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continued on the back inside cover

Cover: A mesmerising Indian Luna moth *Actias selene* is dancing through the starry night (by Vincent van Gogh) moonlit sky, displaying its ballistic display of feather tail.
Digital artwork by Vyshnavee Sneha Jaijar.



Gujarat State, from western India, covers approximately 2,340.62 km of coastline, i.e., up to 21% of the Indian coastline (TRW-MoPSW 2025). A wide range of maritime ecosystems, such as mangroves, coral reefs, rocky coasts, mudflats, sandy shorelines, and estuaries, have been found throughout Gujarat's coastline, adding to the state's abundant marine biodiversity. A number of researchers have attempted to explore the marine variety of this region (Apte 1998; Singh et al. 2004; Venkataraman 2004; Satyanarayana 2009; Dixit 2010). The diversity of corals and crustaceans in this region receives considerable attention. The state's and the nation's crustacean diversity has been the subject of noteworthy research (Pandya & Vachhrajani 2013; Trivedi et al. 2018; Beleem 2019). Nonetheless, nine species from the Gujarat coast have been identified to date (Trivedi et al. 2015; Valarmathi 2024), representing the diversity of isopods among different groups of crustaceans.

In the present study, *Synidotea variegata* (Collinge 1917) is reported for the first time from Gujarat State, India, and thus also making a new addition in the Gulf of Kutch.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Live specimens of *Synidotea variegata* (Collinge, 1917) were collected during low tide from the northern Gulf of Kutch, along the Kutch coastline, using hand-picking. Following collection, the isopods were cleaned, photographed, and preserved in 70% ethanol for future research, following Ravinesh & Kumar (2022). Specimen identification was based on the diagnostic characters provided by Yesudas et al. (2021). The samples were deposited in the Zoological Reference Collection at the Zoology Department of R.R. Lalan College, Bhuj (RRLC-ZC).

RESULTS AND REMARKS

Family: Idoteidae Samouelle, 1819

Genus: *Synidotea* Harger, 1878

Type species: *Synidotea variegata* Collinge, 1917 (Image 1a–d)

Synidotea variegata Collinge, 1917 In Yesudas et al. 2021: 84, p. 107 fig. 1–c.

Material examined: 11.ii.2023, 1 Male, length 8.32 mm, max. breadth 3.39 mm rocky intertidal region of Kachchh coast (22.836° N & 69.225° E), near Mandvi, Gujarat, India, coll.. M. Goswami, D. Dudiya.

Diagnosis: Body oblong-ovate, dorsal surface is convex and almost smooth (Image 1). Animal colouration pale to golden yellow. Frontal margin straight, the

posterior region has a deep transverse furrow, and the cephalon wider than the length and narrows posteriorly. Perionites 2–4 are expanded; perionite 5–7 gradually narrow down. First joint of antennule broad, while the second and third are short, broad, and subequal (Image 1a,b,d). Pleotelson nearly 1.5 times as long as wide with narrow rounded apex. A short denticulate spine is found on the outer posterior margin of the uropod, which has nearly straight lateral sides except at the hinge (Image 1). The endopodite, on the other hand, has a straight inner margin and is cut away on the outer side. Uropods are armed with denticulate spine terminally. Rest of the characters agree with the descriptions given by earlier researchers (Collinge 1917; Yesudas et al. 2021).

Colouration: The species is mostly seen under rocks. The body is yellowish coloured, decorated by minute black pigments. The head region is somewhat depressed, circular, with the anterior area somewhat flat. Eyes are laterally placed and oval.

Remarks: This species demonstrates a close relationship to *Synidotea harfordi* Benedict, 1897 and *S.*



Image 1. *Synidotea variegata* (Collinge, 1917), male (RRLC-ZC-46): a—dorsal view | b—ventral view | c—pleotelson: plane and triangular | d—antennular flagellum. © RRLC-ZC.

