

A new cuttlefish, *Sepia filibrachia* n. sp., from the South China Sea with a redescription of *Sepia mestus* Gray, 1849 (Cephalopoda: Sepiidae) from eastern Australia

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Abstract

Based on two beachwashed cuttlebones, *Sepia mestus* Gray, 1849 was described in a single sentence. The whole animal remained largely unknown until partial descriptions were published by Adam and Rees (1966) and Lu (1998). Though well known by scuba divers as the ‘Common Sydney Cuttlefish’, or the ‘Red Cuttle’, the lack of an adequate description in the scientific literature has made identification and comparison with other species difficult. The discovery of some supposed *S. mestus* in the South China Sea (Khromov 1987) prompted the redescription of *S. mestus*. Khromov’s specimens, in addition to some more of the same species from Taiwan, were found to belong to a new species that is described here as *S. filibrachia* n. sp. It appears that *S. mestus* is most likely an eastern Australian endemic.

Key words: Cephalopoda, Sepiidae, Sepiidae, *Sepia mestus*, *Sepia filibrachia*, taxonomy, new species

Introduction

Cuttlefish (Sepiidae) are small to medium-sized cephalopods distributed on continental shelves and slopes throughout most of the world’s oceans. Australian waters are richly endowed with over one-third of the world’s cuttlefish species (Reid *et al.*, in press). Though our understanding is improving, cuttlefish taxonomy has been hampered in the past though the inadequacy of early descriptions, many of which were based on beachwashed cuttlebones. Quite often the soft parts of the animal were unknown. This is the case with the eastern Australian species *Sepia mestus* Gray, 1849, which was described from two cuttlebones. The collection locality is given only as ‘Australia’ and no illustrations accompanied the brief description. Hoyle (1886) provided the first drawings of the