ON THE OCCURRENCE OF THE PENAEID PRAWN

*Penaeus japonicus* Bate in Hooghly Estuary

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**ABSTRACT**

A male specimen of *Penaeus japonicus* Bate caught off Sagardwip, Sundarbans, is reported, being the second report on its occurrence so far from the east coast of India.

While observing the local market at Kakdwip, 24-Parganas, West Bengal, the authors came across a single male specimen of the prawn *Penaeus japonicus* Bate, of rare occurrence in this region, on December 8, 1982, which forms the basis of the present communication.

In appearance the *P. japonicus* somewhat resembled *P. monodon* Fabricius in body contour and the reddish-yellow bands of coloration, but the bands were more in number in the present specimen and slightly varied in their pattern of arrangement from the latter. It measured 10.9 cm in length, characterised by
well-developed petasma, telson armed with 3 pairs of spinules, adrostral carina reaching almost to the posterior border of the carapace and rostrum with single ventral tooth, and accordingly determined as *P. japonicus* Bate, following George (1969) and Kurian and Sebastian (1982).

*Penaeus japonicus* is known to be widely distributed throughout the greater part of the Indo-Pacific region from Africa to Fiji. However, in India, it occurs along Madras coast and on the west coast, especially in Bombay (Kurian and Sebastian, 1982). It is of small fishery importance in Madras area, especially in Pulicat Lake in post-monsoon months. In Bombay area this species is available in small numbers.

Considering *Penaeus canaliculatus* var. *Japonicus* Bate as a synonym, Alcock (1906) reported *P. canaliculatus* Oliver from Hoogly delta, collected by Bengal Pilot Service. This has subsequently been determined as *P. japonicus* and has been kept in the Crustacea section, Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta. It appears, therefore, after a lapse of 78 years, *P. japonicus* is reported herein for the second time from Hooghly estuary.

On enquiry it has been revealed that the prawn under report was caught by fixed bag-net near lower Sagardwip region (Approx. latitude 21°39'N and longitude 88°04'E). Since our sustained search for more specimens of *P. japonicus* was unsuccessful, it is presumed that this species occurs only rarely in the Hooghly estuary.

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