



Fig. 1

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## *Soft coral mimesis by an aeolidiid nudibranch*

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An interesting case of mimesis between an aeolidiid nudibranch and a xeniid soft coral was observed at Tulamben, Bali. Since no specimen is in hand, very preliminary identification would put this animal into the family Aeolidiidae, superfamily Aeolidoidea (Waegle and Willian 2000, using identification criteria from Gosliner 1987 and Behrens 1991). A somewhat similar association between a tritoniid (Dendronotoidea) nudibranch and a soft coral was recently described from the Red Sea by Avila et al. (1999) between the slug *Marioniopsis fulvicola* and the soft coral *Parerythropodium fulvum*. This slug lives cryptically on the coral, having the same coloration and its gills resembling the shape of the polyps. *M. fulvicola* is a specialist predator of *P. fulvum* and is not deterred by the host's chemicals, which, however, deter generalist fish predators. We assume that the here-illustrated mimesis functions in a similar way, except that the slug does not live on xeniid colonies; it seems to simply disguise its presence by looking like unpalatable prey (Fig. 1A shows a xeniid colony). Xeniid soft corals are generally avoided by fish predators and only eaten by some butterfly fishes (Benayahu, personal communication). The slug's cerata mimic closed tentacles. Figure 1B shows the nudibranch in normal resting position (cephalic tentacles indicated by arrows). Figure 1C shows it taking flight from the photographer. The animal is about 4 cm long.

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