

ON AN UNUSUAL CATCH OF PORTUNID CRAB  
*CHARYBDIS (CHARYBDIS) LUCIFERA* FABRICIUS AT  
SASSON DOCK, BOMBAY

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ABSTRACT

During the second fortnight of April 1979 an estimated catch of more than 30,000 crabs of the species *Charybdis (Charybdis) lucifera*, Fabricius was landed by trawlers at Sassoon Dock. The details of the unusual landing together with important biological observations are presented.

The occurrence in large quantities of *Charybdis (Charybdis) lucifera* Fabricius has not been reported so far. Chhapgar (1957) has recorded this species from Bombay. His collection, however, confined to a male specimen only. The total number of this species landed in April 1979 was estimated at 37584, from 60 units operating at a depth range of 40-50 m using 18 m trawl nets.

Stephenson (1972) has pointed out the close resemblance of this species with *Charybdis (Charybdis) annulata*. However, the species can be easily identified in the field from *C. (C.) annulata* by the presence of two large white spots on either branchial region of which the outer spots are comparatively smaller in size. The circular purple and creamy bands seen on the legs and chelipeds of *C. (C.) annulata* are absent in *C. (C.) lucifera*. The anterior abdominal appendages of male *C. (C.) lucifera* are somewhat sharply bent towards the tip unlike in *C. (C.) annulata*.

Females dominated the catch, 25% of them were in berried condition. The specimens ranged from 38-60 mm carapace length and 55-96 mm carapace breadth. The largest specimen was a male with a carapace breadth of 96 mm. The number of eggs in a fully berried female was estimated at 1,20,000. The diameter varied from 1.4 to 2.4 micro divisions.

The catch was directly auctioned at the landing centre, the price ranging from Rs. 4 to 5 kg. The low price in comparaisn with other portunids of commercial value like *Portunus pelagicus* and *P. sanguinolentus* was perhaps due to reluctance of customers to purchase species not familiar.

The sudden occurrence of this species suggest the probability of a potential bed in this area, inviting further exploration. As the species grow to a large size and compare favourably with other commercial varieties it is likely to find consumer acceptance and higher prices in due course. The high fecundity also indicates the possibility of a maintainable fishery for this crab off Bombay coast.

The author wishes to thank Dr. M. J. George, Senior Scientist, for kindly going through the manuscript and suggesting modifications. Thanks are also due to Shri. K. S. Sundaram, Junior Scientist, for his help.

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