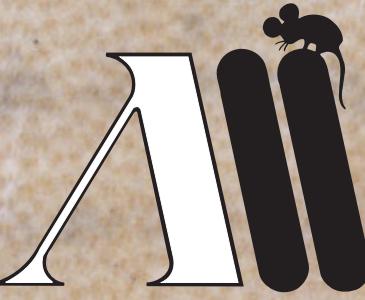


# ANNALES



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Annals for Istrian and Mediterranean Studies  
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## CAPTURE OF A BIGEYE THRESHER SHARK *ALOPIAS SUPERCILIOSUS* (ALOPIIDAE) IN TURKISH WATERS (EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN SEA)

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### ABSTRACT

*The present paper reports a new capture of bigeye thresher shark, *Alopias superciliatus* (Lowe, 1839). To date, 9 specimens have been recorded in the area, suggesting that a viable population of this type of shark might be successfully establishing in the area, but other records are needed to confirm this hypothesis. The paper comments on the distribution of the species in the Mediterranean Sea, suggesting that it does not originate from this sea, but is probably a migrant species from the eastern tropical Atlantic or from the Indian Ocean.*

**Key words:** Chondrichthyes, Alopiidae, distribution, population, migration

## CATTURA DI SQUALO VOLPE OCCHIONE *ALOPIAS SUPERCILIOSUS* (ALOPIIDAE) IN ACQUE DELLA TURCHIA (MEDITERRANEO ORIENTALE)

### SINTESI

*Il presente documento riporta una nuova cattura di squalo volpe occhione, *Alopias superciliatus* (Lowe, 1839). Ad oggi, nove esemplari sono stati registrati nell'area, suggerendo che una popolazione vitale di questa specie si stia stabilendo con successo nell'area. Saranno comunque necessarie altre segnalazioni per confermare questa ipotesi. L'articolo commenta la distribuzione delle specie nel Mediterraneo, suggerendo che lo squalo volpe occhione non sia originario di questo mare, ma sia probabilmente una specie migratrice arrivata all'Atlantico orientale o dall'Oceano Indiano.*

**Parole chiave:** Chondrichthyes, Alopiidae, distribuzione, popolazione, migrazione

## INTRODUCTION

The bigeye thresher shark, *Alopias superciliosus* (Lowe, 1840), is a cosmopolitan species widely distributed in warm temperate waters of the the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans (Compagno, 1984). Off the eastern Atlantic coast, *A. superciliosus* is abundantly collected off the eastern side of the Atlantic Ocean from Portugal and Madeira to Morocco between 15° and 40° N (Quéro, 1984); Moreno & Morón (1992) and Fernandez-Carvalho et al. (2011) provided data about some traits of its reproductive biology from these areas.

*A. superciliosus* probably entered the Mediterranean Sea through the Strait of Gibraltar; in the Mediterranean, it was first recorded in the Ionian Sea following Gruber & Compagno (1981). An overview of Mediterranean records reported in literature shows that at least 40 specimens have been captured since, most of them in the eastern Basin, and especially in Turkish waters (Lanteri et al., 2017). Investigations regularly conducted in the latter area, focusing on elasmobranch species and supported by local fishermen actively helping the researchers, have enabled the collection of the specimen of *A. superciliosus* presented in this paper, which also provides comments about the species' origin and distribution in the same area and in the wider Mediterranean Sea.

