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New record of the Grapsoid crab *Metaplax indica* H. Milne-Edwards, 1852 (Decapoda: Brachyura: Thoracotremata) from the NW of the Arabian Gulf, Iraq

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Abstract

Specimens of grapsoid crab *Metaplax indica* were collected from the intertidal zone of the lower reaches of Shatt Al-Arab at Fao region, NW of the Arabian Gulf, Basrah, Iraq 2012. A note on the morphological features of this species and a photograph is provided to confirm the identification of the crab.

Keywords Grapsoid crab; *Metaplax indica*; Brachyura; NW of the Arabian Gulf; Iraq.

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1 Introduction

Eleven species of the genus *Metaplax* described from the tropical and subtropical intertidal regions (Ng et al. 2008; Naderloo 2011). *Metaplax indica* is the only species of the genus so far known from the Arabian Gulf. Pretzmann (1971) described *Metaplax indicus occidentalis* as a subspecies from Bandar-Abbas on the Iranian coast of the Arabian Gulf. The subspecies is somewhat different from *M. indica* as described by H. Milne-Edwards (1852). Ng et al. (2008) retained the name as a valid species of *Metaplax*. The three characters which was cited by Pretzmann (1971) for *M. occidentalis*, are similar to what have been noticed in the present specimens from Iraq and are identical as well to the original description and depictions provided by H. Milne-Edwards (1852).

2 Materials and Methods

Specimens of the intertidal grapsoid crabs were collected during July 2012 from the mudflats at the intertidal zones of the Shatt Al-Arab at Fao region, north-western Arabian Gulf (Fig. 1). The specimens were collected by hand during the lowest tide, preserved in 70–80% ethanol, and deposited in the collections of the Marine Science Centre (MSC, 38), University of Basra.



Fig. 1 Sampling site Faw=Fao region (white dot).

3 Results

Order Decapoda

Family Varunidae Alcock, 1900

Subfamily Cyclograpsinae H. Milne-Edwards, 1853

Metaplex H. Milne-Edwards, 1852

Metaplex indica H. Milne-Edwards, 1852

(Fig. 2 A-D)

Metaplex indicus H. Milne-Edwards, 1852: 161, 1854: 165, pl. 11, figs. 2. — Alcock 1900: 431. — Apel 1994a: 43, pl. 3, 1996:

330, 2001: 117, 118. — Apel & Türkay 1999: 133.

Metaplex indica — Clayton 1986: 87, fig. 3. — Jones 1986: 161, pl. 47. — Tirmizi & Ghani 1996: 161, fig. 62. — Al-Khayat & Jones 1999: 58, 61. — Ng et al. 2008: 226 (list), Naderloo, 2011: 31, figs. 15a-e, 18c-d.

Metaplex indicus occidentalis — Pretzmann 1971: 478, pls. 1-3, figs. 1-4. — Titgen 1982: 254 (list).

Type locality. Indian Ocean (exact locality not known).

Material examined (msc, 38)

Carapace measurements are length × breadth respectively.

Four males (14.90 × 22.30), (14.70 × 21.50), (13.50 × 19.80), (14. 80 × 22.0)mm collected during July 2012

from the intertidal zones of the mudflats of lower reaches of Shatt Al-Arab at Fao.

4 Diagnosis

Carapace rectangular (Fig. 2A) wider than long (CB/CL = 1.49). Carapace regions distinct and well defined. Front short, about one-quarter maximum carapace breadth, gently deflexed. Anterolateral margin of carapace with 4 teeth (including exorbital tooth), smaller posteriorly; first, second nearly with same shape, nearly subquadrate; first largest, slightly lower than second; fourth very small, attached to former. Posterior surface of the carapace is gray.

Chelipeds somewhat large equal in size. Manus (Fig. 3C) robust, outer surface smooth; lower margin with scarce denticles; upper margin with very small granules. Fingers curved downwards, cutting edges with tubercular teeth; movable finger with 3 or 4 large teeth at proximal half.

Walking legs long, flattened; the second and the third longer than the first leg, fourth. Merus long, anterior margin slightly serrated; long setae densely on anterior margin, upper surface of proximal part of merus, distal part of carpus, whole propodus; last leg with more sparse setae; dactylus with sparse setae.

Male abdomen (Fig. 2B) the somites 3-5 fused, sutures only visible on lateral part; sixth somite longest, becoming wider distally; telson longer than broad.

G1 (Fig. 3D) moderately stout, gently curved outwards; sperm canal nearly straight.



Fig. 2 *Metaplax indica* H. Milne-Edwards, 1852, male (14.90 × 22.30 mm): A, posterior view of whole crab, male; B, male ventral view. Photos taken by Murtada D. Naser, Marine Science Centre.



Fig. 3 *Metaplex indica* H. Milne-Edwards, 1852, male (14.90 × 22.30 mm): C, cheliped of male, outer surface; D, dorsal surface (right first gonopod). Photos taken by Murtada D.Naser, Marine Science Centre.

Habitat: *M. indica* is restricted to the intertidal silty-mud zone of the banks of the lower reaches of Shatt Al-Arab, coexisting with *Macrophthalmus dentipes*.

Regional records: Arabian Gulf, Kuwait (Clayton 1986; Jones 1986), Saudi Arabia (Apel 1996), Qatar (Al-Khayat & Jones 1999), Iran (Pretzmann 1971), Gulf of Oman (Naderloo 2011), **Iraq** (the present study).

Geographical distribution: Northwestern Indian Ocean: Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Pakistan, Arabian Sea coast of India.

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