NOTES AND NEWS

A NEW SOUTHERN RECORD FOR A SAND CRAB, LEPIDOPA WEBSTERI BENEDICT, 1903 (DECAPODA, ALBUNEIDAE)

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Albuneid sand crabs are small anomuran crustaceans that are highly specialized for digging in sand (Faulkes & Paul, 1997a, b; Gingras et al., 2008). Little is known about the basic biology of sand crabs because they leave no visible traces of their presence on the surface of sand, and because their density is low (Murph & Faulkes, 2013). Lepidopa websteri Benedict, 1903 is one of two members of the sand crab genus Lepidopa that lives in the Gulf of Mexico; the other is L. bennedicti Schmitt, 1935 (cf. Boyko, 2002). Both species are also found on the Atlantic coastline. Despite being found in sympatry, they are not sister species (Boyko & Harvey, 2009). Lepidopa websteri is seldom collected: Hay & Shore (1918) wrote, “a vast amount of digging close to the shore has failed to produce any living specimen, nor has dredging at distances from the shore varying from 200 yards to 20 miles”. Boyko (2002) noted, “This species is an excellent example of the relative scarcity of albuneids”. Because L. websteri is rarely collected, new records are important in establishing the distribution of the species. The known distribution of L. websteri contains large gaps. For example, there are no records of L. websteri between Nuences County, TX, U.S.A. (the current most southern record) and Jefferson Parish, LA, U.S.A., a straight-line distance of 699 km (Boyko, 2002). Here, I describe a new southern record for L. websteri on South Padre Island, TX, U.S.A.
MATERIALS AND METHODS

As part of several ongoing projects (e.g., Nasir & Faulkes, 2011; Murph & Faulkes, 2013), I have been collecting sand crabs of the genus *Lepidopa* at South Padre Island, Texas on an ad hoc basis since 2002, and monthly since September 2009. Animals are collected by digging 10 m transects with a shovel, and turning over sand, inspecting it for *Lepidopa*. At least three transects are dug each month. The specimen identified using keys from Boyko (2002) while still alive, and photographed using a Sony Cyber-Shot DSC-W55 digital camera.

RESULTS

The *Lepidopa websteri* specimen was collected on 23 July 2012, on the beach east of the Coastal Studies Laboratory of The University of Texas-Pan American (26°4’30.59″N 97°9’26.59″W; fig. 1) on South Padre Island, Cameron County, TX, U.S.A., between 11:30 am and noon. Boyko (2002) noted that *L. websteri* is found most often at the exact low tide line. Low tide occurred about 1:30 pm that day. The specimen was immediately recognized as being different from *L. benedicti* because its antennae are substantially longer relative to body length than in *L. benedicti* (fig. 2). The *L. websteri* specimen had a carapace length of 8.21 mm and

![Fig. 1. Distribution of *Lepidopa websteri* Benedict, 1903. Unmarked circles show one representative location for each county or parish, taken from Boyko (2002). New location in Texas marked with an asterisk.](image-url)