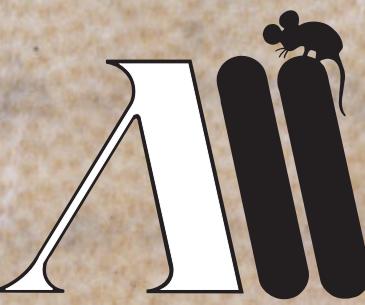


# ANNALES



*Analí za istrske in mediteranske študije  
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Annals for Istrian and Mediterranean Studies  
Series Historia Naturalis, 30, 2020, 2*



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## ABUDEFDUF CF. SAXATILIS IN THE SARONIKOS GULF, GREECE: UNAIDED INTRODUCTION OR HUMAN AIDED TRANSFER?

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### ABSTRACT

*One specimen of the sergeant-major fish Abudedefduf sp., provisionally named Abudedefduf cf. saxatilis (Linnaeus, 1758) was observed for the first time in the Saronikos Gulf, Greece in summer 2020. Its distinctive characteristics and potential mode of introduction in the Gulf, whether unaided or man induced transfer, are discussed.*

**Key words:** *Abudedefduf* sp., new record, Saronikos Gulf, crypto-expanding species, citizen science

## ABUDEFDUF CF. SAXATILIS NEL GOLFO DI SARONICO IN GRECIA: INTRODUZIONE ACCIDENTALE O INTENZIONALE DA PARTE DELL'UOMO?

### SINTESI

*Un pesce appartenente al genere Abudedefduf, provvisoriamente identificato come Abudedefduf cf. saxatilis (Linnaeus, 1758) è stato osservato per la prima volta nel Golfo di Saronico, in Grecia, nell'estate del 2020. Nell'articolo vengono discusse le caratteristiche distintive dell'esemplare e la potenziale via di introduzione nel Golfo, sia accidentale che intenzionale da parte dell'uomo.*

**Parole chiave:** *Abudedefduf* sp., nuova segnalazione, Golfo di Saronico, specie in cripto-espansione, citizen science

## INTRODUCTION

The Saronikos Gulf is a hot spot for alien species in Greek waters (Zenitos et al., 2018) with many species introduced by vessels. Of the seven introduced species of the family Pomacentridae reported in the Mediterranean (Osca et al., 2020), only two species of the genus *Abudefduf* are known from Greek waters to date. These are: *Abudefduf sexfasciatus* (Lacepède, 1801) reported from the Saronikos Gulf (Aegean Sea) (Giovos et al., 2018), and *Abudefduf vaigiensis* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1825) reported from Kythira island (Ionian Sea) (Pirkenseer, 2020). Here we report on the presence of an alleged third species and discuss its potential mode of introduction.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

A collaboration agreement between the Archipelagos Institute of Marine Conservation (<https://archipelago.gr/en/>) and the Ellenic network on Aquatic Alien Species (ELNAIS: Zenetos et al., 2015) in raising public awareness on marine alien species was initiated in 2015.

As a result, many new records provided by citizen scientists have filled in distribution gaps for some of the most invasive species in Greek waters or added new records in Greek waters (Miliou & Loudaros in Ragkousis et al., 2020). Here we report on one new record provided by a citizen scientist (Ms. Mairi D. Aga) in September 2020. The report was accompanied by 2 photographs. Identification of the species was confirmed by the ELNAIS expert Maria Corsini-Foka.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On August 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020, a single specimen of *Abudefduf* was photographed along the south coast of Salamina island (Lat 37.877240, Long. 23.442463) at 2 m depth, during a snorkeling session. The species was tentatively identified as *A. saxatilis* (Linnaeus, 1758).

*Abudefduf saxatilis* is a tropical and subtropical fish of Atlantic origin that has become a commonly encountered species along the Israel coasts (Tsadok et al., 2015). The first occurrence of *A. saxatilis* in the Mediterranean Sea was reported by Azzurro et al. (2013) from Spain. Subsequent records are from Malta (Deidun & Castriota, 2014; Vella et al., 2016); Turkey (Bilecenoglu, 2016); Israel (Tsadok et al., 2015) Italy (Lipej et al., 2019); Slovenia (Lipej et al., 2019); and Libya (Osca et al., 2019). For a detailed account of their Mediterranean distribution, see Lipej et al. (2019).

