

First record of the synaxid lobster
***Palinurellus wieneckii* (de Man, 1881)**
(Crustacea, Decapoda, Palinuridea) from Sri Lanka

Peter K. L. Ng*

Abstract

The rare synaxid furry lobster, *Palinurellus wieneckii* (De Man, 1881) (Palinuridea) is recorded from Sri Lanka for the first time. The male specimen, one of the largest known thus far of the species, was obtained from coral reefs in the Trincomalee area. This is also the first record of the family Synaxidae Bate, 1881, from Sri Lankan waters.

In June 1992, the author had an opportunity to visit Ananda Pathirana, a tropical fish exporter from Colombo, whose divers made regular collections from Trincomalee, on the northeastern coast of Sri Lanka. Among his recently collected specimens was a rare synaxid lobster, *Palinurellus wieneckii* (De Man, 1881).

Palinurellus wieneckii (popularly called the furry lobster) is known only from a handful of specimens from the Indo-West Pacific. It has been reported from Pulau Tikas (off Bengkulu, southwestern Sumatra) (type locality), the Red Sea, South Africa, Mauritius, Phuket (Thailand), Ryukyus (Japan), Philippines, Borneo, New Guinea, Caroline Islands, New Caledonia, New Hebrides and Hawaii (see Holthuis, 1991; Ng, 1992). Its presence in Sri Lankan waters is thus not unexpected.

Pathirana remarked that he has never had this species before although he has been in the aquarium trade for more than 25 years. One of his divers commented that it was only the second specimen he had ever seen. It would appear that *Palinurellus wieneckii* prefers deeper waters where divers for the aquarium trade are only now venturing (C. Martenstyn, pers. comm.) In Sri Lanka, gill nets and fish traps are not usually used to trap specimens, most of the collections being done by hand net, and at night. Holthuis (1991) noted that *Palinurellus wieneckii* appears to be nocturnal in habits, occurring in depths of between 9 and 27 metres.

The Sri Lankan specimen of *P. wieneckii* is a male 60.0 mm (carapace length) and 138.0 mm (total length). This is one of the largest specimens of the species known thus far. The live colour is a uniform dull orange all over, and the hairs on the carapace are golden brown. The dorsal surface of the carapace has algae growing on it. No pleopods are present on the first abdominal somite. The colour of the species appears to change with age. Smaller specimens of *P. wieneckii* are bright red (see Ng, 1992) whereas the present specimen (see Fig. 1) is a dull orange. An account of the taxonomic history of *Palinurellus wieneckii* can be found in Ng (1992).

* Department of Zoology, National University of Singapore, Kent Ridge, Singapore 0511, Republic of Singapore.



Figure 1. *Palinurellus wieneckii*, male, 138.0 mm (total length), coral reef, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan specimen of *Palinurellus wieneckii* is now preserved in the Zoological Reference Collection, Department of Zoology, National University of Singapore.

Acknowledgements

The author is very grateful to Ananda Pathirana for kindly allowing him access to his specimens and generously donating numerous crustacean specimens for study, including *Palinurellus wieneckii*.

Literature cited

- Holthuis, L. B. 1991. FAO species catalogue. Marine lobsters of the world: an annotated and illustrated catalogue of species of interest to fisheries known to date. FAO Fisheries Synopsis, No. 125, Vol. 13, 292 pp.
- Ng, P. K. L. 1992. The rare Indo-Pacific furry lobster, *Palinurellus wieneckii* (Family Synaxidae). Nature Malaysiana, in press.