



A new species of *Palaemon* (Crustacea, Decapoda, Palaemonidae) from West Africa, with a re-description of *Palaemon maculatus* (Thallwitz, 1892)

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Abstract

A new species of *Palaemon*, *P. powelli* **sp. nov.**, is described from tropical West Africa. The new species is characterised by the shape and proportions of its chelae, the shape of the rostrum, spacing between dorsal rostral teeth and a poorly developed grooming brush on the fifth pereopod. *Palaemon maculatus* (Thallwitz, 1892) is redescribed and can be separated from other eastern Atlantic members of the genus by the form of the rostrum, the proportions of the segments of pereopod 2 and the large number of rows of setae in the grooming brush on the fifth pereopod.

Key words: Crustacea, Decapoda, Palaemonidae, *Palaemon*, West Africa

Introduction

The known tropical West African marine and brackish water palaemonine fauna currently consists of 7 species in 5 genera (Holthuis 1951), with an additional, undescribed species being mentioned as long ago as 1983 (Powell 1983). Several freshwater species of *Macrobrachium* Bate 1868 also occur in the region, some of which could perhaps be found in oligohaline waters. Three species of *Palaemon* Weber 1795 are reported from the area, one of which is currently considered endemic to the region. The other two species recorded from West Africa, *Palaemon elegans* Rathke 1837 and *P. serratus* (Pennant 1777), are assumed to have large geographic ranges in the eastern Atlantic. *Palaemon elegans* is reported from south-western Norway to southern Namibia, including the Mediterranean and the Black Sea; whilst *P. serratus* occurs from Denmark southwards to Cape Blanco (Western Sahara) (Holthuis 1951). The only West African endemic species so far recorded, *Palaemon maculatus* (Thallwitz 1892), occurs from Liberia (Rathbun 1900; Johnston 1906) southwards to southern Angola (Balss 1916).

In reports on the decapod crustaceans of the Niger Delta, Powell (1983; 1985) mentions an undescribed species of *Palaemon* occurring in the region based upon extensive samples in the years 1975–1980. In the earlier paper (Powell 1983), a brief diagnosis of the species was given, along with the vernacular name ‘Blackegg prawn’ and the suggestion it should be referred to as *Palaemon* species A, of Powell, 1982 until a description becomes available. The intent to produce such a description was announced by (Powell 1985), but did not appear by the time of his death in 1998 and it is unlikely to appear posthumously. Based on a series of specimens deposited in Naturalis (Leiden) and in the Natural History Museum (London) the species is described here, as part of an ongoing revision of *Palaemon*, and dedicated to its discoverer, C.B. Powell. As no full description of the other endemic West African *Palaemon* species, *P. maculatus* exists, the opportunity is taken to rectify this and it is redescribed herein.