

**“COMMUNITY STRUCTURE OF HOLOTHUROIDS IN
SELECTED SEAGRASS BEDS IN TAKLONG ISLAND
NATIONAL MARINE RESERVE, GUIMARAS, PHILIPPINES”**

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ABSTRACT

Sea cucumbers are beneficial to mankind commercially as food and medicinal commodity. Overexploitation and illegal catch of these organisms even within Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) caused stock depleting and even local extinction of some populations in the country. Monitoring and regular assessment of their population is a must for their proper management and protection. This study investigated the status of holothuroid community within 4 selected seagrass meadows in Taklong Island National Marine Reserve (TINMR), Nueva Valencia, Guimaras. Holothuroid composition and estimates of density, frequency and distribution were determined through plot method. Species identification was based on gross morphology and spicule analysis. There were 40 individuals collected identified as 5 species, namely, *Holothuria atra* (n = 18), *Holothuria pulla* (n = 1), *Holothuria scabra* (n = 5), *Bohadschia vitiensis* (n = 2) and *Synapta maculata* (n = 13). The first 4 belonged to Order Aspidochirotida and the last belonged to Order Apodida. Their distribution and community structure in TINMR are likely influenced by the physical and chemical environment, seagrass community poaching, and cryptic behavior.