



FIG. 5.—*Scolecolepides benhami*, thoracic parapodium in anterior view. FIG. 6.—*Scolecolepides* sp., thoracic parapodium in anterior view.

Family SPIONIDAE Grube

Genus SCOLECOLEPIDES Ehlers, 1907

***Scolecolepides benhami* Ehlers, 1907 (Fig. 5)**

*Scolecolepides benhami* Ehlers, 1907: 14, Figs. 4–6.

**OCCURRENCE:** Found in greatest numbers (up to 5,000 per m<sup>2</sup>) in muddy areas. It extends up the Avon River, which flows into the northern corner of the Heathcote Estuary, as far as Kerr's Reach which is two miles upstream of the recorded limit of saltwater penetration. It was also collected during this survey from Saltwater Creek (North Canterbury), Havelock Harbour and the mouth of the Rakaia River.

**DESCRIPTION:** Most specimens from the estuary were about 4cm long; width across the parapodial lobes in the anterior region, 1.5mm. Setae: Capillaries only in anterior notopodia, in neuropodia of setigers 1–8; capillaries and acicular setae (Fig. 5) in neuropodia of setigers 9–30; bidentate hooded hooks and capillaries in both rami of posterior segments beginning about the last gill-bearing segment dorsally, and at segment 64 ventrally.

Specimens from the Avon River at Pages Road and from Saltwater Creek with a length of 4cm but 3mm wide had acicular setae in only four segments. Occasional incomplete large specimens, up to 4mm wide, from the estuary had no acicular setae but only slightly thicker capillaries in the appropriate segments. It appears that the acicular setae are lost as the worms grow.

Live specimens have a distinctive colour pattern, the anterior 8 to 10 segments and their gills being dark green and the rest of the body pink with red gills. The gills form a regular chevron pattern over the back.

**REMARKS:** Dominant, with *Nicon aestuariensis*, in areas where the salinity conditions cannot be tolerated by other animals.

**DISTRIBUTION:** Moeraki; Saltwater Creek; Havelock Harbour; Rakaia River mouth (coll. H. J. Cranfield).