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urn:lsid:zoobank.org:pub:755EB7B6-46AC-4107-ACAE-0EDE3EEFF4CC

A new species of *Macrobrachium* (Decapoda, Palaemonidae) from Vamanapuram River, Southern Kerala, India

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Abstract

Macrobrachium prabhakarani new species is described from the Vamanapuram River, Kerala, S. India. The species shares certain characters with *M. scabriculum* and *M. madhusoodani*, while it differs remarkably from these two species in distinctive diagnostic characters: rostral formula 12–14/1–2 with 5–7 postorbital teeth; carapace smooth with distal end of rostrum directed forwards; chelae with nine denticles in the movable and six in the proximal part of the immovable finger. In larger second chelate leg, merus is longer than carpus and ischium, and propodus is the longest podomere. Carpus and ischium, equal in length and they are the shortest podomeres. Merus and dactylus are also of equal length.

Key words: taxonomy, Palaemonidae, *Macrobrachium*, Kerala, India

Introduction

The infraorder Caridea consists of approximately 3438 described species in 389 genera (De Grave *et al.* 2011) and occur in all aquatic habitats on the planet and a total of 655 freshwater species are presently known. Among the freshwater families, the two most diverse species are the nearly exclusively freshwater family Atyidae and sub-family Palaemoninae of family Palaemonidae (981 species, De Grave *et al.* 2011). The numerically dominant genus *Macrobrachium*, is restricted to fresh and brackish water (De Grave *et al.* 2008). Most of the members of the genus are widely distributed and require specific saline concentrations to complete their larval development; others are land locked species with limited distribution and complete their entire life cycle in freshwater (Holthuis L.B., 1950; Johnson D.S., 1973). So far, more than 200 species have been described around the world and there are more to be described.

During a survey for the study of Palaemonid prawns along the southwest coast of India, the present authors collected several species from the Vamanapuram River (>50 m above Mean Sea Level), Kerala, India. Among these, 7 specimens showed morphometric and meristic characters that did not conform to any other known species of *Macrobrachium* and these are hence described as a new species, herein.

Material and methods

Among the 7 specimens, 5 are males and 2 are females (one ovigerous). One male specimen is described here as the holotype (no.1, table 1). The holotype and paratype are deposited in the faunal depository of the Zoological Survey of India, Western Ghats Regional Station, Kozhikode, Kerala, India. All length measurements are in mm. and weight in grams.