

## ECOLOGY AND DISTRIBUTION OF FRESHWATER CRABS IN KNUCKLES MOUNTAIN RANGE OF SRI LANKA

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Ten species of freshwater crabs, which belong to four genera, have been so far identified from the Knuckles mountain range. These are: *Ceylonthelphusa rugosa*, *C. sorrow*, *C. sanguinea*, *C. callista*, *C. cavatrix*, *C. sentosa*, *C. armata*, *Perbrinckia nana*, *Oziothelphusa stricta* and *Mahata adonis*. These four genera belong to the family Parathelphusidae.

*Ceylonthelphusa rugosa*, *C. sorrow*, *C. sanguinea* and *C. callista* show a wide range of distribution within the Knuckles area, *C. rugosa* and *C. sorrow* being more abundant at lower altitudes, while *C. sanguinea*, *C. callista*, and *C. cavatrix* being more abundant at higher altitudes.

Usually *C. rugosa* and *C. sorrow* are found in stagnant pools, whereas *C. sanguinea* and *C. callista* prefer semi-terrestrial habitats. Sometimes, the latter two species are found under stones or in leaf litter, away from a water sources. *C. sanguinea* is also found under stones in wet places, especially where water is oozing over the surface. No other crab species was observed in such habitats during the present study. *C. cavatrix* is usually found under wet soil and moist stones along the banks of the streams, but during the present study, a large number was observed in a small stagnant pool as well. *C. armata* was found under stones in a marshy area adjacent to a small stream near a tea plantation. *Oziothelphusa stricta* was observed in holes in the banks of a stream near a paddy field. *O. stricta* and *Mahata adonis* are burrowing forms.

During the present study, new locality records of the different species of crabs were made as follows: *C. sentosa* at Kandaketiya Estate near the township of Huluganga, (previously recorded only from the type locality at Kottawa Proposed Forest Reserve in Galle District), *Perbrinckia nana* at Narangamuwa near Lakegala, (previously recorded from three locations in South-western Sri Lanka within the Bentota and Gin river basins), *C. armata* at Kabaragala near Madulkele, (previously recorded only from its type locality near Galawidaputena-Kadugannawa beside Kandy road), *C. cavatrix* at Narangamuwa near Pallegama (previously recorded from a different nearby drainage system), *Oziothelphusa stricta* at Narangamuwa (previously recorded from some areas of the dry zone and some parts of the Knuckles area), *Mahata adonis* at Rambukoluwa near Pallegama (previously recorded from some other locations of Knuckles area, and also from the southern parts of the dry zone).

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