



"Photo Courtesy of "Volusia County Reef Research Dive Team"

### **White Eye Sea Spray**

*Thesea nivea*

**Range:** Commonly found off the North Florida Atlantic coast with deep dwelling specimens reported from the Dry Tortugas and the eastern Caribbean. The White Eye Sea Spray typically colonizes rocky outcroppings and hard bottom areas and can be found at depths ranging from 75 to 1,200 ft (23-366 m).

**Similar Species:** Pinnate Spiny Sea Fan, *Muricea pendula*, Red Polyp Octocoral, *Swiftia exserta*, and Carmine Sea Spray, *Leptogorgia miniata*, occur in similar habitat as the White Eye Sea Spray and are similar in coloration. However, *M. pendula* and *L. miniata* have translucent white polyps while the red polyps of *Swiftia exserta* occur in a paired fashion and in fewer number than is exhibited by the White Eye Sea Spray.

**Identification:** White Eye Sea Spray colonies are laterally branched and generally grow in a single plane that can appear somewhat bushy as the colony becomes larger. Its branches are yellow-brown to reddish brown to grayish red. Polyps are bright red to pink and often display white centers.

**Note:** White sea sprays often experience multiple abnormal outgrowths of tissue, called galls, caused by the inhabitation of other invertebrates, such as the Spionid worm, *Polydora sp.*), and the crab *Pilumnus floridanus*, within the coral tissue.