



Anaspides (Mountain Shrimp)

Anaspides tasmaniae

CLASS: Crustacea
SUBCLASS: Syncarida
ORDER: Anaspidacea

STATUS:
Endemic to Tasmania



DESCRIPTION:

Fossil crustaceans, very similar to *Anaspides*, have been found in rocks at least 250 million years old. For this reason *Anaspides* is sometimes called a 'living fossil.' Scientists believe that the ancestor of today's modern crustaceans may have closely resembled *Anaspides*.

Unlike many crustaceans, *Anaspides* does not have a carapace (the shell that covers both the head and the thorax), hence its name, derived from the ancient Greek, AN (lacking) + ASPIS (shield).

With a straight, grey-brown body of 15 similar segments, *Anaspides* looks something like a short centipede that swims. The head has two pairs of antennae and one pair of eyes on short stalks. The thorax has seven pairs of walking legs, each of which bears simple, ovoid gills. The abdomen has five pairs of swimming legs and a tail-fan at the end.

SIZE:
Up to 50mm in length.

DISTRIBUTION:

The first published record of this animal was made in 1893 from alpine pools on Mt. Wellington behind Hobart. Since then, it has been widely found on the Central Plateau, as well as in western and southern highland areas.

HABITAT:

Typically found in highland creeks and pools above 750 m in altitude. It has also been found in the underground waters of cave systems.

FOOD:

Feeds on submerged plant material such as algae and mosses. May also prey on other aquatic animals such as tadpoles and worms.

BEHAVIOUR:

Anaspides may be seen crawling across the bottom of a pool or stream, or else swimming near the water surface. It is a very shy creature, however, and when disturbed will dart into shelter with a sharp flick of its tail.

BREEDING:

Egg laying occurs mostly in spring. The 1mm diameter eggs are attached to submerged plant debris. Eight months or more later, the eggs hatch when the young are 2 to 3mm long. They will breed about 15 months later when approximately 18mm in length. Individuals may live for 3 or 4 years.

MUSEUM LOGO:

Anaspides has been used in various forms as a logo for the museum since 1942 when it appeared on the first issue of the Museum's scientific publication *Records of the Queen Victoria Museum*.



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