

On the occurrence of *Stylocheilus longicauda* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1825) (Heterobranchia, Aplysiidae) in the Persian Gulf

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Stylocheilus longicauda (Quoy & Gaimard, 1825), a member of long-tailed sea hares (the genera *Stylocheilus* Gould, 1852 and *Bursatella* Blainville, 1817), is a pelagic species that almost associated with drifting algae. Its distribution range is limited to the pantropical region (Chinnadurai *et al.*, 2014; Gosliner, Valdez, & Behrens, 2018). It is clearly distinguished from the other species of this genus by having blue spots that circled by red organ bands and also by the lack of longitudinal lines (Yonow, 2008; Chinnadurai *et al.*, 2014; Gosliner, Valdez, & Behrens, 2018). Based on the occurrence of the members of this genus in the adjacent waters (Yonow, 2012; Chinnadurai *et al.*, 2014), we except the presence of some congeners in the Persian Gulf, a subtropical region with suitable conditions and habitats for the sea hares (Naderloo, 2017). In previous study, Rezaei *et al.* (2016) reported *S. striatus* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1832) from the Persian Gulf.

During a fieldwork on investigation of nudibranch diversity in the Persian Gulf on November 2019, a single specimen of a sea hare was collected near shore of Hadkan port (28°17'14.3"N 51°01'15.5"E) in Bushehr Province. The specimen was found on the green algal filament, attached to a cage structure (aquaculture facilities) in the depth of 1.5 m. After photography of fresh animal, the specimen was preserved in the 96% ethanol.

Based on the following morphological charactres, the specimen was identified as *S. longicauda*: body elongate, bright yellow and slightly translocate; body soft and smooth; with several bright blue spots on the mantle, which surrounded by orang red rings; bearing several branched papillae in different size on body surface; presence of a slightly long tail; rhinophores and oral tentacles are tubular, same color pattern as the body color; body (4 cm) long and slender; pale yellow foot without blue spots (fig. 1).

Figure 1. Live specimen of *S. longicauda* from the Persian Gulf. Sclae: 1 cm.

Stylocheilus striatus was reported by Rezai *et al.* (2016) from the Persian Gulf, without any morphological descriptions and illustrations. Therefore, due to confusion on distinguishing between *S. longicauda* and *S. striatus*, and, also because of loosing captured specimen in this study, we were not able to make sure that these two were different or same species. Yonow (2012) reported *S. longicauda* from the Muscat of Oman. Considering having longitudinal lines on the body, it has been misidentified and it is *S. striatus* which is now considered as the benthic form of the *Stylocheilus*,

Stylocheilus longicauda has a circumtropical distribution which has reported from Kenya and Zanzibar (Bebbington, 1974), India (Apte, 2013; Chinnadurai *et al.*, 2014), and Red Sea (Yonow, 2008). It always has been found floating on the algae (Bazzicalupo *et al.*, 2020).

Anyway, during this study, *S. longicauda* is reported for the first time from the Persian Gulf. More studies are recommended to examine taxonomic status of the long-tailed sea hares in this region.

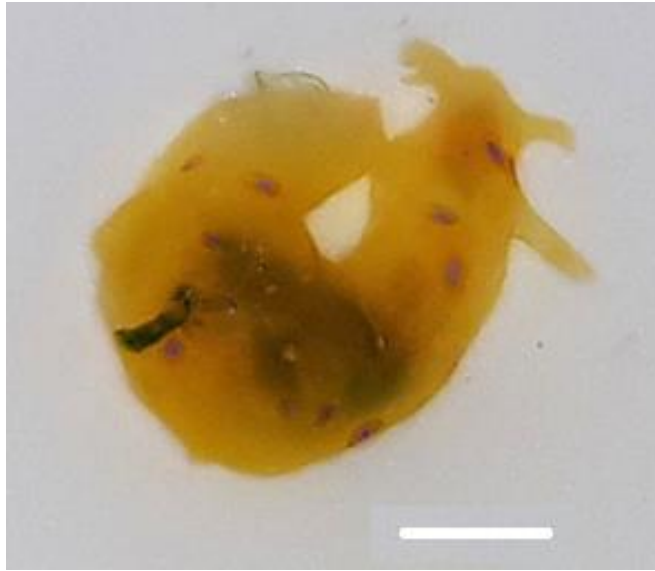


FIGURE 1. Live specimen of *S. longicauda* from the Persian Gulf.

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