

STUDIES IN AUSTRALIAN CRUSTACEA.

No. 4.*

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(Plates xlii-xliii.)

AUSTRALIAN FRESH-WATER CRABS.

(Plate xlii.)

The identification of the several species of Fresh-water Crabs occurring in Australia is a matter of considerable difficulty. This is partly due to the fact that references to them in literature are both scanty and incomplete, but a greater difficulty is presented by the remarkable degree of variation which they exhibit in characters which are recognised as constant in marine species.

The extraordinary uniformity of climatic and other conditions prevailing over a large portion of Australia, combined with a close intermingling of the river systems, has enabled many of our fresh-water animals to distribute themselves over an exceedingly wide area. Some fishes¹ for example, are known to range from the western waters of New South Wales to Central, North, and Western Australia; though they present remarkable variations in both form and colour-marking, they cannot be subdivided even into geographical subspecies, as is readily proved by a large series of specimens collected from various widely separated localities. Similarly, the Yabbie, *Parachærops bicarinatus*², ranges from Victoria to Queensland, Central and North Australia, and perhaps reaches the Western State, but though it exhibits marked variation in all parts of its range, it nevertheless appears indivisible into subspecies. Though more restricted in their distribution, the Fresh-water Crabs of Australia appear to be equally variable, and in the absence of ample material from numerous localities, it seems to be impossible to determine the true relationship of the different forms to one another.

* For No. 3 see Vol. ix., p. 321.

¹ Ogilby and McCulloch—Mem. Qld. Mus., v., 1916, pp. 101, 106, 110.

² Smith—Proc. Zool. Soc., 1912, pp. 147, 163.