

Culcita novaeguineae (Müller & Troschel, 1842)



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Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Echinodermata
Class: Asteroidea
Order: Valvatida
Family: Oreasteridae
Genus: *Culcita*
Species: *C. novaeguineae*

Culcita novaeguineae or **cushion star** is a species of starfish. It has short arms and an inflated appearance and resembles a pentagonal pincushion. It is variable in colour and can be found in tropical warm waters in the Indo-Pacific. *C. novaeguineae* is living coral reefs at reef edge and slope at depths of 1 to 20 m. We report for the **first time from Bali Waters (Indonesia)**. This species has exhibited a slight preference for the coral *Acropora spp.* over *Pocillopora spp.* and *Porities spp.* A mature *C. novaeguineae* is pentagonal in shape with an inflated appearance and much-abbreviated arms. It can grow to a diameter of 30 cm. Rows of tube feet are on the underside, and it has a central mouth. The color is very variable and includes a mottling with darker and lighter shades of fawn, brown, orange, yellow and green. The armored body wall is made of calcareous ossicles which are supported internally by pillars which buttress the ambulacra. The armouring contains pits into which the tube feet can be retracted. The body cavity is filled with water. Small cushion stars are very different in appearance. They are star-shaped, with five short, broad arms and a low profile. As they grow, the inter-arm areas fill in and expand relative to the tube-feet areas, and the arms get shorter relative to the disc which becomes inflated and more massive.

Food: *Culcita novaeguineae* feeds on detritus and small invertebrates, adult *Culcita novaguineae* preys on coral polyps.

Distribution: *Culcita novaeguineae* distributed in east Indo-Pacific Ocean; New Caledonia; Bay of Bengal, East Indies, north Australia, **Indonesia**, Philippine, China, south Japan, South Pacific Is. And Hawaiian Is.; Australia, Lakshadweep