INDIAN STREAMS RESEARCH JOURNAL
ISSN NO : 2230-7850
IMPACT FACTOR : 5.1651 (UIF)
VOLUME - 16 | ISSUE - 3 | APRIL – 2026

A SEASLUG NEW TO THE INDIAN COAST; RECORD OF DISCODORIS CEBUENSIS (BERGH, 1877) (MOLLUSCA: GASTROPODA: DISCODORIDIDAE) FROM MUMBAI, INDIA

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Nudibranchs are a highly diverse assemblage of shell-less marine gastropods, with approximately 3,000 described species distributed globally across intertidal to abyssal depths (Gosliner et al., 2018). The family Discodorididae encompasses around 250 species worldwide, characterised by a flattened dorid body form, spongivorous feeding habits, and identification primarily based on external morphology in the absence of a shell (Valdés, 2002; Dayrat, 2010). A comprehensive review records only 33 discodorid species from India, with the eastern coast being comparatively more diverse than the western coast (Prasade et al., 2012).

A single mature individual of Discodoris cebuensis was recorded from western coast of India on the rocky shores of Haji Ali (18° 58 '54.6"N, 72° 48' 22.4"E); Mumbai, Maharashtra. The individual was found to be about 70 mm in length, gently moving on the surface of a shallow, clear intertidal-pool at a depth of about 0.1 m. The documentation was done on a cloudy morning with lowest low-tide reaching about 0.5 m from the mean sea level on 21 April, 2026. The whole process of documentation was non-invasive and identification was done based entirely on photographic documention.

The individual displayed a flattened, oval body slightly longer than the reported size range of 45-65 mm. The dorsum was brownish beige with subtle darker mottling concentrated at tubercle bases. The mantle surface bore dense, low, rounded tubercles with conspicuously white-tipped apices, a key diagnostic character for this species (Dayrat, 2010). Rhinophores were bilaterally paired and lamellate, with 15–18 lamellae on each club; sheaths were low and perfoliate. The posteriorly positioned gill crown was tripinnate, comprising six to seven pinnate primary branchial plumes arranged around the anal papilla. The foot was broad, slightly projecting anteriorly beyond the mantle margin.

D. cebuensis was initially described on the coasts of Philippines (type locality; Bergh, 1877). Followed by records from Southeast Asia southwards extending to Australia and further east into the Pacific up to Marshal Islands & Hawaii, East Africa including Réunion and Middle East (Reeflex, 2014; WoRMS, 2026; *Discodoris Cebuensis*, 2026). Distributed on the tropical coasts of Indo-West Pacific Ocean, discodorids predominantly inhabit coral reefs and sponge-rich substrates. Thus, such a widespread distribution suggests its occurrence on the Indian coast is natural yet delayed.

The delayed records of *D. cebuensis* from India is likely attributable to a combination of factors. Primarily, systematic opisthobranch surveys on India's west coast are rare and taxonomically limited (Prasade et al., 2012; Apte et al., 2015). Followed by the cryptic colouration, especially the brownish-beige dorsum closely matching encrusting sponge substrates, renders it sighting possibility. This creates a need for more detailed and systematic study on opisthobranchs of the Indian coastline along with highlighting the biodiversity and the Etonian shortfall accompanying the coasts of Mumbai. Adding one more species to the checklist this article emphasizes on opportunities for further research.

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