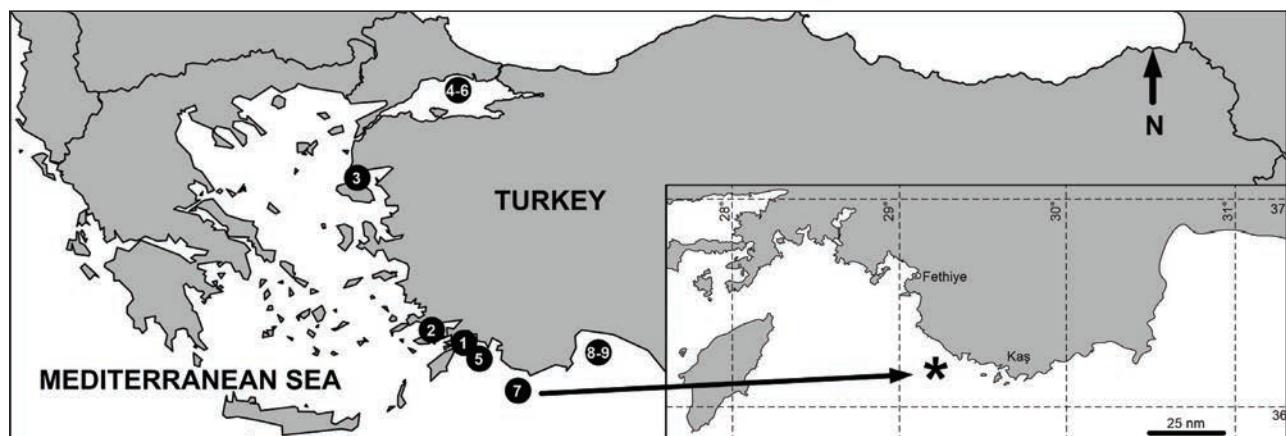
## MATERIAL AND METHODS

On 23 September 2012, a specimen of *A. superciliosus* was captured by a pelagic longline at a depth of 1100 m off Fethiye, a city by the Aegean Sea, located at 36° 23' N and 29° 00' E (Fig. 1). The specimen was a female measuring 150 cm in total length (TL), and weighing 30.2 kg (Fig. 2). It was caught together with a Mediterranean moray eel *Muraena helena* Linnaeus, 1758, an oilfish *Ruvettus pretiosus* Cocco, 1829 and a swordfish *Xiphias gladius*, Linnaeus 1758.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

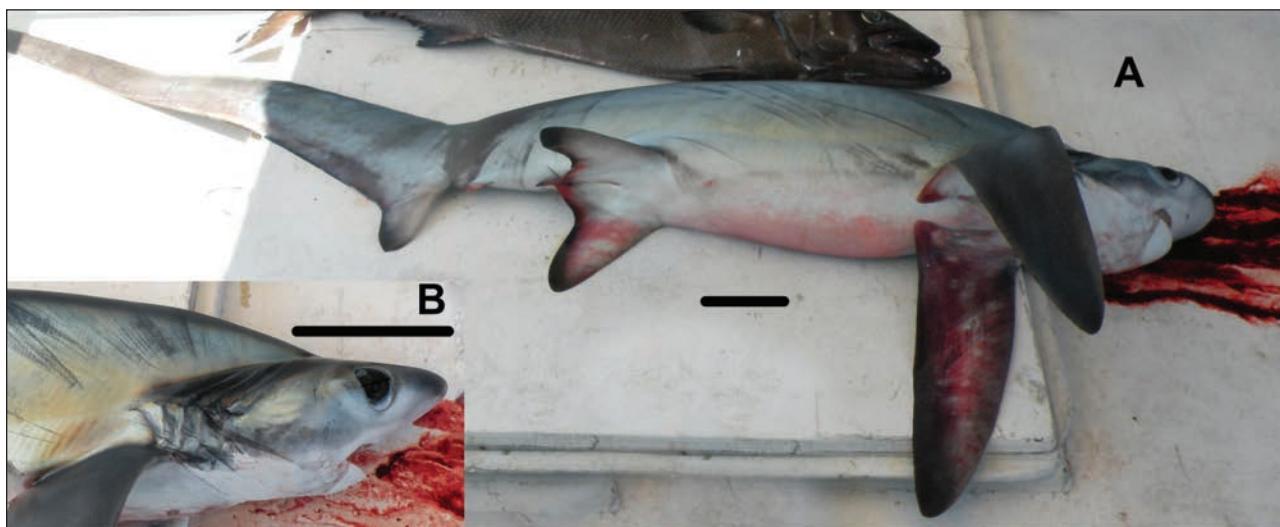
The specimen was identified as *A. superciliosus* based on the combination of the following main morphological characters: species-typical elongated upper lobe; snout rather long, bulbous; eyes very large, with orbits reaching the dorsal surface of the head; horizontal groove present on either side of head above the gills; labial furrows absent; first dorsal fin closer to pelvic fins than to pectoral fins; dorsal surface dark blue, belly cream to greyish.

