

## Flat elbow crab spotted

During a routine field survey, two specimens were collected from the landing of the bottom set gillnet operated at a water depth of 6-7 m on a rocky substratum at Chepala Kancheru, Visakhapatnam on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2018. The specimen was identified as Flat Elbow Crab, *Aethra edentata* Edmondson, 1951. The length and width of the carapace varied from 52 mm to 54 mm and 62 mm to 65 mm respectively. The length of the abdomen ranged from 22 mm to 25 mm. The species is characterized by transversely oval-shaped carapace. The margin of the carapace is thin and slightly turned up, with seven lateral lobes, the closed suture lines being distinct. Minute punctae and granules roughen the intervening margin of the lobe. Presence of a few dispersed warts on the upper surface of the

carapace. Hepatic and lateral parts of the carapace are lowered, the gastric area raised, and distinct on either side of the midline, topped by a transverse row of warts. The cardiac region is elevated by a curved ridge, indistinguishably broken into five portions, the middle one the largest. The rostrum appears much flatter as the longitudinal median groove is shallower. The carapace is brownish with a violet tinge in fresh whereas whitish in preserved condition. The ventral side of the body and appendages are pale brown with a violet tint. Chelipeds equal, upper and lower borders carinate; merus smooth, lower border bicarinate. Carpus, superseding proximal end of propodus toothed on upper and outer borders. The inner surface of the palm and fingers is smooth and concave to conform to the surface of the carapace with which

they are in contact when at rest. The posterior margins of the chela are finely serrated, and quite uneven, but never with well-defined teeth. Oval spots of violet colour mark the outer surface of the palm and fingers. Walking legs are short and decrease in length from first to fourth. Abdomen with nearly parallel sides; segments, except terminal one, pitted and eroded, crossed transversely by ridges; terminal segment flat, surface marked by minute punctae.

The genus *Aethra* Latreille, 1816 is an Indo-Pacific parthenopid and currently consists of four valid extant species (*A. scruposa* (Linnaeus, 1764); *A. scutata* Smith, 1869; *A. edentata* Edmondson, 1951 and *A. seychellensis* Takeda, 1975) and one extinct species, *Aethra stalennyii* (Collins, 2023; Alex, 2018). The species *A. edentata*, commonly known as Flat elbow crab, belongs to the family Aethridae. Geographically, it is distributed in Indo-Pacific Oceans on sandy bottoms at depths between 1 and 30 m. Only species *A. scruposa* (Linnaeus, 1764) has been reported in India's Gulf of Mannar, the East coast of India, and Andaman waters. There is no report on the occurrence of *A. edentata* in Indian waters. This is the first record of the species from India's coastal and marine waters.



Dorsal view of *Aethra edentata* a) fresh sample b) preserved sample



Ventral view of *Aethra edentata* a) fresh sample b) preserved sample

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