

Discovery of a new host coral for a Caribbean parasitic crab species

By Werner de Gier (Naturalis Biodiversity Center)

Scientists from the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez, Naturalis Biodiversity Center and the ANEMOON Foundation discovered a new host coral for a Caribbean parasitic crab species.

During one of the scientific expeditions to Bonaire in the Caribbean Netherlands, the scientists found a parasitic gall-crab, *Opecarcinus hypostegus*, on the previously unknown host coral *Agaricia undata* (a member of the lettuce corals). With help of DNA-barcoding and pictures taken in the field as well as in the labs, the identity of the coral-inhabiting crab was confirmed. With this record, all species within *Agaricia* are now listed as hosts of gall-crabs.

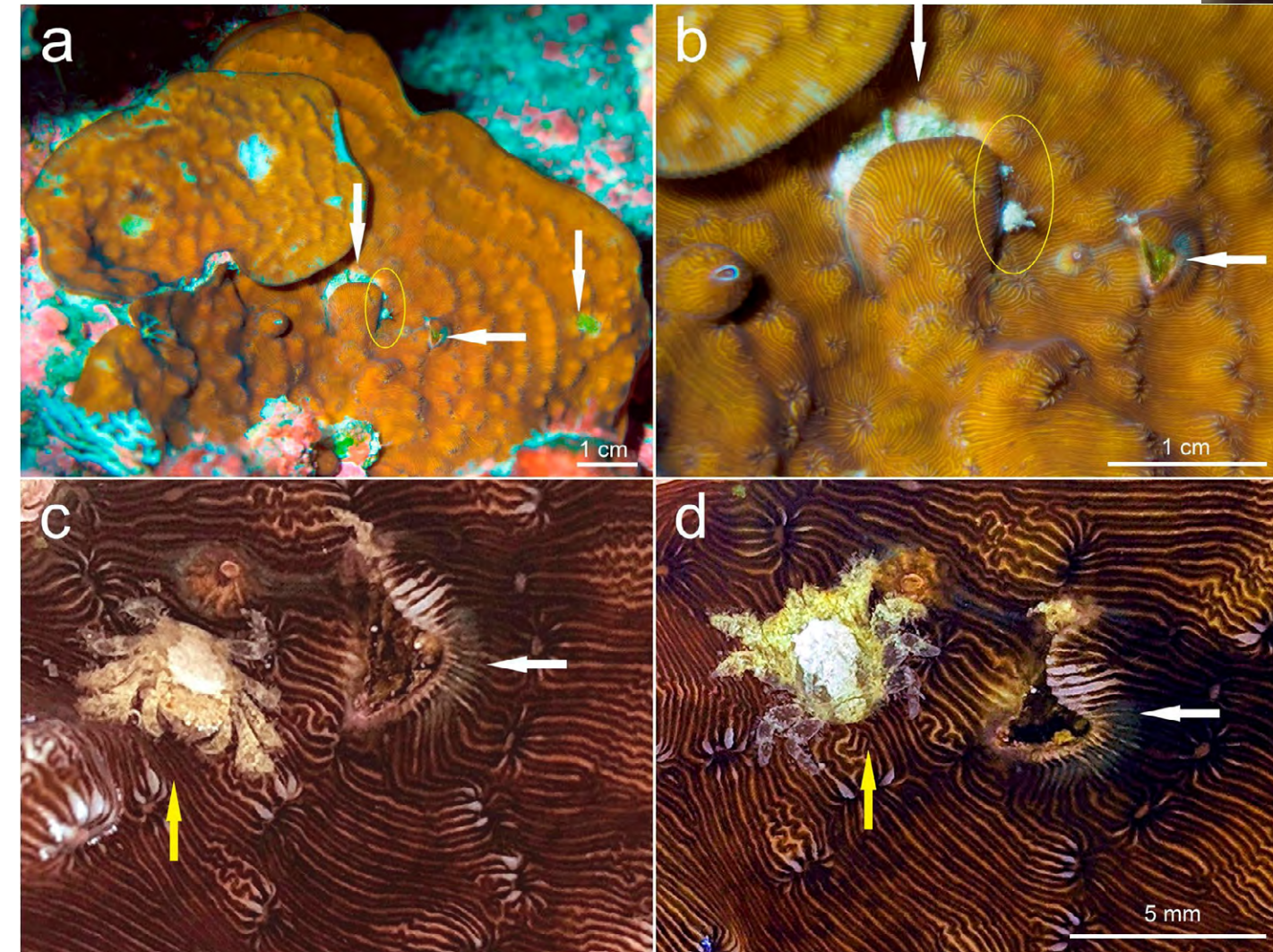
"New information on coral-associated fauna leads to a better insight on the diversity, evolution, and ecology of coral reef creatures, particularly in the Caribbean, where gall-crabs have rarely been studied." – stated the scientists.

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More information

[García-Hernández, J.E., de Gier, W., van Moorsel, G.W.N.M., Hoeksema, B.W. \(2020\). The scleractinian *Agaricia undata* as a new host for the coral-gall crab *Opecarcinus hypostegus* at Bonaire, southern Caribbean. Symbiosis: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13199-020-00706-8>](#)



Agaricia undata with associated gall-crabs (yellow arrows and ellipses) and gall-like structures (white arrows)

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