

Invasive species

Titan Acorn Barnacle

Scientific name:

***Megabalanus
coccopoma***
(Darwin, 1854)

Habitat: Shallow water attached to hard substrate, may survive in lowest intertidal range, most likely to be found in high salinity waters

Origin: Native to the eastern Pacific Ocean from Mexico to Ecuador, but reported in Brazil, Texas, Louisiana, as well as a northern expansion of its Pacific range in California

Suspected pathway of introduction: Hull fouling

Description and similar species:

Megabalanus coccopoma can grow very large (> 5 cm in diameter and height) and has a conspicuous pink color with six triangular plates. It may be distinguished from *M. tintinnabulum (antilensis)* which also occurs occasionally in Georgia by its globulo-conical shell and a circular to ovate aperture. Additionally, if the plates are removed the scutum is noted to be wider than higher.



Photo: *M. coccopoma* scutum right and shell above, Marcy Mitchell, UGA MAREX.

Facts and potential impact:

Research on *M. coccopoma* indicates that the planktonic larvae prefer to settle on disturbed or recently cleaned surfaces. The barnacle can also grow rapidly and attain a large size. Significant settlement and growth of the barnacle on structures including boat hulls, buoys, and fishing gear presents economic problems associated with reduced fuel efficiency and increased cleaning and maintenance efforts. Competition with native filter-feeding species for space and food is an environmental concern.



Photo: Left and above, Fran Lapolla, UGA MAREX.

Selected References:

- Henry, D.P. & McLaughlin, P.A. 1986. The Recent species of *Megabalanus* (Cirripedia: Balanomorpha) with special emphasis on *Balanus tintinnabulum* (Linnaeus) sensu lato. Zoologische Verhandelingen (235): 1-69.
- Newman, William A. and Ronald R. McConnaughey. 1987. A tropical eastern Pacific barnacle, *Megabalanus coccopoma* (Darwin), in Southern California, following El Niño 1982-83. Pacific Science 41: 31-36.
- Perreault, Ray T. 2004. An exotic tropical barnacle, *Megabalanus coccopoma* (Darwin, 184), in Louisiana: its probable arrival and environmental implications. Proceedings of the Louisiana Academy of Sciences 66: 13-16.



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