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FIRST RECORD OF HOLLOWSNOUT GRENADIER *COELORINCHUS CAELORHINCUS* (OSTEICHTHYES: MACROURIDAE) FROM THE SYRIAN COAST (EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN)

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ABSTRACT

*This paper reports the first record of two specimens of the hollowsnout grenadier *Coelorinchus caelorhincus* (Risso, 1810) from the Syrian coast. This record confirms the occurrence of *C. caelorhincus* in the eastern Mediterranean and suggests that a viable population is successfully established in this region. Its apparent rarity is due to the fact that the species inhabits deep bottoms, and does not present an economical value.*

Key words: description, morphometric measurements, meristic counts, distribution, deep sea waters, Eastern Mediterranean

PRIMA SEGNALAZIONE DEL PESCE SORCIO *COELORINCHUS CAELORHINCUS* (OSTEICHTHYES: MACROURIDAE) LUNGO LA COSTA DELLA SIRIA (MEDITERRANEO ORIENTALE)

SINTESI

*L'articolo riporta la prima segnalazione di due esemplari del pesce sorcio *Coelorinchus caelorhincus* (Risso, 1810) lungo la costa siriana. Questo ritrovamento conferma la presenza di *C. caelorhincus* nel Mediterraneo orientale e suggerisce che una popolazione vitale si sia stabilita con successo in questa regione. La sua apparente rarità è dovuta al fatto che le specie vive su fondali profondi e non presenta alcun valore economico.*

Parole chiave: descrizione, misurazioni morfometriche, conte meristiche, distribuzione, acque marine profonde, Mediterraneo orientale

INTRODUCTION

The family Macrouridae comprises at least 300 species generally found at depth, between 200 and 2000 m, and occurring throughout seas and oceans of the world, except the high Arctic (Cohen *et al.*, 1990). In all, 17 genera are found in the FNAM area (*sensu* Whitehead *et al.*, 1984-1986) and most of them are known in the Mediterranean Sea, and apparently, distributed only in the western Basin (Geistdoerfer, 1986).

Tab. 1: Morphometric measurements (mm) and their percentage of total length (% TL), meristic counts and weight (gram) recorded in the 2 specimens of hollowsnout grenadier *Coelorinchus caelorhincus* caught off the Syrian coast.

Tab. 1. Morfometrične meritve (mm) in njihov delež glede na celotno dolžino telesa (% TL), meristika ter teža (gram) dveh primerkov grenadirja *Coelorinchus caelorhincus*, ujetih ob sirski obali.

Specimens	2266M.S.L		2267M.S.L	
	mm	%TL	mm	%TL
Total length	197	100.0	210	100.0
Head length	49	24.9	48	22.9
Interorbital space	11	5.6	11	5.2
Eye horizontal diameter	14	7.1	14	6.7
Eye vertical diameter	11	5.6	11	5.2
Snout length	14	7.1	14	6.7
Maxilla length	14	7.1	16	7.6
Upper jaw length	15	7.6	14	6.7
Lower jaw length	11	5.6	10	4.8
Pectoral fin length	27	13.7	24	11.4
First dorsal fin length	29	14.7	27	12.9
Second dorsal fin length	94	47.7	130	61.9
Pelvic fin length	20	10.2	18	8.6
Anal fin length	116	58.9	142	67.6
Body depth	31	15.7	31	14.8
Suborbital depth	10	5.1	8	3.8
Meristic counts				
First dorsal fin rays	I + 8		I + 8	
Second dorsal rays	48		49	
Pelvic fin rays	I + 6		I + 6	
Anal fin rays	III + 51		II + 57	
Pectoral fin rays	I + 16		I + 16	
Lateral line scales	67		70	
Total weight (g)	40.4		34.1	

No macrourid species were reported to date in the Syrian waters (Saad, 2005), however surveys conducted in the same area since 2000 allowed to collect for the first time two specimens of hollowsnout grenadier *Coelorinchus caelorhincus* (Risso, 1810). In this paper, we present a description of both specimens, comment the actual status of the species from the Syrian coast and throughout the eastern Mediterranean.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Two specimens of *Coelorinchus caelorhincus* were caught by trawl on 24 February 2016, 6 km from off Raas Albassit (35°51' E and 35°54' N), at depth of about 650 m, on muddy bottom (Fig. 1). The specimens were measured to the nearest mm and weighed to the nearest gram. Morphometric measurements with percentages of total length (TL) and meristic counts were recorded following Geistdoerfer (1986) and Cohen *et al.* (1990), (see Tab. 1).

