P23 - First records of species of *Ligophorus* Euzet et Suriano, 1977 (Ancyrocephalidae) from the Sea of Oman

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To date, 51 nominal species of *Ligophorus* Euzet & Suriano, 1977 are known, most of which have been described from the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and their associated seas. Although eight species have recently been described from the Red Sea, along with a similar number from the Strait of Malacca, and one species is known from freshwaters in Iran, there are no published records of species directly attributed to *Ligophorus* from the Indian Ocean itself. The Sea of Oman, which is an arm of the Arabian Sea and thus forms part of the Indian Ocean, lies between regions from which representatives of this genus are already known. Consequently, data on the occurrence of *Ligophorus* spp. in this sea are of great interest for a better understanding the phylogeography of this genus. About 12 species of the Mugilidae inhabit the Sea of Oman; some of these are widespread throughout the world's oceans, whereas others are endemic to this region. Among the mullets investigated in this study, *Crenimugil crenilabris* (Forsskål) and *Moolgarda seheli* (Forsskål) occur in coastal waters throughout much of the Indo-Pacific region. The former is infected by *Ligophorus bykhowskyi* Dmitrieva et al., 2012 and *L. zhangi* Dmitrieva et al., 2012, which have been described from the same host in the Red Sea, whereas two innominate species occur in the latter host, both of them previously reported from the South China Sea off Vietnam as *Ligophorus* sp. 9 (Gerasev et al., 2011) on the same host species and *Ligophorus* sp. 15 (Dmitrieva et al., 2012) on *Liza affinis* (Günther). These monogeneans appear accompany their hosts throughout much of their distribution. Moreover, all four of the above-mentioned *Ligophorus* spp. simultaneously parasitise specimens of *Liza tricuspidens* (Smith), which occurs off the Atlantic and Indian Ocean coasts of Africa. The occurrence of this mullet in the Indian Ocean together with the other two host species of these monogeneans would appear to be conducive to the host-switching of *Ligophorus* spp. between them. Whereas only one species of *Ligophorus* is found on *Oedalechilus labiosus* (Valenciennes), which is widely distributed not only in the Indian but also in the Pacific Ocean, this species is new and has unique morphological characters. The fifth of the mullets examined, *Liza persicus* (Senou, Randall & Okiyama), has the most limited distribution, occurring only in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman. However the three *Ligophorus* spp. which are found on this fish, namely *L. mamaevi* Dmitrieva et al., 2012, *L. bipartitus* Dmitrieva et al., 2012 and *L. surianoae* Dmitrieva et al., 2012, have also been reported from *Liza carinata* in the Red Sea. It should be noted that the specimens from the Sea of Oman identified as *Ligophorus mamaevi* have some minor differences in the shape of the copulatory organ compared with the original description and may prove to be representatives of a new species. The type-host of these three species also occurs in the Sea of Oman but has not yet been examined. The first results of our study of the fauna of *Ligophorus* in the Sea of Oman have shown that it is rich in terms of both the quantitative and the qualitative nature of its composition. Eight *Ligophorus* spp. have been found on the five mugilids, including one new species, five species of which are also reported from the Red Sea and two species from the South China Sea. Moreover, seven of them are recorded on new host species. Thus the data obtained in this study significantly enhance our knowledge of the distribution and specificity of members of this genus.

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