*Abudefduf saxatilis* has been confused in the past with *A. vaigiensis*. The meristic counts and morphometric parameters of two species overlap a lot. As illustrated in Lipej et al. (2019) *Abudefduf saxatilis* is morphologically distinguished from *A. vaigiensis* by the following characteristics:

- a. in *A. saxatilis*, the origin of the 4<sup>th</sup> vertical bar is located under the last dorsal spine, while in *A. vaigiensis* it is placed behind the spine in the soft part of the dorsal fin;
- b. the continuous extension of the fifth dark vertical bar from the origin of the dorsal fin to the anal fin in *A. saxatilis*, which is shorter and



**Fig. 1: *Abudefduf cf. saxatilis* from Salamina Island. The arrow indicates the two black spots that are the distinguishing features of the species (Photo credit: Mairi D. Aga).**

**Sl. 1: *Abudefduf cf. saxatilis* iz otoka Salamina. Puščica označuje dve črni piki na repnem korenju, po katerem lahko to vrsto prepoznamo (Foto: Mairi D. Aga).**

- discontinued in *A. vaigiensis* and is located on the caudal peduncle;
- c. the presence of two black spots on the caudal peduncle (Fig. 1), which are absent in *A. vaigiensis*.

However, some researchers go as far as doubting the presence of consistent meristic or morphometric differences (see Deidun & Castriota, 2014; Osca et al., 2019) and, therefore molecular analysis is needed to confirm the correct identification of the species. In the absence of concrete data (only photographic evidence is available) we have provisionally named our finding *Abudefduf cf. saxatilis* (Linnaeus, 1758).

The presence of *Abudefduf cf. saxatilis* in the Saronikos Gulf cannot be attributed with certainty to any particular pathway because many potential pathways/vectors could be implicated (range expansion, vessel transfer, release from an aquarium). Considering that the closest record is that of Çandarlı bay, Turkey, east Aegean Sea (Bilecenoglu, 2016), and that other alien fishes attributed to aquaria releases have been recorded recently from the Saronikos area (Giovos et al., 2018; Karachle et al. in Bariche et al., 2020), the most plausible explanation is that of release from an aquarium. This is the first record of the species in

Greek waters. If its occurrence is due to ship transfer or to an aquarium release (pathways questioned by Lipej et al., 2019), it should be considered a new alien species for the area. Evans et al. (2020) classify *A. saxatilis* as a range expanding species (unaided introduction via the Gibraltar Strait, since there are at least three records which show an eastward progression in the Mediterranean). We provisionally classify it as crypto-expanding until molecular phylogenetic analysis shed more light.

In case it proves to be a man-induced transfer, it will be added to the list of alien species in the Mediterranean, which according to the latest update includes 666 established species (Zenetas & Galanidi, 2020).

This is yet another case evidencing the potential of citizen scientists to revealing the undetected as highlighted by Azzurro et al. (2013), who reported the first finding of *A. saxatilis* from Spain.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank Ms. Mairi D. Aga for providing the information and photographs, and Maria Corsini-Foka for confirming the species identification of the species.

## ABUDEFDUF CF. SAXATILIS V ZALIVU SARONIKOS (GRČIJA): NENAMEREN ALI NAMEREN VNOS?

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### POVZETEK

*Primerek seržanta Abudefduf sp., ki sta ga avtorici provizorično poimenovali kot Abudefduf cf. saxatilis (Linnaeus, 1758), je bil poleti 2020 prvič opažen v zalivu Saronikos (Grčija). Avtorici razpravljata o razlikovalnih znakih in možnem načinu prihoda te vrste v zaliv v smislu namernega (antropogenega) ali nenamernega vnosa.*

**Ključne besede:** *Abudefduf sp., novi zapis o pojavljanju, zaliv Saronikos, prikrito razširjajoča se vrsta, ljubiteljska znanost*

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