

Short communication

On the record of the Lessepsian migrant *Fistularia commersonii* (Rüppell, 1835) from the Adriatic Sea

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Summary

On 7 November and 15 December 2006, two specimens of the Lessepsian migrant *Fistularia commersonii* were caught in trammel nets off the coastal waters of Tricase Porto (south-western Adriatic, Italy) and Sveti Andrija (southeastern Adriatic, Croatia), respectively. These represent the first records of this species in the Adriatic Sea.

Introduction

Since the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, there has been an influx of Red Sea and Indo-Pacific species into the Mediterranean Sea, a phenomenon known as Lessepsian migration. In the most recent comprehensive account, Golani et al. (2002) enumerated 59 Lessepsian fish species; nine of these species have reached the Adriatic Sea (Dulčić et al., 2004).

The bluespotted cornetfish *Fistularia commersonii* (Rüppell, 1835), a reef-associated species of minor importance to commercial fisheries, is widely distributed in the East Pacific, from Mexico to Panama, in southern Japanese, Australian and New Zealander waters, in East African waters, and in the Red Sea (Froese and Pauly, 2003). It was first recorded in the Mediterranean Sea in Israeli waters in January 2000 and was classified as a new Lessepsian migrant (Golani, 2000).

This paper presents the first record and description of the Lessepsian migrant bluespotted cornetfish *F. commersonii* (Rüppell, 1835) in the Adriatic Sea.

Results and discussion

On 7 November and 15 December 2006, two specimens of the bluespotted cornetfish (Fig. 1) were caught with trammel nets in the waters off Tricase Porto (southwestern Adriatic, Italy; 39°55'N 18°23'E) and off Sveti Andrija (southeastern Adriatic, Croatia; 42°39' N, 17°57'E), respectively. The Tricase Porto specimen was collected 200 m off the coast at about 20 m depth, on a rocky bottom interspersed with sandy patches. The specimen from Sveti Andrija was caught at a depth of 30 m on a rocky bottom. Both specimens had the typical diagnostic features of *F. commersonii* [i.e. fin rays: 15 dorsal, 14 anal, 14 pectoral, and 6 pelvic; no elongated body plates along the dorsal midline in front and behind the dorsal fin (Golani, 2000)]. This species can be distinguished from all other Mediterranean similar-bodied fish by its very long tubular mouth, extremely elongated body shape and whiplike filamented caudal middle rays. Brownish to olive in colour, with

rows of blue spots and a pair of blue stripes along the back. White belly, fins with orange crest, transparent at base. Total length (TL) of the *F. commersonii* collected off Tricase was TL = 1020 mm, standard length SL = 850 mm and total weight 530 g, and is preserved at the 'Pietro Parenzan' Museum of the Porto Cesareo Marine Biology Station. Total length of the specimen caught off Sveti Andrija was TL = 1150 mm, standard length SL = 1108 mm and total weight 1210 g, being the largest *F. commersonii* caught to date in the Mediterranean Sea. Previous captures were in Israeli waters: 3 individuals, 268–516 mm SL and 10.3 and 82.5 g (Golani, 2000); Island of Rhodes: 37 individuals, 141–734 mm SL (Corsini et al., 2002); North Aegean Sea, Chalkidiki Peninsula: one individual, 884 mm SL and 448.1 g (Karachle et al., 2004); eastern coast of Lampedusa Island: 1 individual, 104.5 cm SL and 1150 g (Azzurro et al., 2004); and Turkish waters, 3 individuals, 691–728 mm SL (Bilecenoglu et al., 2002). These specimens were not preserved as fishermen took them to fish markets, however, they represent the first records of *F. commersonii* in the Adriatic Sea.

In 2001 the bluespotted cornetfish was reported to be in considerable abundance in the waters off the Island of Rhodes (south-eastern Aegean Island; Corsini et al., 2002). It was then recorded on the Anatolian coast of Turkey (Bilecenoglu et al., 2002), Tunisian coast (Ben Souissi et al., 2004), southern Italy (Azzurro et al., 2004) including the Sicilian Canal (Fiorentino et al., 2004) and northwestern Sicily (Pipitone et al., 2004), as well as the Island of Sardinia (Italy) in the central Tyrrhenian Sea (Pais et al., 2006). Because of its rapid spread throughout the Mediterranean it was nicknamed the 'Lessepsian sprinter' (Karachle et al., 2004). A piscivorous species, *F. commersonii* also feeds on small crustaceans [e.g. mysids, euphasiids, crabs, and other benthic crustaceans (Froese and Pauly, 2003)], and is considered to be a higher order carnivore (Stergiou and Karpouzi, 2002). These records of bluespotted cornetfish on both coasts of the Adriatic Sea do not allow with confidence any comments as to whether the species has established a population in the sea basin. In any event, the impact of the possible successful colonization by these and other exotic fish species would, at a minimum, represent a significant change in the composition of the native ichthyofauna. The rapid rate of northward expansion of the bluespotted cornetfish and very high abundance attained in the past 6 years in Mediterranean waters implies that such colonization in the Adriatic might take place in the near future, with the potential for significant effects on local fish communities.

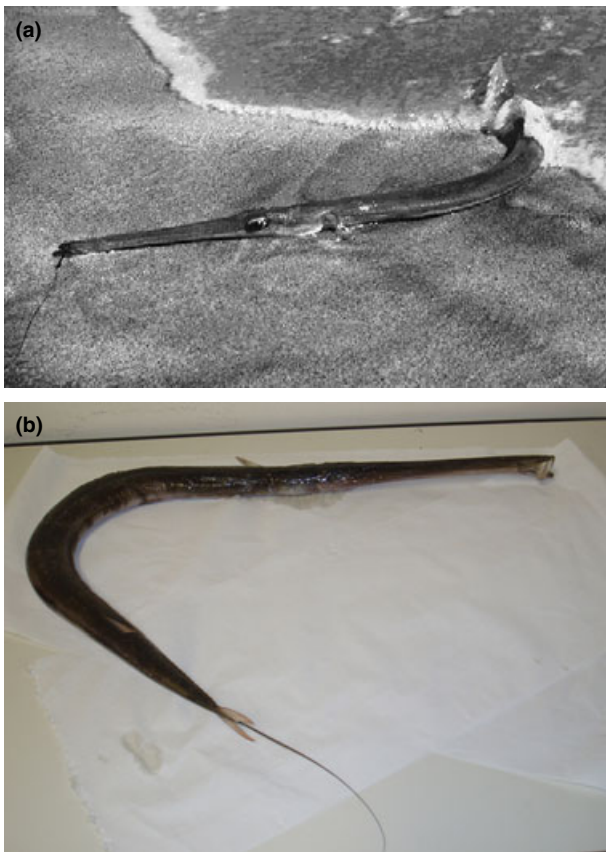


Fig. 1. *Fistularia commersonii* specimens: (a) (TL = 1150 mm) caught near Sveti Andrija Island (southeastern Adriatic, Croatia); (b) (TL = 1020 mm) caught in waters off Tricase Porto (southwestern Adriatic, Italy)

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