Record of *Phyllidiella zeylanica* (Mollusca: Gastropoda: Opisthobranchia) after 42 years from Gujarat, India

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Nudibranchs the subclass belonging Opisthobranchia are among the least studied molluscs in India. The work done on opisthobranchs in India is sparse and patchy. The earlier works date back to the 1880s by Alder & Hancock (1864), Kelaart (1858a,b; 1859a,b,c; 1883) and Bergh (1877). Notable works on Indian Opisthobranchia are by Gardiner (1903), Eliot (1905, 1906a,b,c, 1909a,b, 1910a,b, 1916), Farran (1905), Hornell (1909a,b, 1949, 1951), O'Donoghue (1932), Rao (1936, 1952, 1961), Satyamurthi (1952), Rao & Alagarswami (1960), Burn (1970), Rao et al. (1974), Rao & Rao (1980), Valdés et al. (1999) and Fontana et al. (2001).

In recent times Apte (2009), Apte & Bhave (2010,

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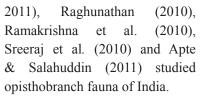
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Work on marine fauna of Gujarat, specifically the Gulf of Kutch and its adjoining areas, was first initiated by Hornell (1909a,b) and was continued by Eliot (1909), Gideon et al. (1957), Kundu (1965), Narayanan (1968, 1969, 1970, 1971a,b), Burn (1970), Menon et al. (1970), Rudman (1980) and Deomurari (2006). The most comprehensive work on ophisthobranchs of the Gulf of Kutch was that by Narayanan (1968, 1969, 1970, 1971a,b) after that, for a long time no such focused studies were conducted and the only recent information from this area about nudibranchs comes from the checklist prepared by Apte et al. (2010).

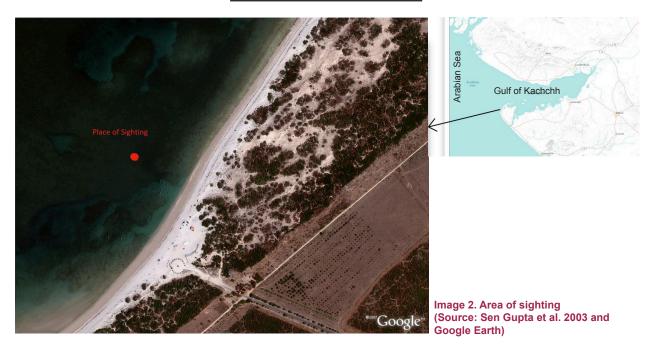
Two specimens of *Phyllidiella zeylanica* (Kelaart, 1859) measuring 20 and 22 mm were first reported at Pirotan Island, Gulf of Kutch by Narayanan (1968). Since then this species was never reported in any study or research work done on the marine fauna of Gujarat.

Location: This interesting sighting occurred on 03 April 2010 during a regular coral monitoring survey under "Coral reef restoration programme" by the Wildlife Trust of India at Mithapur reef" (22°25.672'N & 68°59.510'E), at a depth of 1.5m on dead corals substrate (Images 1 & 2).

Description: Presently reported (23–24 mm) individual has identical external morphological features which typify *P. zeylanica*. The dorsal surface of the mantle has five longitudinal rows of pink



Image 1. The reported individual (Phyllidiella zeylanica)



tubercles which are arranged in a semicircular fashion along the anterior and posterior margins except the median one. Irregular tubercles are arranged in a group of two or three. Median ridge forms a canal like structure at the centre which is filled in by black lines. These lines, excepting the median one are all along the posterior and anterior margins in a semicircular fashion (Narayanan 1969). The reported individual also possessed the same rough ridges which are the typical features for this species (Brunckhorst 1993). Rhinophores are black with colourless stalks. The foot sole is white.

Discussion: Though *Phyllidiella zeylanica* is a common nudibranch species in Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Apte 2009; Ramakrishna et al. 2010; Sreeraj et al. 2010), its occurrence in Gujarat and particularly in the Gulf of Kutch is rare. This probably is due to the lack of studies on the opisthobranchs in this region. It is important to have conservation based systematic and comprehensive studies on these animals so that base line information may be generated on these animals and their habitat.

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