

ANNALES

Anali za istrske in mediteranske študije
Annali di Studi istriani e mediterranee
Annals for Istrian and Mediterranean Studies
Series Historia Naturalis, 33, 2023, 1





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Series Historia Naturalis, 33, 2023, 1

ISSN 1408-533X
e-ISSN 2591-1783

UDK 5

Letnik 33, leto 2023, 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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e-mail: annales@mbss.org, **internet:** www.zdjp.si

Redakcija te številke je bila zaključena 23. 06. 2023.

**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/copies

Revija 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).

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received: 2022-10-18

DOI 10.19233/ASHN.2023.04

ADDITIONAL RECORD OF *SILLAGO SUEZENSIS* (SILLAGINIDAE) FROM THE AEGEAN SEA, TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

Two specimens of the Lessepsian migrant S. suezensis were captured by trammel net on 2 August 2022 off Akyaka, Gökova Bay, Turkey at a depth of 2 m over a sandy bottom. This finding documents the third occurrence of S. suezensis in the south-eastern Turkish Aegean Sea. It is also the second northernmost record of the taxon in the Mediterranean Sea.

Key words: smelt-whiting, Lessepsian migration, occurrence, eastern Mediterranean

NUOVO RITROVAMENTO DI *SILLAGO SUEZENSIS* (SILLAGINIDAE) NEL MAR EGEO, TURCHIA

SINTESI

Due esemplari di S. suezensis, migrante lessepsiano, sono stati catturati con un tramaglio il 2 agosto 2022 al largo di Akyaka, nella baia di Gökova, in Turchia, a una profondità di 2 m su un fondale sabbioso. Questo risultato documenta il terzo ritrovamento di S. suezensis nel mar Egeo turco sud-orientale. Si tratta inoltre del secondo ritrovamento più settentrionale della specie nel mare Mediterraneo.

Parole chiave: *Sillago suezensis*, migrazione lessepsiana, presenza, Mediterraneo orientale

INTRODUCTION

The Sillaginidae family comprises 38 valid species (Fricke *et al.*, 2020) commonly known as smelt-whitings. Based on their elongated bodies, long snout, and long soft dorsal and anal fins as well as the horizontally positioned preopercles, the identification of the Sillaginidae at the level of family is easy (Golani *et al.*, 2014).

The species *Sillago suezensis* Golani, Fricke & Tikochinski, 2013 is endemic to the Northern Red Sea (Gulf of Suez, Egypt) and to date it is the only sillaginid species to have entered the Mediterranean from the Red Sea via the Suez Canal, i.e., through Lessepsian migration (Golani *et al.*, 2006, 2014; Golani & Fricke, 2018). In the Mediterranean, the species was initially misidentified as *S. sihama* (Golani *et al.*, 2014).

In the Mediterranean, *S. suezensis* was recorded for the first time (as *S. sihama*) in 1976 in the Lebanese coast by Mouneimne (1977) and in 1977 off the coasts of Israel (Ben-Tuvia, 1978). Along the Mediterranean coasts of Turkey, *S. suezensis* has been recorded from Iskenderun and Mersin Bays in the 1983-1984 (Gücü *et al.*, 1994) and 1997-1998

periods (Taskavak & Bilecenoğlu, 2001); from off Karataş (Başusta & Erdem, 2000; Torcu & Mater, 2000); from Antalya (Innal *et al.*, 2015; Innal, 2020); and repeatedly from Iskenderun Bay (Erguden *et al.*, 2009; Keskin *et al.*, 2011; Yemişken *et al.*, 2014; Mavruk *et al.*, 2017; Erguden & Doğdu, 2020). In the Levantine Sea, the species has also occurred in Egyptian waters since 1992 (cf. Halim & Rizkalla, 2011; Akel & Rizkalla, 2015; Rizkalla & Heneish, 2021), spreading as far as the waters of Cyprus (Katsanevakis *et al.*, 2009). Today, *S. suezensis* is common in Lebanese and Israeli waters (Bariche & Fricke, 2020; Galil *et al.*, 2020) as well as in the northeastern Mediterranean waters of Turkey (Erguden & Doğdu, 2020). In the southeastern Aegean Sea, *S. suezensis* was recorded for the first time in the southern waters of the Datça Peninsula, Turkey, by Bilecenoğlu (2004). The species has been recently reported from Gökova Bay, situated in the same region of the southeastern Turkish Aegean Sea (Çelik *et al.*, 2019), and from the Island of Rhodes, the latter being the first record for Greek waters (Tiralongo & Doumpas, 2019). Details of records of *S. suezensis* in Turkish waters are summarised in Table 1.

Tab. 1: Records of *Sillago suezensis* in the Mediterranean and Aegean waters of Turkey (N: number of specimens collected; BT: bottom trawl; TN: trammel net; GN: gill net; HL: handline).

Tab. 1: Pojavljanje vrste *Sillago suezensis* v sredozemskih in egejskih vodah Turčije (N: število ujetih primerkov; BT: pridnena vlečna mreža; TN: trislojna mreža; GN: zabodna mreža; HL: ročna vrvica).