These morphological characters are in total agreement with Compagno (1984), Quéro (1984) and Ebert & Stehmann (2013), and allow to include the present specimen among the nine *A. superciliosus* recorded to date in Turkish waters (Tab. 1). Ebert



**Fig. 1:** Records of *Alopias superciliosus* captured in Turkish waters by chronological order. 1: Marmaris, Aegean Sea (Clo et al., 2009). 2: Gökova Bay, Aegean Sea (Kabasakal, unpubl. data). 3: Sivrice, Aegean Sea (Kabasakal et al., 2011). 4: Silivri, Sea of Marmara (Kabasakal & Karhan, 2007). 5: Fethiye, Aegean Sea (Kabasakal et al., 2011). 6: Silivri, Sea of Marmara (Kabasakal et al., 2011). 7: Fethiye, Aegean Sea (This study). 8-9: Antalya, NE Mediterranean (Soldo et al., 2014). Insert: asterisk indicates the capture site of the present specimen.

Sl. 1: Zapisi o pojavljivanju velikooke morske lisice v turških vodah po kronološkem redosledu. 1: Marmaris, Egejsko morje (Clo in sod., 2009). 2: Gökova Bay, Egejsko morje (Kabasakal, neobjavl. podatki). 3: Sivrice, Egejsko morje (Kabasakal in sod., 2011). 4: Silivri, Marmarsko morje (Kabasakal & Karhan, 2007). 5: Fethiye, Egejsko morje (Kabasakal in sod., 2011). 6: Silivri, Marmarsko morje (Kabasakal in sod., 2011). 7: Fethiye, Egejsko morje (pričujoča raziskava). 8-9: Antalya, SV Sredozemsko morje (Soldo in sod., 2014). Manjša slika - zvezdica označuje mesto ulova obravnavanega primerka.



**Fig. 2: A - specimen of *Alopias superciliosus* captured off Fethiye (Aegean Sea), scale bar = 75 mm. B - head of the same specimen, scale bar = 75 mm.**

**Sl. 2: A - primerek velikooke morske lisice, ujet v vodah pred Fethiye (Egejsko morje), merilo = 75 mm. B - glava primerka, merilo = 75 mm.**

& Stehmann (2013) noted that size at birth ranged between 100 and 140 cm TL, with the largest adult *A. superciliosus* ever captured reaching 484 cm TL. Since female specimens mature between 332 and 356 mm TL (Ebert & Stehmann, 2013), the present *A. superciliosus* could be considered at least as a juvenile female.

Serena (2005) noted that *A. superciliosus* was an occasional or rather rare species in the Mediterranean Sea. Conversely Clo et al. (2008) and Corsini-Foka & Sioulas (2009) considered the species abundant in some areas. De Maddalena & Baensch (2005) noted that the recent findings of *A. superci-*

*liosus* indicate that the shark occurs in the Mediterranean and is rather abundant in the eastern Basin, where a viable population appears to be progressively establishing (Kabasakal et al., 2011). However, no nursery grounds for *A. superciliosus* were clearly observed anywhere in the Mediterranean Sea, and some traits of its reproductive biology are locally still unknown.

