

OCCURRENCE OF A VERY EARLY STAGE OF *PARAPEGASUS NATANS* (LINNAEUS) FROM THE NEAR-SHORE WATERS OF PORTO NOVO, SOUTH INDIA

Three species of Pegasidae have so far been recorded from the Indian waters, viz., *Pegasus draconis* (L) by Day (1889) from the Andamans, *Parapegasmus natans* (L) by Johnstone (1904) and by Munro (1955) from Ceylon, and *Parapegasmus volans*

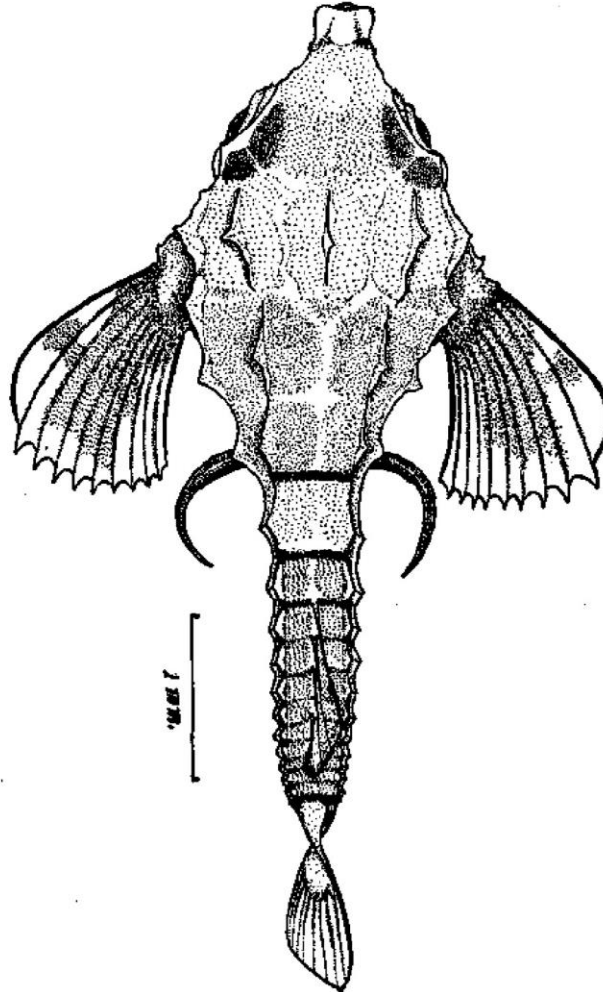


FIG. 1. Showing larva of *Parapegasmus natans* (L)

(L) by Munro (1955), also from Ceylon. Jones and Pantulu (1958) recorded 23 post-larval stages of *Parapegasmus natans* (L) from the Orissa coast. Of these, the earliest stage was reported to be 7.88 mm. in length.

The present note relates to the find of an earlier stage of *Parapegasmus natans* (L) than has been known hitherto. A single larva of this species was obtained in the tow-net collection of plankton, taken at the 7-fathom line off Porto Novo, on the 23rd of July, 1961.

The measurements of the specimen are given below :

Total length	Head	Snout	Eye	Snout to Dorsal	Snout to Ventral
6.00 mm.	2.00 mm.	0.32 mm.	0.13 mm.	3.49 mm.	2.84 mm.

The larva now recorded, shows an overall resemblance to the stage I of the specimen described by Jones and Pantulu (1958). However, the following characteristics of the larva collected from Porto Novo, are worth mentioning.

The general colour of the specimen, when alive, is dark brown. The tip of the upper jaw is flexed upwards and this makes the lower jaw appear longer when viewed dorsally. The body is covered with bony plates ankylosed on the trunk. When the specimen is viewed dorsally, there is a short ridge comprised of three plates between the base of the pectoral fin and the posterior margin of the eye. This probably corresponds to the 'small bony frill immediately behind the eyes', observed by Jones and Pantulu in stage I of the specimens collected by them. The caudal fin in the present specimen is devoid of any pigmentation and is very transparent, unlike what has been reported by Jones and Pantulu in the stage I of their specimen. The eyes are prominent and pigmented.

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