

**FIRST REPORT OF *PHORONCIDIA SEPTEMACULEATA* O. P. –
CAMBRIDGE, 1873 (ARANEAE: THERIDIIDAE) FROM INDIA****Vinayak Patil*, Virendra Prasad Uniyal** and Sujit Sasane***

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ABSTRACT: We report occurrence of *Phoroncidia septemaculeata* O. P. –Cambridge, 1873 for the first time from India. This species is also being reported first time since its original description nearly one and a half century ago. It is important to explore and document such rare species before they go extinct.

KEY WORDS: Cob-web spiders, *Phoroncidia*

Phoroncidia Westwood is a widespread genus of wonderful cob-web spiders with curiously shaped abdomen. These spiders are characterized by a coriaceous abdomen either hardened into a turtle-like shell or produced into tubercles and/or spines. The abdomen usually overhangs the cephalothorax and the eye region is protruding and overhanging the clypeus. The spinnerets are also surrounded by a sclerotized ring (Agnarsson, 2004). The tarsi are longer than metatarsi. Presently, there are 81 nominate species under this genus including 24 reported from Oriental region (World Spider Catalog, 2017). This genus is represented in India by 3 species – *Phoroncidia aculeata* Westwood which is also the type species; *P. maindroni* (Simon); and *P. testudo* (O. P. –Cambridge).

Phoroncidia septemaculeata O. P. –Cambridge, 1873 is a spectacular member of Theridiidae. It was described from Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) based on adult male and females collected by Mr. Thwaites. The exact type locality within Sri Lanka is not known, neither any further collection. Thus, it has not been reported after its report either from Sri Lanka or from anywhere else (World Spider Catalog, 2017). But owing to the detailed description and clear illustrations in the original report, it is very easy to identify this species. We report *P. septemaculeata*, for the first time, from India. But, since we could collect only immature males, we are not reporting detailed description of genitalia. Instead, we are presenting a photographic record for the facility of other researchers who would come across this species in future.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The specimen based on which this report is made were collected as a part of doctoral research of the first author during October 2013 to June 2014. Spider fauna of sacred groves and similar wooded habitats in Dapoli taluka in Maharashtra state of India was explored in this study. Spiders were collected by vegetation beating and ground litter sorting. However, both the specimen of the present species were collected by vegetation beating method from 2 different sacred groves nearly 13 kms apart. Specimen were preserved in 70% alcohol and are stored in the spider collection of College of Forestry (CFOR), Dapoli. They

were examined under LABOMED stereomicroscope and photographed with a camera attachment. All measurements were made with an eye-piece graticule and are expressed in mm.

***Phoroncidia septemaculeata* O. P. Cambridge, 1873**

(Figs. 1a-e)

Material examined: 1♂ immature, Umbarle (Dapoli, District Ratnagiri, Maharashtra); Vinayak Patil & Sujit Sasane, 14.I.2014, CFOR-S386, beating; 1♂ immature, Kondhe (Dapoli, District Ratnagiri, Maharashtra); Vinayak Patil & Kiran Kumar S. V., 21.V.2014, beating, CFOR-S702.

Diagnosis: *P. septemaculeata* is different from all its conspecifics from India in having a spiny abdomen (other species have only tubercled abdomen). The presence of 7 abdominal spines is also diagnostic among several other spiny conspecifics. The etymological pattern of 7 spots on anterior and posterior surfaces of abdomen is also diagnostic.

Description: juvenile Male-Total length 1.8; carapace length 1.1, width 1.1; abdomen length 1.6, width 1.1 and height 2.3.

Carapace dark brown with ocular area conspicuously protruding and overhanging clypeus. Anterior median eyes the largest. Labium, maxillae and sternum light brownish yellow.

Legs brownish yellow, leg formula 4-1-2-3, tibia I with 3 strong dorsal spines.

Abdomen light yellow mottled with various shades of brown and white; nearly triangular in lateral view with the mid-dorsal transverse ridge forming the top, antero-posteriorly flattened. Anterior face concave because of raised lateral margins equipped with 3 pairs of short stout spines projecting from tubercles, first two pairs directed inward and the third pair directed outward; in addition a posteriorly directing similar spine present at the apex of the abdomen. Posterior face of abdomen flattened and this view shows only 3 topmost spines. Posterior face also decorated with 7 distinct blackish brown spots with 6 spots arranged laterally and 1 spot in between the top quartet. The anterior face with large brown sigillae corresponding to these spots. Lateral faces also shows several irregularly arranged sigillae. Ventrums dirty yellow with some transverse folds and spinnerets enclosed in a sclerotized ring.

Distribution: Maharashtra, India (present record); Sri Lanka.

Remarks: We have come to conclude that this is not any other *Phoroncidia* species on the basis of available literature on this genus in South-east Asian region (Yoshida, 1979) and elsewhere (Levi, 1964; Kariko, 2014).

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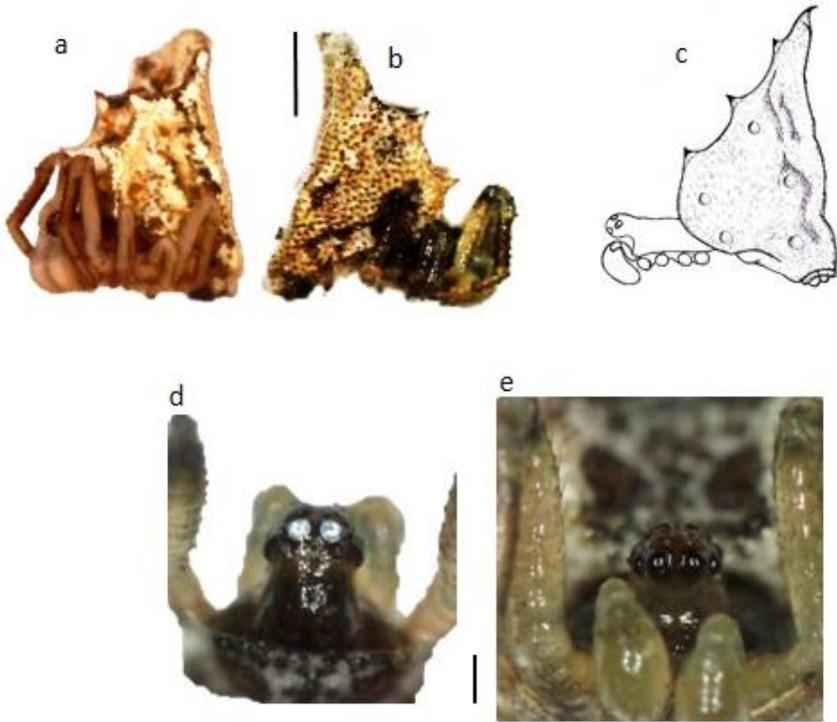


Figure 1. *Phoroncidia septemaculeata* juvenile male, general habitus lateral (a,b,c), eye area dorsal (d) and frontal (e). Scale bar 1 mm for a,b,c and 0.2 mm for d,e.