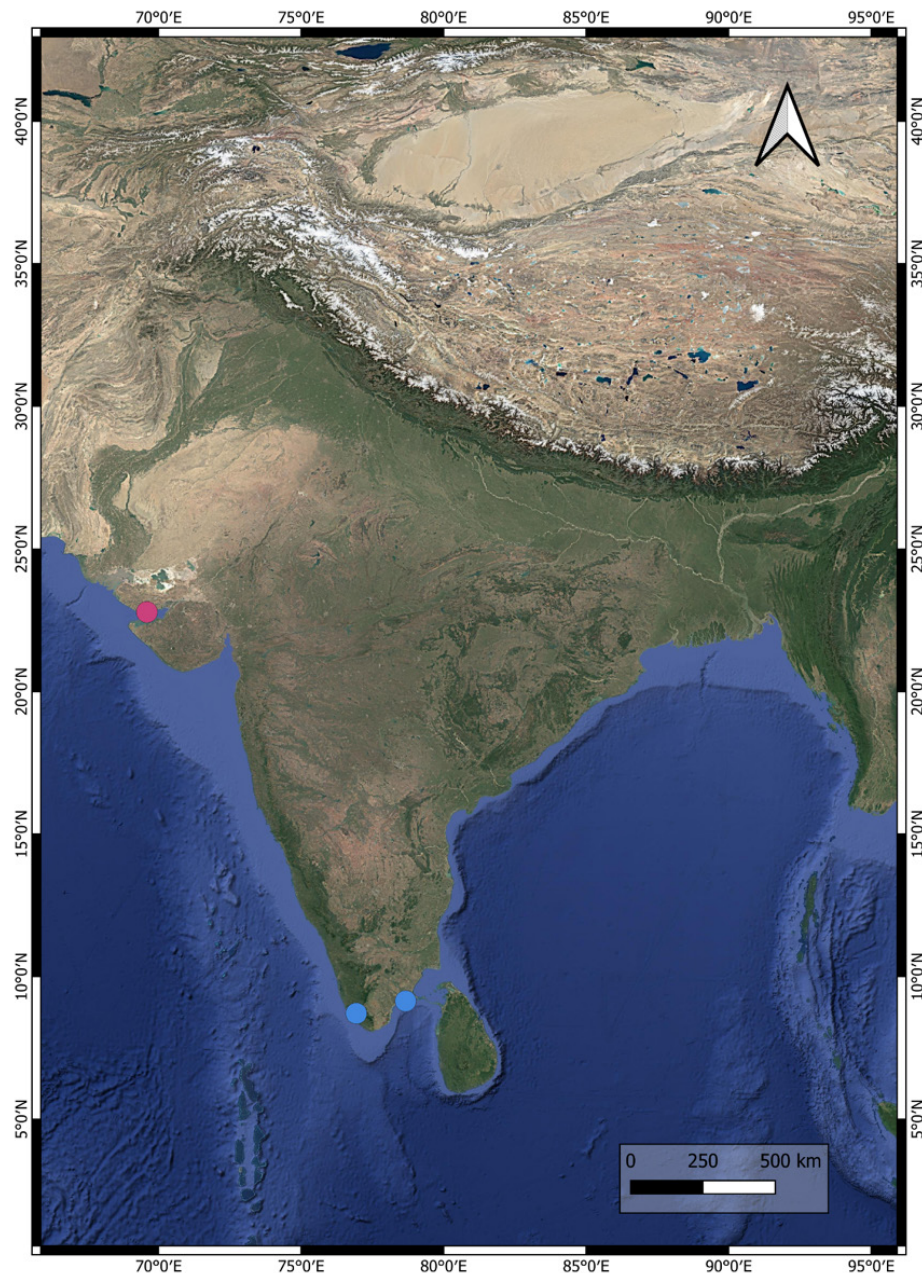


Image 2. A map showing the distribution of *Synidotea variegata* (Collinge, 1917) on the Indian coastline. Filled sky blue circle indicating previous report (Tamil Nadu & Kerala), filled pink circle indicating new distribution report (Mandvi, Gulf of Kutch, Gujarat).

angulata (Collinge, 1917). It varies from both in several structural traits. It coincides with the earlier species in the shape of the cephalon and in possessing the little rounded median notch or depression on the posterior border of the metasome. In the context of mesosomatic and metasomatic segments, it has a resemblance to *S. angulata*.

Distribution: Kerala, Tamil Nadu (Yesudas et al. 2021), and Gujarat (present study) (Image 2).

