

OCCURRENCE OF A SPECIES OF *ELAPHOGNATHIA* (ISOPODA) ON THE FORESHORE OF VISAKHAPATNAM

ABSTRACT

A brief description of a species of *Elaphognathia* belonging to the family Gnathidae (Isopoda) and collected from Visakhapatnam, east coast of India is given here.

THE isopod family Gnathidae is little known from the Indian Seas and it represents an interesting group in which male, female and larva (Praniza) are all of different form, each with five pairs of ambulatory pereopods (Sars, 1899 ; Nayler, 1972). Literature on gnathids from this region reveals that a praniza and single male specimen of *Elaphognathia insolita* from Sri Lanka (Walter, 1885 ; Stebbing, 1905) and a single praniza from Kerala Coast (Pillai, 1954) are the only records. While engaged in studies on the phytal fauna of Visakhapatnam Coast, several specimens of male, female and larvae of an undetermined species of *Elaphognathia* Monad were encountered (Sarma, 1972). As the present specimens cannot be identified with

any of the known species of the family satisfactorily, a brief description of the specimens along with relevant figures is given here (Fig. 1).

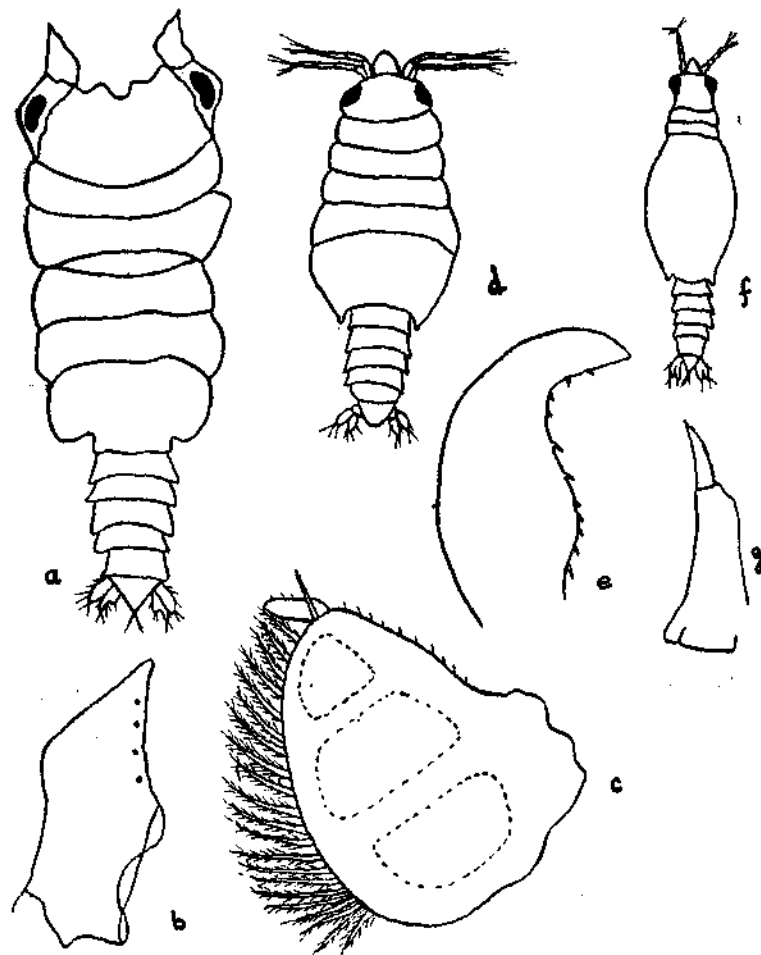


Fig. 1. *Elaphognathia* sp. : a. dorsal view of male (60 x) ; b. mandible of male (200 x) ; c. pylopod of male (240 x) ; d. dorsal view of female (60 x) ; e. mandible of female ; f. praniza (37.5 x) and g. mandible of praniza (500 x).

Males : 2.0 to 2.4 mm in length ; cephalosome quadrate, emarginated deeply between the mandibles at its anterior front ; rostral point practically absent ; mandibles large and located wide apart ; first pereopod modified as a gnathopod called pylopod covering mouth parts ventrally ; first two pereopodal segments are fused with cephalon ; metasome narrow, six segmented and terminating in a triangular telson bearing at its tip two setae.

Females : greyish ; fusiform, ranging from 1.4 to 1.7 mm in length ; cephalosome obtusely produced in front ; mandibles flattened and forceps-like ; mesosome elated ; metasome as in male.

Larval forms: fusiform body with a small head; length 2.0 to 2.3 mm; oral parts well developed and together form a rostrum-like structure; peraeonal segments 3-5 fused together and are elated.

The adult gnathids are known as freeliving benthic forms and the pranizas as ectoparasites on fish (Sars, 1899; Nayler, 1972). The pranizas are also occasionally taken in plankton hauls as they occasionally detach from the host and freely swim with the help of their well developed appendages (Sars, 1899; Nayler, 1972).

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