Samples were preserved in 10% buffered formalin and deposited in the Ichthyological Collection of the Marine Sciences Laboratory, Agriculture Faculty at Tishreen University, Syria, with the catalogue numbers: 2266 M.S.L. (Fig. 2), and 2267 M.S.L.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Both Syrian specimens of *C. caelorhincus* were identified by the following combination of main character-

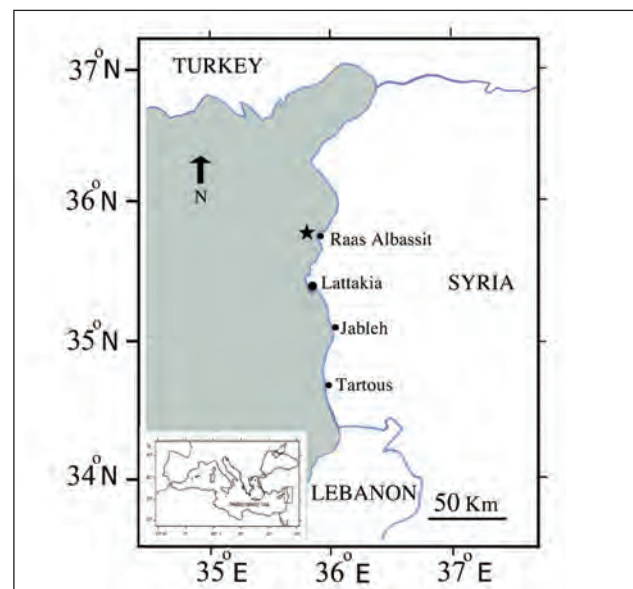


Fig. 1: Map of the Mediterranean Sea and of the coast of Syria, pointing out the capture site of the hollowsnout grenadier *Coelorinchus caelorhincus* (black star). Sl. 1: Zemljevid Sredozemskega morja in sirske obale z označeno lokaliteto, kjer sta bila ujeta primerka grenadirja (črna zvezdica).



Fig. 2: The hollowsnout grenadier *Coelorinchus caelorhincus* captured off the Syrian coast (specimen referenced 2266 M.S.L, in the Ichthyological Collection of Tishreen University, Syria); scale bar = 20 mm.

Sl. 2: Grenadir *Coelorinchus caelorhincus*, ujet blizu sirske obale (osebek označen s kataloško številko 2266 M.S.L, v ihtiološki zbirki Univerze v Tishreenu; merilo = 20 mm).

istic features following Geistdoerfer (1986) and Cohen *et al.* (1990): moderately deep and compressed body, tapering behind short trunk to form a long tail ending in a point, head moderate or bulky, snout sharply pointed with prominent body ridge with anterolateral margin incompletely supported by bone, underside of bone, naked medially, a broad area dorsally on either side with thin spinulated scales, chin barbell smooth, small and protactile, anus at the origin of anal fin. Colour tawny to swarthy, with purplish tinges and serie of broad saddles marks, oral cavity darkish, branchial cavity blackish, first dorsal and pectoral fins dusky, pelvic fin black with pale outer ray, anal fin edged with black stripes.

Morphometric measurements (including percentages of TL), meristic counts, morphology and colour agree with Geistdoerfer (1986) and Cohen *et al.* (1990). These findings of *C. caelorhincus* increase the number of fish species already recorded in the same area to date 276, including 43 elasmobranch species and 233 teleost species. However, the eastern extension range of *C. caelorhincus* seems to be not limited, especially in the Levant Basin following Golani (2005). The species is also found from the Aegean Sea (Filiz *et al.*, 2006; Sever *et al.*, 2008), the Mediterranean coast of Turkey (Bilecenoglu *et al.*, 2014) and the Sea of Marmara (Artüz *et al.*, 2010). Mouneimne (1979) noted the species oc-

currence off the Lebanese coast where it appears to be rarely captured; conversely, Saad (2005) did not report it among the bony fishes caught from the Syrian marine waters. This rarity is probably due to the fact that *C. caelorhincus* inhabits deep waters which are poorly explored by usual fishing gears: additionally, the species has no economical interest and specimens are generally discarded at sea by fishermen soon after their capture.

On the other hand, Capapé (1980), Carrassón *et al.* (1992) and Rafrafi-Nouira (2016) noted that *C. caelorhincus* constitutes the main prey for bathyal sharks, similar trophic relationships occur for elasmobranch species living in the Syrian deep waters. However, predatory pressure seemingly does not affect negatively the homeostasis of its population, therefore, *C. caelorhincus* is not intrinsically vulnerable to depletion, and could not be considered to date as an endangered species (IUCN, 2014). In conclusion, this record confirms the presence of the species in the entire eastern Mediterranean where a viable population seems to be established.

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PRVI PODATEK O POJAVLJANJU GRENADIRJA *COELORINCHUS CAELORHINCUS*
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POVZETEK

Avtorji poročajo o prvem podatku o pojavljanju dveh grenadirjev *Coelorinchus caelorhincus* (Risso, 1810) ob sirski obali. Ta podatek potrjuje navzočnost vrste *C. caelorhincus* v vzhodnem Sredozemskem morju z ustaljeno viabilno populacijo v regiji. Navidezna redkost te vrste je posledica dejstva, da gre za globokomorsko vrsto brez ekonomske vrednosti.

Ključne besede: opis, morfometrične meritve, meristika, razširjenost, globokomorsko okolje, vzhodno Sredozemsko morje

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