

Record of inarticulate Brachiopoda, *Lingula* sp. from mangrove areas in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra and its unusual commercial exploitation

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The Brachiopoda or 'lamp shells' belong to an ancient phylum of filter feeding marine worms. They live inside a pair of shells much like the bivalve; however, brachiopods differ from bivalves in many ways. Their shells have a definite dorsal and ventral (upper and lower) half, while bivalves, which are molluscs, have left and right halves to their shells. The brachiopods are so different internally that they have been grouped under separate phylum. *Lingula* is a genus of brachiopods with about eleven species within the family lingulidae.

During October 2009, on a field visit to Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, it was observed that in the local fish

market *Lingula* sp. was being sold along with a host of other bivalve species. On enquiry, it was understood that this species is considered a delicacy by the locals and fetched a good price in the market. The meat inside the shell and the peduncle are both used for consumption. However, some people had some reservations on its consumption as it leads to some sort of acidic problems later. The local fishermen hand pick them from nearby mangrove areas during lowtide and market them in the local market in fresh condition.

Samples from the market were brought to the laboratory for further biological analysis. The length

was measured using a digital caliper and total body weight (± 0.01 g) was determined using an electronic balance after the specimens were dried on blotting paper. The *Lingula* sp. was brown-bright green in colour (Fig. 1). Fifty three specimens were measured for individual length and weight. The length ranged from 45 mm to 58 mm with the corresponding total weight ranging from 4.251 g to 10.089 g with the maximum number of animals in 50-54 mm size group. Specimens were dissected to study the food items but could not ascertain them as they are filter feeders feeding exclusively on detritus from mangrove areas. Further

investigations are to be undertaken on this important resource.

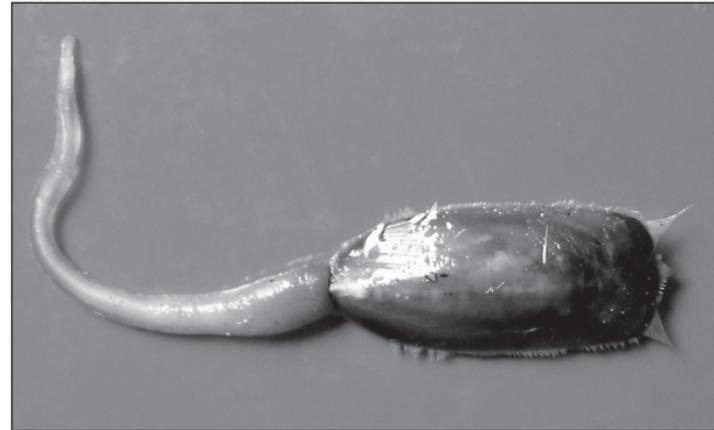


Fig. 1. Lamp shell *Lingula* sp.