

ANNALES

Anali za istrske in mediteranske študije
Annali di Studi istriani e mediterraneei
Annals for Istrian and Mediterranean Studies
Series Historia Naturalis, 32, 2022, 1





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**Anali za istrske in mediteranske študije
Annali di Studi istriani e mediterraneei
Annals for Istrian and Mediterranean Studies**

Series Historia Naturalis, 32, 2022, 1

ISSN 1408-533X
e-ISSN 2591-1783

UDK 5

Letnik 32, leto 2022, številka 1

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Založništvo PADRE d.o.o.

Izdajatelj/Editori/Published by:

Zgodovinsko društvo za južno Primorsko - Koper / Società storica del Litorale - Capodistria®

Inštitut IRRIS za raziskave, razvoj in strategije družbe, kulture in okolja / Institute IRRIS for Research, Development and Strategies of Society, Culture and Environment / Istituto IRRIS di ricerca, sviluppo e strategie della società, cultura e ambiente®

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Address of Editorial Board:**Nacionalni inštitut za biologijo, Morska biološka postaja Piran / Istituto nazionale di biologia, Stazione di biologia marina di Pirano / National Institute of Biology, Marine Biology Station Piran
SI-6330 Piran / Pirano, Fornace/Fornace 41, tel.: +386 5 671 2900, fax +386 5 671 2901;
e-mail: annales@mbss.org, **internet:** www.zdjp.si

Redakcija te številke je bila zaključena 30. 06. 2022.

**Sofinancirajo/Supporto finanziario/
Financially supported by:**

Javna agencija za raziskovalno dejavnost Republike Slovenije (ARRS) in Mestna občina Koper

Annales - Series Historia Naturalis izhaja dvakrat letno.**Naklada/Tiratura/Circulation:** 300 izvodov/copie/copiesRevija *Annales, Series Historia Naturalis* je vključena v naslednje podatkovne baze / *La rivista Annales, series Historia Naturalis* è inserita nei seguenti data base / *Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in:* BIOSIS-Zoological Record (UK); Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts (ASFA); Elsevier B.V.: SCOPUS (NL); Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).To delo je objavljeno pod licenco / *Quest'opera è distribuita con Licenza / This work is licensed under a Creative Commons BY-NC 4.0.*Navodila avtorjem in vse znanstvene revije in članki so brezplačno dostopni na spletni strani <https://zdjp.si/en/p/annalesshn/>
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A RARE OCCURRENCE OF *CARAPUS ACUS* (CARAPIDAE) IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN, TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

Two specimens of pearl fish Carapus acus (Brünnich, 1768) were caught at a depth of 108 m in Gazipaşa coast, Antalya Bay (Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey) in March 2019. The present paper provides information on the occurrence of C. acus in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, in Turkey. Since it was recorded only once before in the last twenty-eight years, this species could be considered exceptionally rare in the easternmost area of the Mediterranean Sea.

Key words: Pearl fish, Carapidae, Rare record, Mersin Bay, Mediterranean Sea

RARO RITROVAMENTO DI *CARAPUS ACUS* (CARAPIDAE) NEL MEDITERRANEO ORIENTALE, IN TURCHIA

SINTESI

Due esemplari di galiotto, Carapus acus (Brünnich, 1768), sono stati catturati ad una profondità di 108 m al largo della costa di Gazipaşa, baia di Antalya (Mediterraneo orientale, Turchia) nel marzo 2019. L'articolo fornisce informazioni sull'occorrenza di C. acus nel Mediterraneo orientale, in Turchia. Poiché precedentemente è stato ritrovato una volta sola negli ultimi ventotto anni, questa specie potrebbe essere considerata eccezionalmente rara nell'area più orientale del Mediterraneo.

Parole chiave: Galiotto, Carapidae, ritrovamento raro, Baia di Mersin, Mediterraneo

INTRODUCTION

The family Carapidae is represented in Mediterranean waters by a single genus and a single species (Froese & Pauly, 2022), *Carapus acus* (Brünnich, 1768).

