces of the valves are white with blue triangular areas in valves ii, iv, and v.

The first specimen of *Stenoplax circumsenta* collected in the Gulf of California, at Bahía de San Gabriel, Isla Espíritu Santo, November 1970, was deposited with the California Academy of Sciences and is now part of the collection in the Department of Geology (loc. no. 45 418).

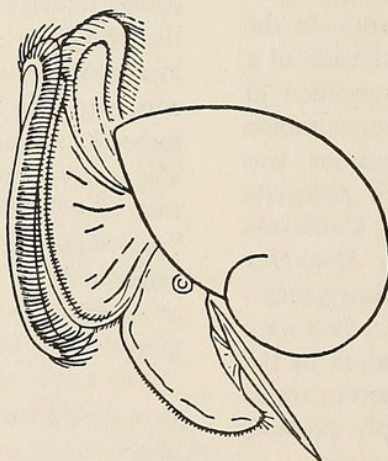


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