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FIRST RECORDS OF SIDEBURN WRASSE *PTERAGOGUS PELYCUS*
(OSTEICHTHYES: LABRIDAE) OFF THE SYRIAN COAST
(EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN)

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ABSTRACT

*This paper reports the first records of two specimens of sideburn wrasse *Pteragogus pelycus* Randall, 1981 from the Syrian coast. These records confirm the occurrence of *P. pelycus* Randall, 1981 in the eastern Mediterranean and suggest that a sustainable population is progressively established since two decades in this sea.*

Key words: Lessepsian migrants, description, morphometric measurements, meristic counts, distribution

PRIME SEGNALAZIONI DI *PTERAGOGUS PELYCUS* (OSTEICHTHYES: LABRIDAE) AL
LARGO DELLA COSTA SIRIANA (MEDITERRANEO ORIENTALE)

SINTESI

*L'articolo riporta le prime segnalazioni di due individui del labride *Pteragogus pelycus* Randall, 1981 al largo della costa della Siria. A seguito di tali segnalazioni, gli autori confermano la presenza di *P. pelycus* Randall, 1981 nel Mediterraneo orientale e ipotizzano che una popolazione sostenibile si sia progressivamente stabilita nell'area negli ultimi due decenni.*

Parole chiave: migranti lessepsiani, descrizione, misurazioni morfometriche, conteggi meristici, distribuzione

INTRODUCTION

Sideburn wrasse *Pteragogus pelycus* Randall, 1981 is widely distributed in the western Indian Ocean, from South Africa coast (Randall, 1986), Mozambique (Smith, 1969), Seychelles, Mauritius and Madagascar Islands (Randall, 2013) to Red Sea (Golani et al., 2002). *P. pelycus* migrated toward northern areas and penetrated through Suez Canal into the Mediterranean Sea, where it was recorded for the first time in Haifa Bay by Golani & Sonin (1992).

P. pelycus extended its distribution range in the eastern Mediterranean and was recorded off Rhodes Island (Corsini & Economidis, 1999), northern Cyprus (Kaya et al., 2000), eastern Aegean Sea, where the species is one of the most abundant wrasses in *Posidonia* beds (Kalogirou et al., 2010), the coast of Turkey (Taskavak et al., 2000; Oz et al., 2007) and Lebanon (Harmelin-Vivien et al., 2005). Additionally, *P. pelycus* was recorded off the Mediterranean coast of Egypt which is considered to date as the southwesternmost extension range of the species in the Mediterranean Sea (Halim & Rizkalla, 2011; Azzurro et al., 2012).

Surveys conducted in the Syrian waters since 2000 allowed to collect some Lessepsian migrants (Ali et al., 2010, 2012, 2013a, 2013b), and, in the present paper, we report the capture of two specimens of *P. pelycus* that allow us to comment and discuss the spread of the species in the broader eastern Mediterranean, to assess its actual status in the same region.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Two specimens of *P. pelycus* were caught on 15 February, 2014, using a bottom cage net made of metal wire, at a depth of approximately 38 m, on rocky bottom. The capture site was located 1.5 km off Tartous Harbour (34° 51' N and 35° 48' E; Fig. 1). Both specimens were measured to the nearest millimetre and weighed to the nearest gram. Morphometric measurements with percents of standard length (SL) and counts followed Randall (1981, 1986) and Golani et al. (2002); they are included in Table 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, under the catalogue numbers 260 M.S.L (Fig 2) and 261 M.S.L, respectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Both Syrian specimens of *P. pelycus* were identified referring to Randall (1981, 1986) and Golani et al. (2002) with main characteristic features as follows: moderately deep and compressed body, its depth 2.62.7 in SL, head profile straight to slightly concave, head length 3.43.6 in SL, interorbital convex, eye diameter 3.5 in head length (Tab. 1), no long filaments extending from

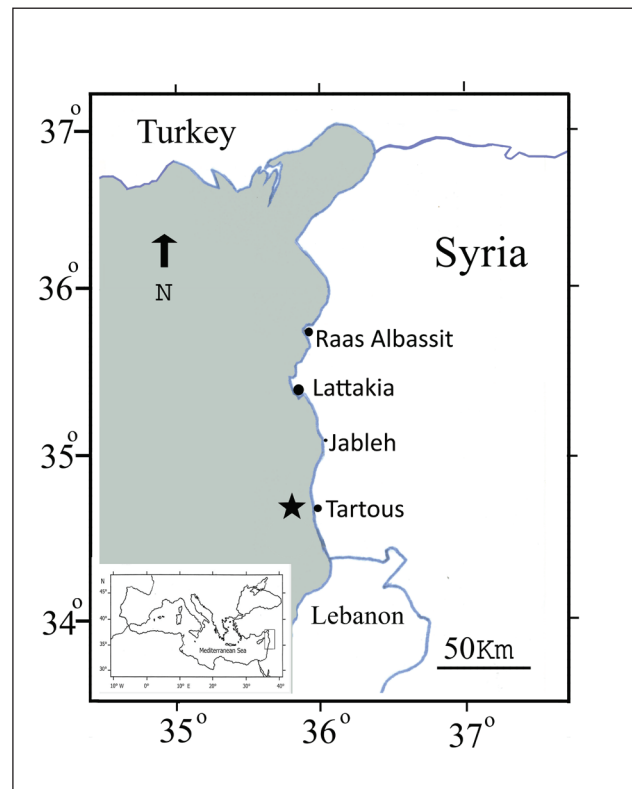


Fig. 1: Map of the Mediterranean showing Syria and map of the coast of Syria pointing out the capture sites of sideburn wrasse *Pteragogus pelycus* (black star).

