

**Yet another record of *Charybdis hellerii* (A. Milne Edwards)  
(Crustacea, Decapoda) from the Northeast of Brazil**

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ABSTRACT. The presence of *Charybdis hellerii* (A. Milne Edwards, 1867), an Indo-Pacific species, in one of the estuaries of the State of Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil is reported here.

KEY WORDS. Crustacea, Decapoda, *Charybdis hellerii*

*Charybdis hellerii* (A. Milne Edwards, 1867) (Crustacea, Decapoda), a species extensively distributed in the Indo-Pacific region and often fished as a commercial catch, has been extending its distribution into the Atlantic Ocean in recent years. Based on the publications available (GÓMEZ & MARTÍNEZ-IGLESIAS 1990; LEMAITRE 1995; TAVARES & MENDONÇA 1996; MANTELATTO & DIAS 1999), it can now be confirmed that the species has established itself in the Western Atlantic region.

LEMAITRE (1995) and TAVARES & MENDONÇA (1996), while reporting on the occurrence of the species in the Florida region and Brazilian coastal waters respectively, have attempted to trace the chronological sequence of the invasion of the species into the western Atlantic region. While the species has been known to occur in the Caribbean waters (GÓMEZ & MARTÍNEZ-IGLESIAS 1990; CAMPOS & TURKAY 1989) and Venezuela (GÓMEZ & MARTÍNEZ-IGLESIAS 1990) from 1987, its presence along the Brazilian coastal waters has been confirmed only recently (CALADO 1996; CARQUEIJA & GOUVÊA 1996; TAVARES & MENDONÇA 1996 and MANTELATTO & DIAS 1999). LEMAITRE (1995) and TAVARES & MENDONÇA (1996) have attempted to explain the mechanism of introduction of this exotic species and are of the opinion that the species had its entry into the region facilitated through the movement of the ships. The species was known to have reached the Mediterranean region as early as 1978 (POR 1978) where it is considered to have established itself. The fact that NEGREIROS-FRANZOZO (1996) and TAVARES & MENDONÇA (1996) have been able to collect ovigerous females from the São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, regions respectively, shows that the species can breed successfully in this region and hence can be added to its faunistic list.

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During the recent survey of the decapod fauna of the sublittoral region in the estuaries of the Rio Grande do Norte State, Brazil initiated in 1997, three juvenile specimens of *C. hellerii*, a male measuring 13.5 mm (carapace width -c.w.)/9.7 mm (carapace length -c.l.), and two females measuring 13 mm (c.w)/9.4 mm (c.l.) and 17.3 mm (c.l.)/12 mm (c.l.) from the estuary of Galinhos (5°07'S, 36°15'W), and a recently moulted male of similar size from an estuary close to Macau (05°06'S, 36°34'W) were collected.

The present finding together with the earlier observations establishes a continuous distribution for the species along the western Atlantic region from Florida to São Paulo through the Caribbean region. It is, however, quite likely that the introduction of the Brazilian population must have taken place independent of that in the Caribbean as suggested by GÓMEZ & MARTÍNEZ-IGLESIAS (1990) – taking into consideration the pattern of the flow of the Brazilian current – in which case the species might have been introduced initially in the northeast from where it has subsequently spread to the southern part of Brazil through larval transport.

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