

Make Room for Harvey!

by Carol Ann McCormick, Asst. Curator, UNC Herbarium

There is a new mascot in town, so move over, Ramses, and make room for Harvey!

Meet *Chondracanthus harveyanus*, a member of the distinguished family Gigartiniaceae and citizen of the Kingdom of Plantae. “Harvey” spent his early years in the Pacific Ocean one mile south of Punta Cabras in Baja California, Mexico. He moved permanently to Chapel Hill in November 1969, and resides in Coker Hall on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

“I consider myself to be *the* Tar Heel of Low Intertidal,” says Harvey. “My holdfast which I use to cling to sand and rocks is discoid in shape, so essentially, I’m the round blob on the Tar Heel footprint. I like to point out to Ramses that anatomically, I so much more rock the Tar Heel theme than he does. Ramses is like, ‘Dude, your ligulate blades are red,’ but I shoot back, ‘Hey, wool-brain, the only thing Carolina Blue on you is horns and they are like *painted*.’ Ramses is so jealous of my holdfast.”

Harvey is the official mascot for the 60,000+ specimens of red marine algae in the UNC Herbarium Collection. Dr. Max Hommersand (“affectionately known as ‘Mad Max’ to us algae,” Harvey confides) has travelled to Namibia, Tasmania, the Aleutian Islands, the Philippines, Sweden, and even coastal North Carolina to

collect and document the diversity of macroalgae which are the foundation of many marine, estuarine and freshwater ecosystems. Macroalgae provide food, substrate and protection for many other aquatic organisms and are important indicators of environmental change. Many macroalgae, including kelp and nori, are used for human food, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals.

In 2013, the UNC Herbarium joined 48 other herbaria to form the Macroalgal Herbarium Consortium. The National Science Foundation is funding the Macroalgal Digitization Project to image, database and georeference specimens in herbaria from New England to Florida, from Alaska to Guam.

“It’s like the Facebook of the algae world,” enthuses Harvey. “My web presence has skyrocketed with macroalgae.org! Even my cousin, *Adenocystis utricularis*, who lives in Antarctica, is on it. Anybody can use it – you can search on species or collector or location or date, and you can search just one collection or all 49 herbaria simultaneously. I’m really looking forward to the year 2016 when the Consortium will have 1,138,500 algae catalogued.

I’m looking to be the spokesalga for the whole Consortium. Ruminant on that, Ramses!”

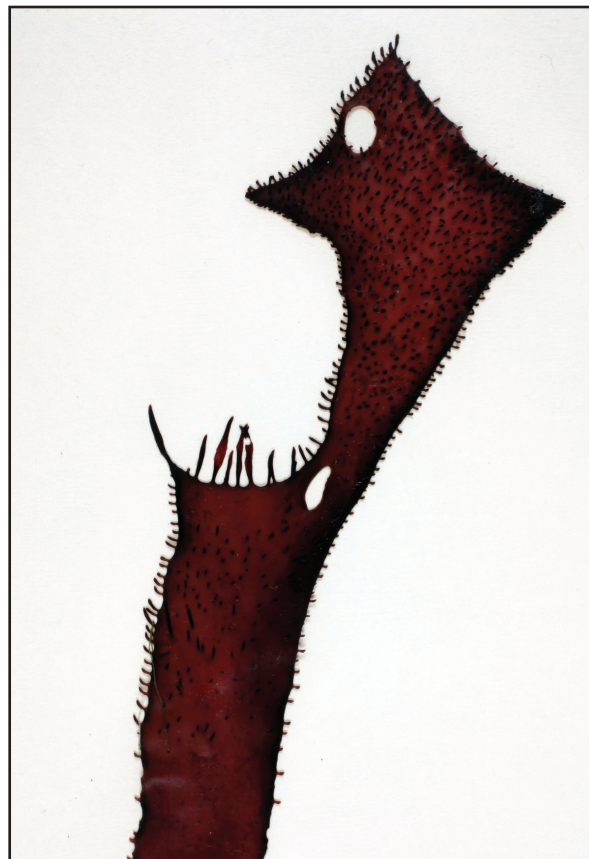
As with all work at the Garden, volunteers and students are paramount in the Macroalgal Digitization Project in the UNC Herbarium. Emma Kunkel, a student at Chapel Hill High School, and volunteers Sarah Farmer and Muriel Easterling affixed accession numbers and barcodes to specimens.

“I love all the Tar Heel undergrads who work in the Herbarium,” says Harvey. “Joseph Jurkiewicz, Luis Reyes, Tra Nguyen, Alexy Hernandez, Billy Marinello and Serene Majid are my homies – they’re databasing, imaging, doing constant updates to macroalgae.org and making the world a better place for algae The Carolina Way.” Herbarium staffer Shanna Oberreiter started posting images of algae specimens in February 2014, and by the end of April several thousand specimens had been imaged, databased and geolocated. The

UNC Herbarium is a regional hub in the Consortium, so in addition to our own collection, we will be imaging algae specimens from UNC-Wilmington, Florida Museum of Natural History, University of South Carolina, University of Alabama, Texas A & M University and Louisiana State University.

To learn more about the UNC Herbarium’s algae collection, to volunteer with the Macroalgal Digitization Project, or to arrange a visit with Harvey, contact Carol Ann McCormick, Assistant Curator, at 919-962-6931.

When reached for comment about Harvey’s mascot status, Ramses replied “Blaaaahhhhh,” and resumed grazing. 🐌



Harvey, the official mascot for red marine algae in the UNC Herbarium Collection, is challenging Ramses for Tar Heel mascot status.