The status of the species in some Mediterranean areas remains questionable, due to fact that it is also noted as endangered (Walls & Soldo, 2016). Additionally, it is facing interspecific competition pressure from its closely sympatric species, thresh-

**Tab. 1: Detailed records of specimens of *Alopias superciliosus* caught in Turkish waters.**  
**Tab. 1: Podrobni zapisi o primerkih velikooke morske lisice, ujetih v turškikh vodah.**

Record	Date	Area	Depth (m)	TL (cm)	Fishing gear	References
1	? /04/2005	Marmaris, Aegean Sea	?	?	?	Clo et al. (2009)
2	23/05/2005	Gökova Bay, Aegean Sea	?	350	?	Kabasakal (unpub. data)
3	21/05/2006	Sivrice, Aegean Sea	100	400	gill net	Kabasakal et al. (2011)
4	23/02/2007	Silivri, Sea of Marmara	?	450	purse-seine	Kabasakal & Karhan (2007)
5	28/02/2011	Fethiye, Aegean Sea	110	450	trammel net	Kabasakal et al. (2011)
6	02/07/2011	Silivri, Sea of Marmara	?	250	purse-seine	Kabasakal et al. (2011)
7	23/09/2012	Fethiye, Aegean Sea	1100	150	longline	This study
8	15/04/2015	Antalya, NE Mediterranean	500	?	?	Soldo et al. (2014)
9	05/05/2015	Antalya, NE Mediterranean	500	?	trawl	Soldo et al. (2014)

er shark *Alopias vulpinus* (Bonnaterre, 1788), which is locally somewhat more abundant. The best example of such competition is probably the Maghreb shore, where *A. superciliatus* does not occur and *A. vulpinus* is commonly caught (Hemida, 2005; Hemida 2019; pers. comm., Rafrati-Nouira et al., 2019).

The first Mediterranean records of *A. superciliatus* occurred during 1952–1954 according to Corsini-Forkas & Sioulas (2009), with 40 other records reported since (Lanterni et al., 2017). The first reports on the species came from the western Basin, suggesting a migration of *A. superciliatus* from the eastern tropical Atlantic to the Mediterranean Sea through the Strait of Gibraltar. It appears that most of the subsequent records of *A. superciliatus* reported by Lanterni et al. (2017) occurred in the eastern areas, therefore a migration of the species toward these areas remains a valid hypothesis.

*A. superciliatus* is known throughout the Indian Ocean, where viable populations are successfully established (Bass et al., 1975; Das et al., 2016). Although it is not recorded in the Red Sea (Golani & Fricke, 2005), a migration of the species into the Mediterranean Sea through the Suez Canal cannot be totally ruled out. It is evident that *A. superciliatus* does not originate from the Mediterranean Sea; rather, it is a vagrant species – a Herculean migrant (*sensu* Quignard & Tomasini, 2001) or a Lessepsian migrant (*sensu* Por, 1978), or having perhaps both origins. Similar patterns were also reported for the milk shark *Rhizoprionodon acutus* (Rüppell, 1983) by Ben Amor et al. (2016). Consequently, the origin of *A. superciliatus* in the Mediterranean could and should be determined using molecular tools. Still, whatever the origin of *A. superciliatus*, the latter should be defined as an alien species among the fish species known to date in this sea (see Golani et al., 2017).

# ULOV VELIKOOKE MORSKE LISICE *ALOPIAS SUPERCILIOSUS* (ALOPIIDAE) V TURŠKIH VODAH (VZHODNO SREDOZEMSKO MORJE)

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## POVZETEK

Avtorji poročajo o novem primeru pojavljanja velikooke morske lisice, *Alopias superciliatus* (Lowe, 1839). Do danes je bilo v turških vodah potrjenih 9 zapisov o pojavljanju te vrste, na podlagi katerih bi lahko sklepali, da se je viabilna populacija te vrste uspela ustaliti v obravnavanem območju, čeprav bi to hipotezo zanesljivo potrdili novi podatki. Avtorji razpravljajo o razširjenosti vrste v Sredozemskem morju, na podlagi katerih menijo, da vrsta ne domuje v njem, ampak je vanj najverjetneje zašla kot selivka iz vzhodnega tropskega Atlantika ali iz Indijskega oceana.

**Ključne vrste:** Chondrichthyes, Alopiidae, razširjenost, populacija, selitev

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