

ABNORMALITY IN THE RIGHT CHELA OF THE PORTUNID CRAB, *PORTUNUS PELAGICUS* LINNAEUS

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An abnormal male crab of *Portunus pelagicus* Linnaeus was obtained on 9th June, 1971 from the gill net (*nandu valai*) landings at Devipattinam (Palk Bay). The abnormality is noted on the right chela. A brief description of the specimen is given.

Large quantities of *Portunus pelagicus* are caught in gill nets (*nandu valai*) along the inshore waters of Palk Bay at Devipattinam between March and May and the crabs are got in small amounts in other periods of the year. A detailed study of the bionomics and life-history of this species was started early in June, 1970.

On 9th June, 1971, an abnormal male specimen was collected from the landing centre at Devipattinam (9° 28' 51" N., 78° 54' 00" E) and a brief description of it are as follows: weight when fresh 352.7 g., carapace width 166 mm, length 81 mm, left cheliped normal and 257 mm in length, left cheliped upto carpus 119 mm and the propodite (upto tip of thumb) 138 mm in length, right cheliped total length 229 mm, upto carpus 109 mm, and the propodite (upto tip of thumb) 111 mm.

The right cheliped is normal upto carpus and the palm (propodite) is narrow as compared to that of the left cheliped and slightly but distinctly bent outwards. The thumb and finger (dactylus) are narrow and curved outwards (Figs. 1 and 2). The right cheliped is well developed and functional and the abnormality in the chela may be intrinsic or it might have been caused following an accident in which the cheliped was injured by a falling stone. It is very likely that the abnormal condition is of intrinsic nature.

Earlier Noble (1964) reported abnormality in the case of the Portunid crab *Neptunus* (*Neptunus*) *sanguinolentus* Herbst where the crab possessed two additional thumbs on the left cheliped and James (1968) recorded a somewhat similar type of abnormality in *Portunus pelagicus* Linnaeus where two additional dactyli were present on the left cheliped. The present type of abnormality has

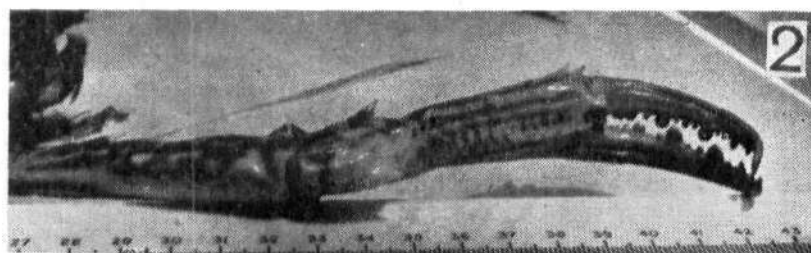
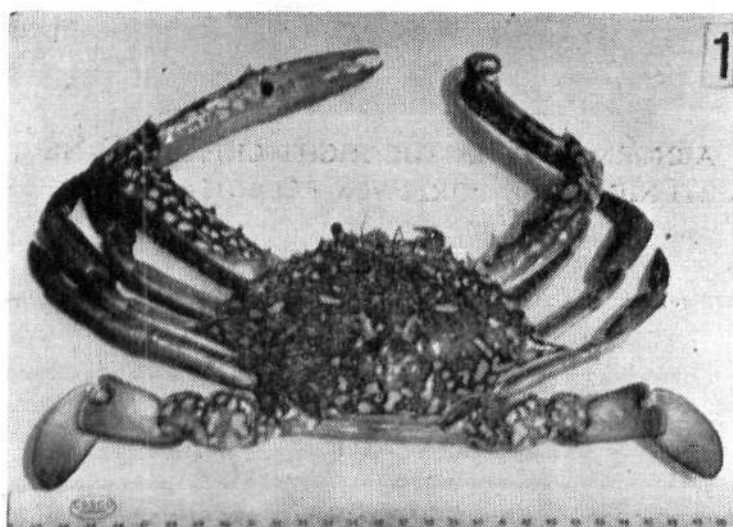


FIG. 1. Dorsal view of *Portunus pelagicus* Linnaeus showing abnormality in the right chela.

FIG. 2. Enlarged view of the right chela which is bent outwards.

not been reported so far and should be of interest. The specimen (C.M.F.R.I. Reg. No. 104) has been deposited in the Reference Collections of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute.

NOBLE, A. 1964. Abnormality in the portunid crab *Neptunus* (*Neptunus*) *sanguinolentus* Herbst. *J. mar. biol. Ass. India*, 6 (2):312-313.

JAMES, P. S. B. R. 1968. On an anomaly in the cheliped of the portunid crab, *Portunus pelagicus* Linnaeus. *Ibid.*, 8 (1):218-220 (1966).