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Nembrotha megalocera Yonow, 1990 - Red Sea

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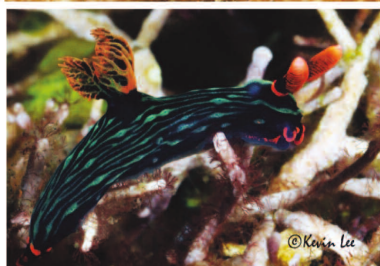
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upper: *Nembrotha guttata* (orange spots) with the only Indian Ocean locality record of *N. cristata* (green spots), Maaya Tila, Ari Atoll, 6-8 m depth, March 1994 (photo H. Voigtmann); lower: *N. kubaryana*, Tulamben, Bali, Indonesia, July 2010 (photo K. Lee). Cover: *N. megalocera*, Red Sea (photo H. Sjøholm).

The genus *Nembrotha* (Bergh, 1877). The genus *Nembrotha* is widely distributed throughout the tropical Indo-West Pacific, characterised by bright colours and patterns. It belongs to the family Polyceridae, which are nudibranchs with a reduced mantle margin, the presence of a frontal veil or ridge, and a group of gills located forward or at the mid-dorsal point and have no pocket within which to retract. The rhinophores are lamellate, sometimes a contrasting colour to the body, and issue from a pocket with a raised rim which may be coloured. Many have large obvious oral tentacles, often in a contrasting colour. With a long 'tail' many species can swim using lateral flexions of the body. Species of *Nembrotha* appear to feed on ascidians: their radular teeth, a good diagnostic character for most other species and genera, are not very helpful in identification of species in this genus. The ribbon is narrow, with a broad central tooth, a large hooked lateral tooth on each side, and a short series of small outer lateral plates on each side. *N. megalocera* Yonow, 1990 is a species endemic to the Red Sea, and feeds on the violet ascidian *Diazona*. It is known to swim, but mating and spawning have not been recorded. It has similarly coloured sibling species in the Indian and Pacific oceans which never occur in the Red Sea; equally, *N. megalocera* has not been recorded outside the Red Sea, even in the Gulfs of Aden or Oman, which support a few Red Sea endemics. This is fairly typical of species of *Nembrotha*, some species having a very limited distribution and no external variation, whilst others have a large range and vary in colour and pattern. Another species with a very limited range is *N. guttata* Yonow, 1994, which is only found in one Indian Ocean island group, the Maldives archipelago. It belongs to a small group of black species which have coloured pustules, interesting because most species are linearly patterned. In this species the pustules are orange, with those around the frontal margin and on the head edged in green. *Nembrotha cristata* Bergh, 1877 is a Pacific species known only from the Maldives in the Indian Ocean, and has green pustules, green gills, and green rhinophore sheaths and tentacles. A third species in this colour group is *N. kubaryana* Bergh, 1877, found in both the Indian and Pacific oceans.

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