Sl. 1: Položaj raziskovanega območja na zemljevidu Sredozemskega morja z lokalitetami, kjer je bila v sirskih vodah ujeta ustnača vrste *Pteragogus pelycus* (črna zvezdica).

tips of dorsal fins, caudal fin rounded, lateral line complete with dark brown-red spots, mouth terminal slightly



Fig. 2: Sideburn wrasse *P. pelycus* captured off the Syrian coast (specimen referenced 260 M.S.L, in the Ichthyological Collection of Tishreen University, Syria); scale bar = 20 mm.

Sl. 2: Primerek ustnače vrste *P. pelycus*, ujet v sirskih vodah (primerek s kataloško številko 260 M.S.L. v ihtiološki zbirki Univerze v Tishreenu v Siriji); merilo = 20 mm.

Tab. 1: Morphometric measurements in mm and as a percentage of standard length (% SL), meristic counts and weight in gram recorded in the 2 specimens of sideburn wrasse *P. pelycus* caught off the Syrian coast. Tab. 1: Morfometrične meritve v mm in izražene v deležu standardne dolžine (% SL), meristična štetja ter teža v gramih pri dveh primerkih ustnače *P. pelycus*, ujetih ob obali Sirije.

Reference of specimens	260 M.S.L		261 M.S.L	
	mm	% SL	mm	% SL
Morphometric measurements				
Standard length	75	100.0	74	100.0
Total length	93	124.0	92	124.3
Head length	21	28.0	21	28.4
Interorbital space	4	5.3	4	5.4
Eye horizontal diameter	6	8.0	6	8.1
Eye vertical diameter	6	8.0	6	8.1
Iris horizontal diameter	2	2.7	2	2.7
Iris vertical diameter	2	2.7	2	2.7
Snout length	7	9.3	8	10.8
Upper jaw length	9	12.0	8	10.8
Lower jaw length	8	10.7	8	10.8
Pectoral fin length	14	18.7	15	20.3
Pectoral fin base	4	5.3	5	6.8
Dorsal fin length	54	72.0	52	70.3
Dorsal fin base	44	58.7	43	58.1
Dorsal fin height	7	9.3	8	10.8
Pelvic fin length	37	49.3	32	43.2
Pelvic fin base	2	2.7	2	2.7
Anal fin length	28	37.3	29	39.2
Anal fin base	20	26.7	19	25.7
Anal fin height	4	5.3	4	5.4
Body depth	28	37.3	28	37.8
Pre-pectoral length	25	33.3	23	31.1
Pre-dorsal length	24	32.0	23	31.1
Pre-anal length	42	56.0	41	55.4
Pre-pelvic length	25	33.3	25	33.8
Caudal peduncle length	10	13.3	10	13.5
Suborbital depth	5	6.7	4	5.4
First dorsal spine length	5	6.7	5	6.8
Longest spine length of dorsal fin	10	13.3	8	10.8
Meristic counts				
Dorsal fin spinous rays	11		11	
Dorsal fin soft rays	9		8	
Pelvic fin spinous rays	1		1	
Pelvic fin soft rays	5		5	
Anal fin spinous rays	3		3	
Anal fin soft rays	8		9	
Pectoral fin spinous rays	-		-	
Pectoral fin soft rays	13		13	
Caudal fin soft rays	13		12	
Lateral line scales	23		23	
Total weight (g)	11.61		10.92	

oblique, with two pairs of large recurved canine teeth. Colour olivaceous, an oblique elliptical black spot present on operculum with yellow ring near its edge, fins yellowish with black spots on the upper part of the first 2-4 interspinous dorsal membrane (Fig. 2).

Morphometric measurements (including percent of SL), meristic counts, morphology and colour are in total agreement with Randall (1981, 1986) and Golani et al. (2002). So, these findings of *P. pelycus* constitute the first records of the species reported from the Syrian coast. Consequently, the addition of *P. pelycus* in the local ichthyofauna brings the number of species to 270, including 43 chondrichthyan species and 227 teleost species (Saad et al., 2004; Saad, 2005; Ali et al., 2010, 2013a, 2013b).

These two new records suggest that a sustainable population of *P. pelycus* is at present established in the eastern Mediterranean. However, the western extension range of *P. pelycus* seems to be rather limited; since its first record which occurred twenty-two years ago (Golani & Sonin, 1992). *P. pelycus* reached only to date the Mediterranean coast of Egypt (Halim & Rizkalla, 2011; Azzurro et al., 2012). Such pattern could be due to the fact *P. pelycus* lives in restricted habitats where it feeds on invertebrate species strictly related to endemic Mediterranean Sea grass niches (Kalogirou et al., 2010). Additionally, lacks of information concerning new findings of *P. pelycus* from the western Mediterranean cannot be totally ruled out.

PRVI ZAPIS O POJAVLJANJU USTNAČE VRSTE *PTERAGOGUS PELYCUS*
(OSTEICHTHYES: LABRIDAE) OB SIRSKI OBALI (VZHODNO SREDOZEMSKO MORJE)

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POVZETEK

Prispevek obravnava prvi zapis o pojavljanju dveh primerkov ustnače Pteragogus pelycus (Randall, 1981) iz sirske vode. Ti podatki vnovično potrjujejo pojavljanje vrste P. pelycus v vzhodnem Sredozemskem morju in kažejo, da se je ta vrsta v vzhodnem Sredozemlju po prvih zapisih izpred dvajsetih let danes že popolnoma ustalila.

Ključne besede: Lessepske selivke, opis, morfometrične meritve, meristika, razširjenost

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