

ON THE OCCURRENCE OF MITHRAX (MITHRAX) TORTUGAE RATHBUN (CRUSTACEA: BRACHYURA: MAJIDAE) ON THE BRAZILIAN CONTINENTAL SHELF

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ABSTRACT: Specimens of the spider crab considered by FORNERIS and FREITAS (1983) as *Mithrax* (*Mithrax*) *pleuracanthus* Stimpson prove to be *Mithrax* (*Mithrax*) *tortugae* RATHBUN. This record for the Brazilian coast enlarges the species distribution to the South Atlantic Ocean. A photographic illustration of the species is also presented.

RESUMEN: El reexamen de ejemplares del sudoeste del Brasil considerados por FORNERIS y FREITAS (1983) como *Mithrax* (*Mithrax*) *pleuracanthus* STIMPSON, muestra que estos deben ser referidos como *Mithrax* (*Mithrax*) *tortugae* RATHBUN. El registro de *M. tortugae* para el litoral Brasileño amplía la distribución de esta especie para el Atlántico Sur. Una fotografía de la especie redescrita se presenta como ilustración.

INTRODUCTION

FORNERIS and FREITAS (1983) recorded *Mithrax* (*Mithrax*) *pleuracanthus* STIMPSON, 1871 for the Brazilian continental shelf based on material from São Sebastião, São Paulo (23° 48' S; 45° 23' W). No material of *Mithrax pleuracanthus*, for comparison, was available to these authors at that time.

A comparative study including specimens of *M. pleuracanthus* from off Georgia (31° 23' 12"N; 80° 53' 12"W), (USNM 232212; transfer to USU - 0268); from Tabasco and Campeche coasts, Mexico, (Secretaria de Marina; Oficina de Biología Marina, lots: 8104- 13; 8104- 17; 7808. 1a and 8108- 15) and the material studied by FORNERIS and FREITAS (*op. cit.*) (MZUSP- 8064, 4568, 4569 and 5309), showed that the specimens from Brazil cannot be assigned to *Mithrax* (*Mithrax*) *pleuracanthus* STIMPSON, 1871.

The specimens considered by FORNERIS and FREITAS (1983) as *M. pleuracanthus* prove to be *Mithrax* (*Mithrax*) *tortugae* RATHBUN, 1920. This conclusion was enforced by comparison of specimens (two males) of *M. tortugae* from the Caribbean Sea (USNM- 233595 and 13279). Additional specimens coming from Espirito Santo (MNRJ- MD- 822), and Rio de Janeiro

(MNRJMD- 821,982,983 and USMN- 229985) look the same. Additionally, AUSTIN B. WILLIAMS has compared the two above mentioned males from it Caribbean with the holotype of *Mithrax tortugae* RATHBUN (USNM- 50442).

M. tortugae is now reported for the first time for the Brazilian continental shelf. Earlier it was only known from the Caribbean and the north coast of South America (Colombia).

Abbreviations: USNM- United States National Museum (Natural History, Washington); MNRJ- Museu Nacional do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro; MZUSP= Museu de Zoologia da Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo; USU= Coleção Carcinológica da Universidade Santa Ursula.

Mithrax (*Mithrax*) *tortugae* RATHBUN
(Fig. 1)

Mithrax tortugae RATHBUN, 1920: 23 (type locality: Tortugas type: Cat. Nº. 50442, SUSMN); RODRIGUEZ, 1980: 288.

Mithrax (*Mithrax*) *tortugae* RATHBUN, 1925: 417, pl. 147, fig. 2; VELEZ, 1977: 130, fig. 18; VELEZ, 1979: 155.

Mithrax (Mithrax) pleuracanthus; FORNERIS and FREITAS, 1983: 155, fig. 1 and 2.

DIAGNOSIS: Metabranhial region smooth. Row of small tubercles along the postlateral margin of the carapace absent. Carpus of the cheliped smooth.