CONCLUSION

Synidotea variegata (Collinge, 1917) is typically found inhabiting rocky intertidal and shallow subtidal zones, where it shelters among crevices, algae, and sessile invertebrates. This study presents the first confirmed record of *S. variegata* from the Gulf of Kutch, Gujarat, located along the northwestern coastline of India. The discovery significantly extends the known distribution range of the species along the Indian coastline. Until now, *S. variegata* (Collinge 1917) had only been

documented from the southeastern and southwestern regions of India, particularly from the coastal waters of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Its presence in the Gulf of Kutch suggests a broader ecological tolerance, adaptability to varying salinity and habitat conditions, and may also point to gaps in previous biodiversity assessments in the region. This finding underscores the need for continued monitoring and documentation of marine isopods in underexplored habitats along the Indian coastline.

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Articles

Inventory of traditional medicinal plants and ethnobotanical knowledge from Hassan District, Karnataka, India

– Kushavara Venkatesh Amara, Gotravalli Manjunatha Prashanth Kumar & Rajkumar Hanumanthrao Garampalli, Pp. 27035–27063

An annotated checklist of lianas in Manipur, India

– Longjam Malemnganbee Chanu & Debjyoti Bhattacharyya, Pp. 27064–27074

New records and typification in family Poaceae from western Himalaya, India

– Smita Tiwari, Dileshwar Prasad, Sangam Sharma, Supriya Tiwari & Priyanka Agnihotri, Pp. 27075–27086

Collection and lipid analysis of marine unialgal cyanobacteria: a case study from the southeastern coast of India

– Selvam Selvapriya & Sundaram Rajakumar, Pp. 27087–27097

Range expansion of Indian Grey Hornbill population: a case study based on land use, land cover, and vegetation changes in Vadodara, Gujarat, India

– Parikshit Dhaduk & Geeta Padate, Pp. 27098–27109

Communications

A pioneer study of orchids on Nusa Barung Island of Indonesia

– Toni Artaka, Bina Swasta Sitepu, Fajar Dwi Nur Aji, Suryadi & Tri Atmoko, Pp. 27110–27115

A bibliometric visualization of trends in Philippine sharks studies published in Scopus-indexed journals over the past five decades

– Merfat Ampong Sali, Najeeb Razul Ampong Sali, Araniza M. Diansuy, Anina Haslee A. Julkanain-Ong & Richard Nami Muallil, Pp. 27116–27124

First camera-trap evidence of Dhole *Cuon alpinus* Pallas, 1811 (Carnivora: Canidae) from the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape, Assam, India

– Mujahid Ahamad, Jyotish Ranjan Deka, Priyanka Borah, Umar Saeed, Ruchi Badola & Syed Ainul Hussain, Pp. 27125–27130

Distribution, habitat use and conservation status of Smooth-coated Otter *Lutrogale perspicillata* along the Cauvery and Kabini rivers, Karnataka, India

– Allison Amavisca, Raghunath Belur & Sugandhi Gadadhar, Pp. 27131–27140

Review

An annotated checklist of the genus *Amorphophallus* Blume ex Decne. (Araceae): an update on the distribution and conservation status of its species

– Norilyn Fontarum-Bulawin, Michael A. Calaramo & Grecebio Jonathan D. Alejandro, Pp. 27141–27158

Short Communications

Embelia ribes Burm.f. (Primulaceae) – an ayurvedic plant with ethnobotanical notes from Manipur, India

– Robert Panmei, Soyala Kashung, Lanrili Dangmei, Akoijam Surviya & Ungpemmi Ningshen, Pp. 27159–27162

First record of marine isopod *Synidotea variegata* (Collinge, 1917), (Crustacea: Isopoda: Valvifera) from the Gulf of Kutch, Gujarat, northwestern coast of India

– Deep D. Dudiya, Mansi S. Goswami & Pranav J. Pandya, Pp. 27163–27166

Lesser Blue-wing *Rhyothemis triangularis* Kirby, 1889 (Insecta: Libellulidae), a new addition to the dragonfly diversity of Rajasthan, India

– Anil Sarsavan, Manohar Pawar, Satish Kumar Sharma & Vinod Paliwal, Pp. 27167–27170

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