ON THE OCCURRENCE OF THE HYDROID *OBELIA COMMISSURALIS* McCRADY ALONG WEST COAST OF INDIA

ABSTRACT

Obelia commissuralis McCrady, a hydroid from the thoracic appendages of the crab *Matuta lunaris* (Forskal) is recorded for the first time from Beypore estuary, west coast of India. A brief account of the species is given here.

ON 11-1-65 at Beypore estuary a decapod Crab, *Matuta lunaris* (Forskal) was noticed with a heavy infestation of hydroid colonies along the bases of its thoracic appendages. The hydroid was identified as *Obelia commissuralis* McCrady. This is the first record of it from the West Coast of India and the second report for the Indian region, the first being from *Balanus* shells at Royapuram beach, Madras reported by Mammen (1965). Earlier records are from Charleston harbour (McCrady, 1858), Woods Hole region (Nutting, 1901) and West Coast of North America (Fraser, 1937). The above records of *O. commissuralis* points to its World-wide distribution in tropical and subtropical waters.

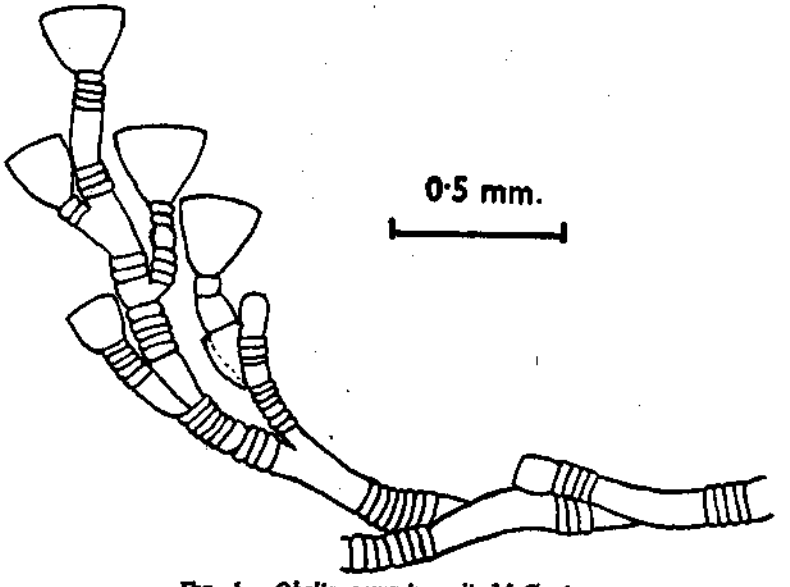

FIG. 1. *Obelia commissuralis* McCrady

It occurs attached to littoral animals (Mammen, 1965), seaweeds of various sorts or stones (Agassiz, 1862) and also in docks and on floating timbers (Nutting, 1901).

Mammen (1965, p. 14, fig. 41) while describing *O. commissuralis* McCrady stated that the ' Hydrothecal peduncle alternate ' but it does not agree with the figure given by him . Further he mentions that ' Nutting's statement that the colonies are dichotomously branched is neither corroborated by accounts of other workers nor by his own figures '. Later, in the remarks to the said species Mammen (op. cit.) pointed out that ' the present specimens agree in general with the descriptions and figures of Nutting (1901, 1915) except in the shape of the hydrotheca '. Actually the branching of *O. commissuralis* does not exhibit the alternate or dichotomous branching and the present specimens under study agree with the figure drawn by Mammen (1965, fig. 41). However, Mammen (1965, p. 14, fig. 39) described another species, *Obelia geniculata* Linnaeus figured it with alternate hypothecal peduncles but did not mention this in the text of *O. geniculata*. This is probably an inadvertent omission and calls for a correction. Hence the statement ' Hydrothecal peduncle alternate ' and the footnote to it has to be read along with *O. geniculata* instead of *O. commissuralis*.

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