

Variation in a *varians*: A mutant *Actinopyga varians* from Cook Islands

Michael Parrish

Species: *Actinopyga varians*

Date of observation: 28 November 2023

Location: West coast of Atiu, Cook Islands (approximate coordinates S 20°0'4.10", W 158°8'32.55")

Depth: < 0.3 m

Habitat: Reef flat with coral pavement and sand substrate

Total length: 24 cm

Note: An adult *Actinopyga varians* was observed on the reef flat on the western side of Atiu, Cook Islands. The sea cucumber had a partial split longitudinally starting from the posterior end. The two posterior ends each had a terminal anus; one end had three teeth and the other had five teeth. There was a difference in length of 4 cm between the two posterior ends. The longer of the two posterior ends was lighter in color than the rest of the cucumber (Fig. 1A and B).



Figure 1. A: An adult *Actinopyga varians* with longitudinal split resulting in two posterior ends; B: terminal anus on each posterior end; one with three teeth, the other with five teeth. Images: © Kirby Morejohn, Ministry of Marine Resources, Cook Islands