



TALL task for tiny coral

Scientists say RI species could be key in saving world’s reefs

Alex Kuffner Providence Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK

BRISTOL, RI

You may not think that a coral can be a fierce hunter. But Rhode Island’s Northern star coral isn’t like others of its kind. ● “It’s unremarkable to the naked eye,” said Koty Sharp, head of the Coral Microbial Ecology Research Lab at Roger Williams University. “But look at it under the scope. You’re gonna love it.” ● On the digital screen attached to a stereo microscope, *Astrangia poculata* is revealed in all its writhing, tentacled glory. Up close and magnified like this, the pebble-sized colony looks like some sort of sinister alien ready to grab anything within reach.

And that’s exactly what it does when lab manager Ciaran Fitzpatrick squirts a bevy of brine shrimp into the water surrounding it. Sensing food, the ring of tentacles around each of the colony’s individual members goes to work, shooting forth venomous barbs that capture the tiny shrimp like a harpoonist from a bygone age spearing a whale.

Pretty soon, nearly all the shrimp have disappeared into the many mouths of the little animals known as polyps that make up the colony.

“We think they’re actually pretty remarkable,” said Fitzpatrick.

It’s easy to underestimate Rhode Island’s only native coral species, which, judging by its small size and drab appearance, is a mere shadow of the colorful, reef-building corals of the tropics.

But in the decade since Sharp founded the coral lab at Roger Williams, she and her scientific collaborators have proven that there’s a lot more to Northern star coral than meets the eye.

In the latest study to come out of the lab, Sharp was part of a team that successfully manipulated *Astrangia*’s



ABOVE: Koty Sharp is head of the Coral Microbial Ecology Research Lab at Roger Williams University, where research is conducted that could help save tropical reef-building corals. PHOTOS BY DAVID DELPOIO/PROVIDENCE JOURNAL

AT TOP: When judged by its small size and drab appearance, it’s easy to underestimate the Northern star coral, Rhode Island’s only native coral species. But research on the coral could help researchers understand how to protect reefs that are crucial for marine life.

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METRO MARKET

Store director wins award

Nida Tazeen
Reporter Assisted by AI
Stevens Point Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK – WISCONSIN

STEVENS POINT – Charlie Kilburg, store director at Metro Market in Stevens Point, has received the Excellence in Operations Award from the Wisconsin Grocers Association.

The award, presented during a ceremony at the store, recognizes Kilburg’s leadership, operational excellence and commitment to the community, according to an announcement.

Kilburg is known for fostering a culture of trust, growth and service, empowering associates, mentoring local students and championing initiatives

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RUTH GILFRY CENTER

Health supply vending machine returns

Nida Tazeen
Reporter Assisted by AI
Stevens Point Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK – WISCONSIN

STEVENS POINT – The Portage County Health and Human Services Division of Public Health has moved its public health vending machine back to the Ruth Gilfry Center at 817 Whiting Ave. in Stevens Point.

The move follows the completion of renovations at the center, according to a community announcement.

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