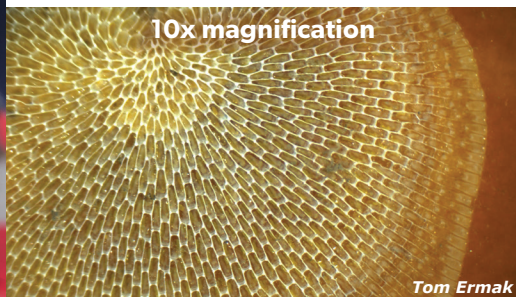


*Membranipora membranacea* - Lacy Crust Bryozoan

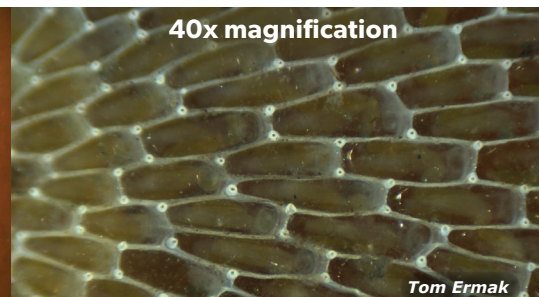
New England Aquarium

- Colonies form a white or light-gray, lace-like layer with smooth, rounded borders
- Individual zooids are rectangular with short spines, creating a sandpaper-like texture and a brick-like appearance visible with the naked eye or a hand lens
- Native range is unclear, considered non-native to the East Coast of North America
- First observed in Maine in 1987, now common throughout New England
- Often grows on native kelp, shading and weakening plants and making them more susceptible to wave damage
- Where kelp beds are damaged, other invasive species may establish, such as the green algae *Codium fragile* subsp. *fragile* and numerous invasive filamentous red algae



10x magnification

Tom Ermak



40x magnification

Tom Ermak

Bryozoans are colonies of many tiny, individual, filter-feeding animals called zooids. Encrusting bryozoans grow in a thin layer on seaweeds, shellfish, rocks, docks, and other surfaces. Many native and non-native encrusting bryozoans are common in New England coastal habitats. Distinguishing between species requires a close examination of zooid shape and colony arrangement, and a microscope is required for definitive identification.

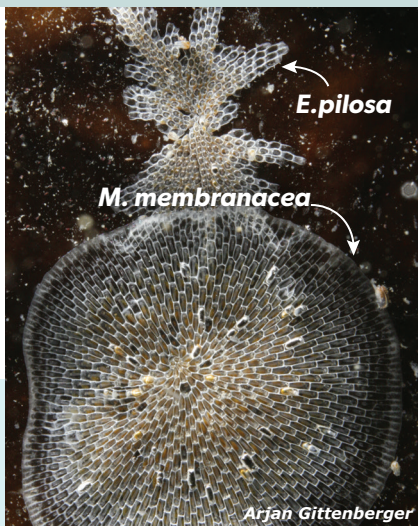
# Similar Species



*Electra pilosa*  
Hairy Sea-Mat

- White, lace-like encrusting bryozoan that grows on kelp and other seaweeds
- Colonies tend to have irregular edges, often star-shaped or branching
- Zooids are oval and do not have the regular, brick-like appearance of *M. membranacea*

Photo on right shows the star-shaped formation of *E. pilosa* with the round formation of *M. membranacea*



## Other Encrusting Bryozoans

- Several other species occur in New England, including those described below
- Both *Cryptosula pallasiana* and *Schizoporella* spp. can be orange, tan, rusty, or pink
- *Conopeum* spp. is also lacy, white to tan in color, and less common on seaweeds



Orange-colored *C. pallasiana* colonies (left) and reddish-orange colonies of encrusting *Schizoporella* sp. taken from the side of a dock (right)

Species are cryptogenic (native origins are unknown).