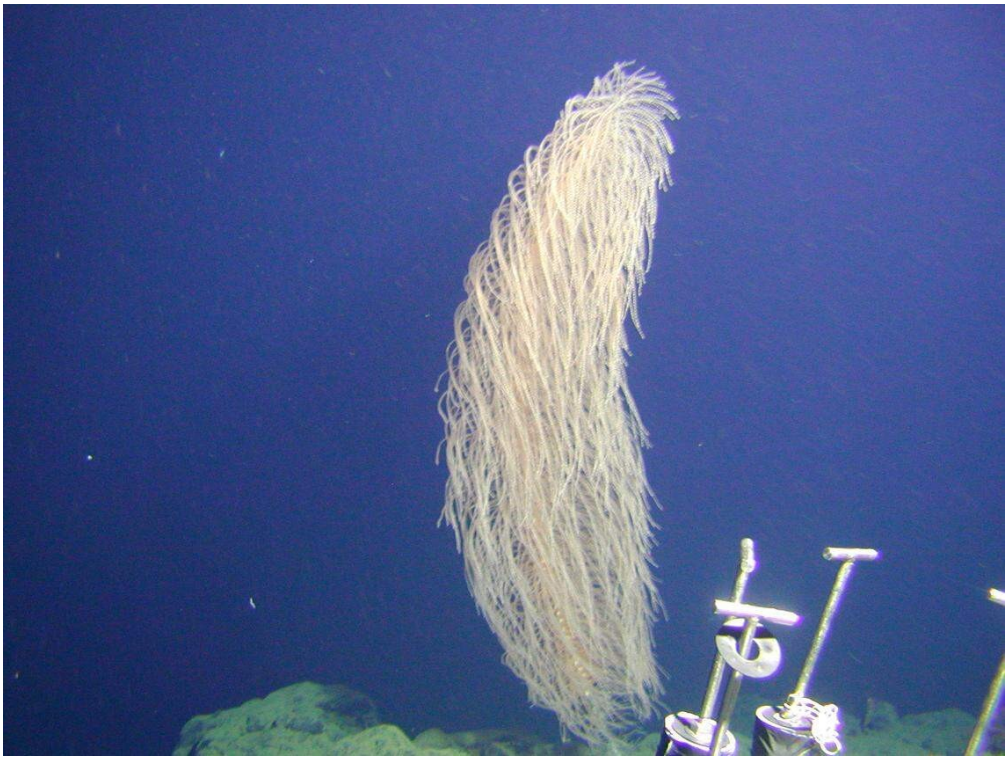
Iridogorgia Chewbacca

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Conservation

Why in news?

Recently, the Scientists have discovered a unique deep-sea coral and given it a name inspired by Chewbacca from Star Wars.

- It is a newly identified ***deep-sea coral.***
- **Scientific name** - Iridogorgia Chewbacca.
- **Genus - *Iridogorgia***, a group of deep-sea corals with long, spiralling structures.
    - There are currently ***14 species of Iridogorgia with 12 species in the Pacific*** (10 species were found in the tropical western Pacific, showing a high diversity).
- **Discovered location –** Tropical Western Pacific Ocean.
- **Nomenclature –** Named after the furry Star Wars character Chewbacca because of its hairy-looking branches.
- **First sight** – It was first seen in waters off Moloka'i in 2006 and later near the Mariana Trench in 2016 in Pacific Ocean.
- **Morphology -** The coral has become known for its ***long, hairy, flexible branches*** and shiny surface.
- The coral grew ***upright*** on the ocean floor like the tall figure of the character.
- **Size -** Height from 20 inches to about 4 feet.



- **Growth pattern -** Despite its large size and striking appearance, it usually ***occurs alone, scattered*** across deep-sea rocky bottoms.
- **Threats -** Climate change, pollution, overfishing and destructive fishing practices.
- **Significance** - This discovery adds to scientists' expanding understanding of the biodiversity hidden in the deep ocean.

References

1. Hindustan Times | Iridogorgia Chewbacca
2. Oceanographic Magazine | Iridogorgia Chewbacca

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