

On a large specimen of *Panulirus argus* (Latreille, 1804) (Crustacea: Decapoda: Palinuridae) from Archipelago of São Paulo and São Pedro, Brazil.

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A strikingly large male specimen of *Panulirus argus* (Latreille) (Crustacea: Decapoda: Palinuridae) collected from the Archipelago of São Pedro/São Paulo together with its colour variations is reported on here.

Panulirus argus (Latreille, 1804), *Panulirus echinatus* Smith, 1869 and *Panulirus laevicauda* (Latreille, 1817) constitute commercial species of lobsters fished from the continental and offshore waters of Brazil. Of these, *P. argus*, which is the largest with a wider distribution, is the dominant species in commercial catches followed by *P. laevicauda*. *P. echinatus*, the smallest of the three, is more abundant in the offshore waters (Paiva, 1995). The statistical records show a drastic decline in the catch attributed to increasing fishing pressure on the stock. Reduction in the size of lobsters is another indication of over-fishing. Total ban of fishing in force from January to April has failed to reverse the trend.

An exceptionally large male specimen of *P. argus* collected in March 2001 from the Archipelago of São Paulo and São Pedro (0°56'N; 29°22'W) is a refreshing news. The specimen was hand picked by skin diving at a depth of 10 m. This archipelago, located about 870 Km from the continent, has limited access to commercial fishing which may explain why such large specimens can still be encountered.

This specimen weighing 5.8 Kg measured as follows: total length - 47.0 cm; carapace length - 21.5 cm; width of carapace - 14.5 cm; length of pereopods I to V - 29.0 cm, 50.5 cm, 34.0 cm, 28.5 cm and 26.5 cm, respectively.

Though the lone specimen examined can be assigned to *P. argus* on its gross morphological features (Fig. 1), certain morphological features and colour pattern present variations. The spines on the gastric region tend to be obtuse and towards the posterior region of carapace they appear as lumps. The spines on the hepatic and branchial regions have disappeared completely. The large frontal horn has a large and almost rectangular yellowish blotch near its base while its distal portion has smaller irregularly shaped spots. The lower part of ocular peduncle is yellowish and the upper part has a large oblong yellowish blotch near its base and two yellowish lines near the distal margin of the peduncle. A line of brownish oval blotches border the posterior margin of carapace. The hepatic and branchial regions have brownish oval blotches of varying sizes. The abdomen has yellowish spots of varying size and shape in transverse lines. The pair of large yellowish blotches on second and sixth abdominal somites, a characteristic feature of the species (William, 1964; FAO, 1978; Williams, 1984; Melo, 1999), is conspicuous by their absence. Similar minor variations have been observed among the fishes occurring in this area (Observation of J.E.L.O.). The telson and uropods have numerous yellowish spots, with alternating transverse brownish and yellowish bands and the latter with yellowish borders.

References

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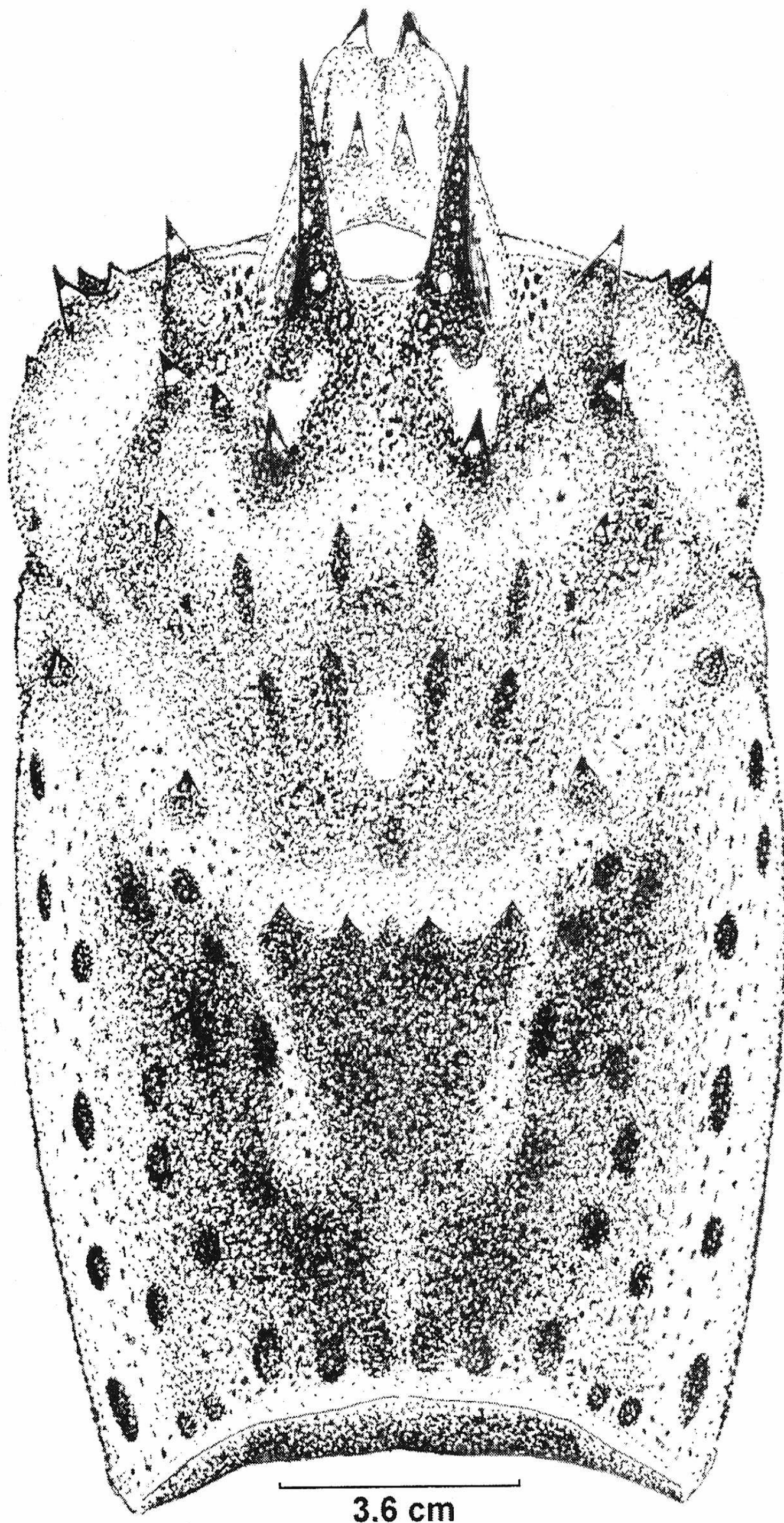


Figure 1: *Panulirus argus* (Latreille), carapace of a male specimen measuring 47,0 cm in total length.