DESCRIPTION: Width of the carapace much more pronounced than its length. Gastric and cardiac regions well delimited. Anterior width of the gastric region twice the posterior one or near by so. Mesogastric region with a row of five tubercles (inconspicuous in adults, but easily distinguishable in juveniles). Mesobranhial region with three tubercles. Smooth metabranhial region, row of small tubercles along the postlateral margin with four spines, excluding the external orbital tooth. Fourth lateral spine recurved forward. Short rostral horns V-shaped sinus. Circular orbit, supraorbital margin with two small tubercles, suborbital one with a tubercle as pronounced as the rostral horns. Internal margin of the ischium of the third maxilliped, toothed and hairy. Long exognath, sharply distal. Strong, smooth (excepting merus), long chelipeds. Carpus, smooth, spherical. Merus tuberculated on the dorsal face, the internal margin with two pronounced tubercles. Dactylus of the ambulatory legs hairy.

Geographical distribution.- Bahamas, Florida Keys, Belize, Colombia, Curacao, Trinidad, Brasil (Espírito Santo, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo).

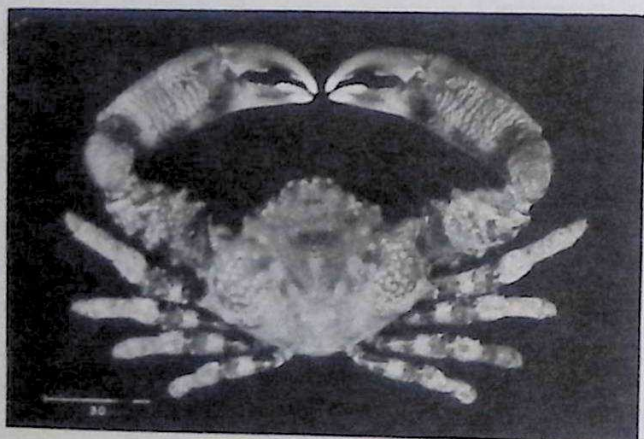


Fig 1. *Mithrax (Mithrax) tortugae* Rathbun, dorsal view, Ilha da Mãe.

Material. BELIZE viz. Carrie Bow Cay, J. NORRIS col., 25. iv. 1977, 1♂ (USNM-233595)

TRINIDAD Gulf of Paria, Chacachare Island, Rusts Bay, J. M. STONLEY col., iii 1971, 1♂ (USNM-139279)

BRAZIL Espírito Santo: 18° 06' S: 35° 04' W, 3.iv.1974, 1♂ (MNRJ- MD-822)

Rio de Janeiro: Cabo Frio, Praia das Conchas w. Zwink and L. F. Reis col., 4-7. 1985, 2♂.

(MNRJ-MD-821); Ilhas Mari-cas, M.S. TAVARES col., 26.iv. 1985, 1♂ (MNRJ-MD-983), 1♂ (USMN-229985); Itaipu, Ilha da Mãe, M.S. TAVARES col., 6.i.1983, 2♂ (MNRJ-MD-982).

São Paulo: Ubatuba, 1983, 1♀ (MZUSP-8064); Canal de São Sebastião, J.C. FREITAS col., 1981, 3♂, 1♀ (MZUSP-4568); idem, 2♂ (MZUSP-4569); São Sebastião, J.C. FREITAS col., 1981 3♂, 1♀ (MZUSP-5309).

DISCUSSION

Mithrax tortugae Rathbun is similar to *Mithrax pleuracanthus* STIMPSON. However, the species is easily distinguishable by the following features: (1) row of tubercles along the postlateral margin of the carapace (absent in *tortugae*, conspicuous in *pleuracanthus*) (2) metabranhial region (smooth in *tortugae*, tuberculated in *pleuracanthus*): (3) dorsal face of the carpus of the cheliped (smooth in *tortugae* - juveniles included -, tuberculated in *pleuracanthus*): Juveniles of *M. pleuracanthus* show slight tubercles on the dorsal face of the carpus.

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