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**EPIBIOTA OF *Holothuria scabra* (JAEGER, 1833) FROM TINMAR, SOUTHERN
GUIMARAS AND SAGAY MARINE RESERVE, NEGROS OCCIDENTAL**

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ABSTRACT

The composition and abundance of epibiota on the sea cucumber *Holothuria scabra* collected in TINMAR, Southern Guimaras (Panay Gulf, northern Sulu Sea) and Sagay Marine Reserve, Negros Occidental (Visayan Sea), were determined. Epibiotic organisms on 10 *Holothuria scabra* individuals in each site were detached from the body surface with a fine brush dipped in alcohol. Samples collected were fixed in buffered formalin, followed by counting and identification under light microscopy. Sea cucumber epibionts consisted of photosynthetic protists, mainly diatoms (Phylum/Division Bacillariophyta), and small marine invertebrates (Protozoa, Mollusca, Arthropoda, and Annelida). Some 2,237 epibionts were counted with the diatoms as the most abundant and frequently encountered group. Epibiont species on *Holothuria scabra* were almost the same in both sites, except for annelids which was only encountered in samples from Sagay. Mean epibiotic abundance of *Holothuria scabra* from TINMAR was 61 per individual which was about a third of epibiotic abundance on individuals from Sagay (163 per individual). This study provides preliminary information on epibionts present on Philippine holothurians, and will help future researches in this field.