Individuals of pearl fish swim close to the sea bottom searching for suitable (new) hosts. The species lives as a commensal in common association with sea cucumbers, spending the day inside the respiratory tree in the body cavity of sea cucumbers (Gonzales-Wangüemert *et al.*, 2014; Froese & Pauly, 2022).

In Turkish waters, the pearl fish has been observed only occasionally (Aksiray, 1954; Geldiay, 1969). It was reported by Gucu *et al.* (1994) from Mersin Bay (northeastern Mediterranean Sea) and later off the Bozcaada Island, in the northern Aegean Sea (Eryılmaz,

2003), as well as from Çeşme (İzmir) in the Turkish coast of the Aegean Sea (Aydın & Akyol, 2018).

Although *C. acus* has been reported in the north coasts of the Levantine Sea (Aksiray, 1954; Gucu & Bingel, 1994), the species is very rare in the Mediterranean (Fischer, 2007). In Turkish Mediterranean waters it had been recorded only once before in the last twenty-eight years. This study reports the first occurrence of *C. acus* from Antalya Bay and confirms the presence of the species in the western area of the southern coasts of Turkey.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

On 28 March 2019, two specimens of *C. acus* were captured at a depth of 108 m with a commercial bottom trawl off the Gazipaşa coast (N 35°47'447''

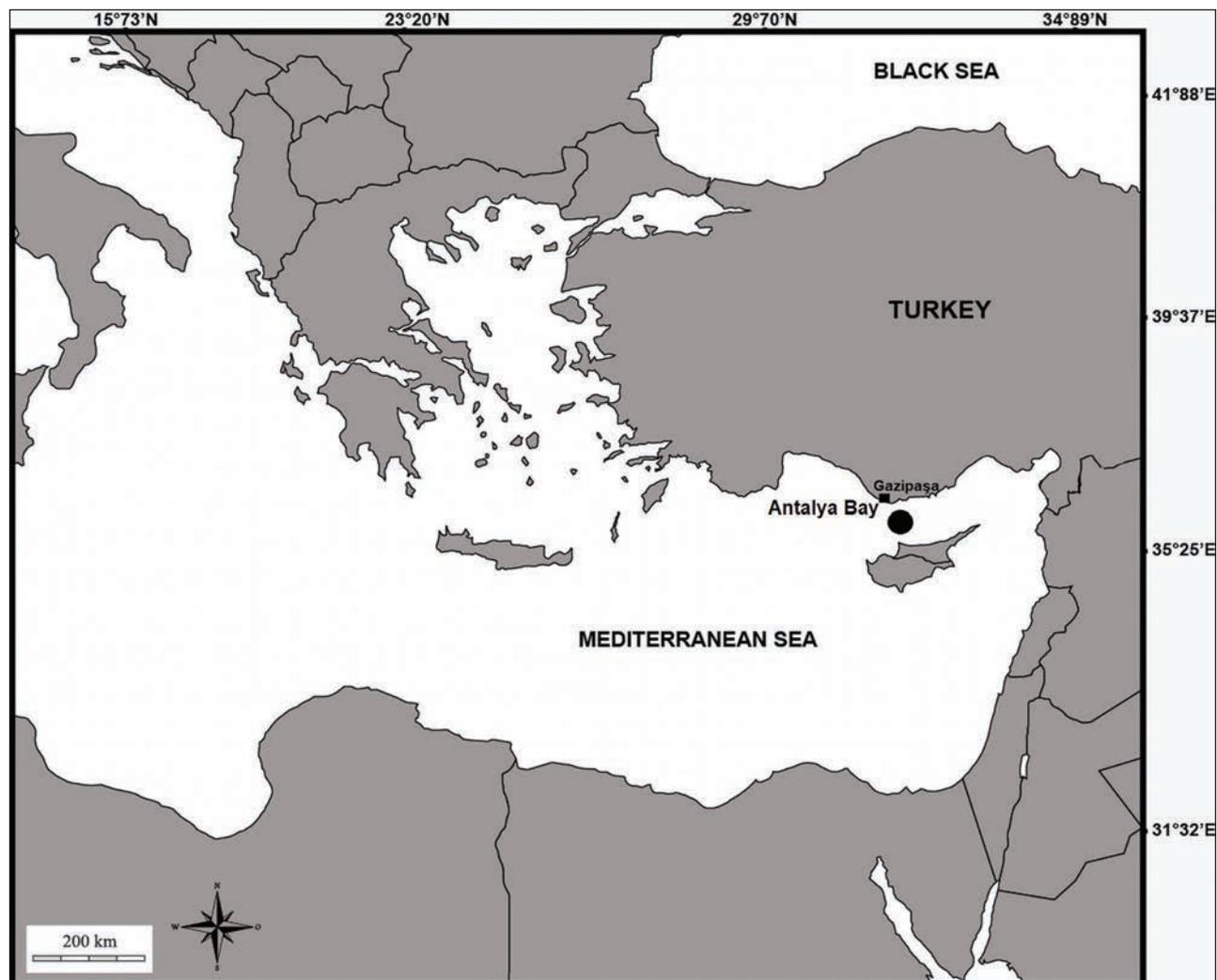


Fig. 1: Map showing the capture site (•) of *Carapus acus* specimens in Antalya Bay (Eastern Mediterranean Sea).

Sl. 1: Zemljevid obravnavanega območja z označeno lokaliteto ulova (•) primerkov strmorinca v Antalijskem zalivu (vzhodno Sredozemsko morje).

Tab. 1: Morphometric measurements of *Carapus acus* specimens captured in Antalya Bay, Turkey and comparison with previous studies.

Tab. 1: Morfometrične meritve osebkov *Carapus acus*, ujetih v Antalijskem zalivu v Turčiji, in primerjava s prejšnjimi študijami.

Measurements (cm)	This study		Enajjar & Bradai (2016)	Aydın & Akyol (2018)
	1	2		
Numbers of Specimens	1	2	1	1
Total length	9.8	8.6	13.6	18.1
Body depth	0.47	0.41	0.54	0.94
Head length	1.34	1.18	1.16	1.33
Head width	0.42	0.37	-	-
Eye diameter	0.24	0.21	0.34	1.67
Pre-orbital length	0.25	0.22	0.33	1.25
Pre-pectoral length	0.70	0.61	1.77	1.27
Pre-dorsal length	1.48	1.30	2.16	4.36
Pre-anal length	1.32	1.16	1.91	1.38

and E 32°45'488"), in Antalya Bay (western Mediterranean, Turkey) (Fig. 1). After being brought to the laboratory, the specimens were identified and photographed. The morphometric characters of the two specimens were measured to the nearest 0.1 mm using a digital caliper. All measurements and colour agree with the description of Trott & Olney (1986). The specimens were preserved in 4% formaldehyde and deposited in the Museum of the Faculty of Marine Sciences and Technology, Iskenderun Technical University, under catalogue numbers MSM-PIS/2019-4 and MSM-PIS/2019-5 (Fig. 2).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The body is laterally compressed, elongated. The continuous dorsal fin and the anal fin run the whole length of the body. Teeth in jaws small and uniform. There is no caudal fin and the tail ends with a point. Colour: the body is translucent, with a number of silvery or reddish-gold iridescent spots on the operculum and the thoracic region. The peritoneum lining the body cavity is an opaque silvery colour.

The pearl fish *C. acus* is a nocturnal species. Adult specimens occurring in shallow waters are typically commensal with holothurian species (Eeckhaut *et al.*, 2004) and generally use them as shelter (Schwartz *et al.*, 2012). The most common sea cucumber hosts are *Parastichopus regalis*, *H. hammata*, *H. sanctori*, and *H. tubulosa* (González-Wangüemert *et al.*, 2014). According to Trott & Olney (1986) *C. acus* may partly protrude from or entirely leave the host at night to feed.



**Fig. 2: The specimens of *Carapus acus* captured from Gazipaşa coast (Antalya Bay).
Sl. 2: Primerki strmorincev (*Carapus acus*), ujeti na obali Gazipaşa (Antalijski zaliv).**

Tab. 2: Records of *C. acus* in the Mediterranean Sea.**Tab. 2: Najdbe strmorincev (*C. acus*) v Sredozemskem morju.**

Author(s)	Year(s)	Location	Depth (m)	Gear	TL (cm)
Gucu <i>et al.</i> (1994)	May 1980 - October 1984	Northeastern Mediterranean Sea, Turkey	55-78	Trawl net	-
Eryilmaz (2003)	May 2001	Bozcaada Island (northern Aegean Sea), Turkey	68	Trawl net	14.9-16.1
González-Wangüemert <i>et al.</i> (2004)	May-July 2013	Off the Southeastern Spanish coast, Spain	-	Trawl net	7.0-21.5
Enajjar & Bradai (2016)	09 May 2014	Gulf of Gabes (central Mediterranean), Tunisia	100	Trawl net	13.6
Aydın & Akyol (2018)	30 March 2018	Çeşme (İzmir) coast (Aegean Sea), Turkey	60-80	Trawl net	18.1
This study	28 March 2019	Gazipaşa coast, Antalya Bay, Turkey	108	Trawl net	8.6-9.8

C. acus is known throughout the Mediterranean, commonly in its western part, and rarely occurs in the Adriatic and the Aegean Seas (Uiblein *et al.*, 2015). It is a non-migratory benthic species found in demersal areas usually at depths between 1 m and 150 m (Nielsen *et al.*, 1999). *C. acus* can reach a maximum size of 20.8 cm in total length, TL (Markle & Olney, 1990). It commonly feeds on small bottom invertebrates and small fishes (Trott & Olney, 1986).

The specimens of pearl fish *C. acus* from Antalya Bay were captured during commercial trawling hauls in the evening, and no sea cucumbers were caught in the process. Gonzales-Wangüemert *et al.* (2014) and Aydın & Akyol (2018) reported *C. acus* specimens found among *P. regalis*. Parmentier and Das (2004) mentioned that these species leave their host holothurians essentially at night. Thus, the two specimens from the present study might have been captured after leaving their hosts.

The two specimens were measured at 8.6 cm and 9.8 cm in TL. The measurements of *C. acus* are summarised in Table 1 and compared with previous Mediterranean samples (Enajjar & Bradai, 2016; Aydın & Akyol, 2018). Our specimens were found

to be smaller than those of the previous records reported for the Gulf of Gabes (southern Tunisia, central Mediterranean) (Enajjar & Bradai, 2016), for Bozcaada Island (Aegean Sea, Turkey) (Eryilmaz, 2003), and the Aegean Sea (Çeşme, Turkey) (Aydın & Akyol, 2018). However, González-Wangüemert *et al.* (2004) reported samples for the Mediterranean (southern Spain) that are in total agreement with our measurements. The previous captures of the species in the Mediterranean waters are documented in Table 2.

Although *C. acus* has been categorised as a Least Concern (LC) species in the Mediterranean according to the Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the situation concerning *C. acus* in the Eastern Mediterranean should be re-evaluated. We propose that continuous studies are conducted to further investigate and monitor this rare species in the eastern region of the Mediterranean.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors thank the boat captain and staff who helped the samples.

REDKO POJAVLJANJE STRMORINCA *CARAPUS ACUS* (CARAPIDAE) V VZHODNEM SREDOZEMSKEM MORJU (TURČIJA)

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POVZETEK

Dva primerka strmorinca Carapus acus (Brünnich, 1768) sta bila ujeta na globini 108 m na obali Gazi-paşa, v Antalijskem zalivu (vzhodno Sredozemsko morje, Turčija) v marcu 2019. V pričujočem prispevku avtorja podajata podatke o pojavljanju vrste C. acus v vzhodnem Sredozemskem morju (Turčija). Ker je bil v zadnjih 28 letih ujet doslej le v enem primeru, to vrsto opredeljujeta kot izjemno redko vrsto v skrajnem vzhodnem delu Sredozemskega morja.

Ključne besede: strmorinec, Carapidae, redka najdba, zaliv Mersin, Sredozemsko morje

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