Location	Coordinates Lat.N/Lon. E	Depth (m)	Record Date	N	Size (mm)	FG	References
Mediterranean Sea, Turkey							
Iskenderun and Mersin Bays	?	?	1983-1984	5	129-203 TL	BT	Gücü <i>et al.</i> (1994)
Off Karataş	?	?	1991-1994	2	149-173 TL	?	Torcu & Mater (2000)
Off Karataş	?	20-30	1994-1996	7	65-166 TL	BT	Başusta & Erdem (2000)
Iskenderun and Mersin Bays	?	10-80	1997-1998	108	94-203 TL	BT	Taskavak & Bilecenoğlu (2001)
Iskenderun Bay	?	12-120	2007-2008	23	87-205 TL	BT	Erguden <i>et al.</i> (2009)
Iskenderun Bay	?	54-64	2007-2008	?	?	BT	Keskin <i>et al.</i> (2011)
Iskenderun Bay	?	31-110	2010-2011	4	170-181 TL	BT	Yemişken <i>et al.</i> (2014)
Antalya Bay	?	?	2011-2012	149	122-176 TL	TN	Innal <i>et al.</i> (2015)
Iskenderun Bay	?	40	2013-2014	872	115-242	BT	Erguden & Doğdu (2020)
Brackish waters in Antalya	?	?	2014-2017	?	?	?	Innal (2020)
Aegean Sea, Turkey							
Palamutbükü, Datça	36°40' - 27°28'	12	7 th July 2004	2	148-157 SL	GN	Bilecenoğlu (2004)
Gökova Bay	37°02' - 28°19'	2	9 th July 2018	1	174 TL	HL	Çelik <i>et al.</i> (2019)
Gökova Bay	37°02' - 28°18'	2	2 nd Aug. 2022	2	174-175 TL	TN	This study

Continuous monitoring of the occurrence in space and time of marine non-indigenous species is of fundamental importance for assessing the levels of biological invasions, especially in marine regions such as the Aegean Sea, a basin of the Mediterranean Sea under high impact of thermophilic Lessepsian species, in particular in its southeastern sector (Katsanevakis *et al.*, 2020).

The paper documents a new record of the Lessepsian migrant *S. suezensis* in the Aegean Sea (eastern Mediterranean).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

On 2 August 2022, two specimens of *Sillago suezensis* were captured by trammel net off Akyaka, Gökova Bay ($37^{\circ}02'56''\text{N}$, $28^{\circ}18'47''\text{E}$, Fig. 1) at a depth of 2 m over a sandy bottom. The specimens were fixed in a 5% formaldehyde solution and then measured to the nearest mm with a caliper and weighed. The samples are deposited in the fish collection of the Faculty of Fisheries, Ege University (ESFM-PIS/2022-004).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Short descriptive characteristics of the *S. suezensis* specimens from Gökova Bay (Fig. 2): body elongated; head conical with pointed snout; small and terminal mouth with villiform teeth, upper jaw slightly longer than the lower; two dorsal fins close to each other, the first set higher than the second; second dorsal fin opposite to anal fin; absence of scales on the preoperculum and operculum. Body colour of fresh specimen silvery yellow, growing paler along

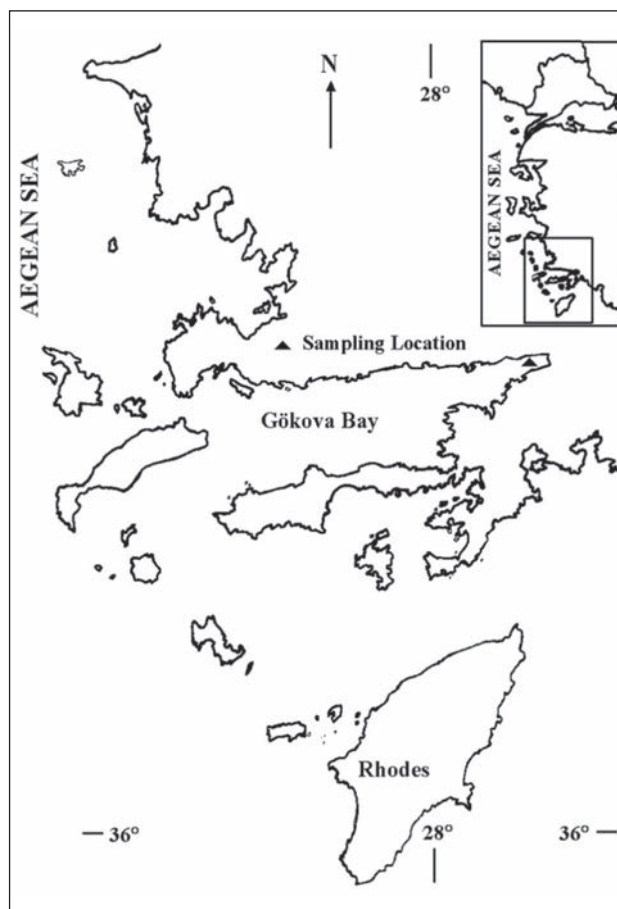


Fig. 1: Sampling location (black triangle) of *Sillago suezensis* in the Aegean Sea.

Sl. 1: Lokaliteta ulova (črn trikotnik) vrste *Sillago suezensis* v Egejskem morju.



Fig. 2: The largest specimen of *Sillago suezensis* captured from Gökova Bay, SE Aegean Sea (ref. ESFM-PIS/2022-004) (Photo: O. Akyol).

Sl. 2: Večji primerek vrste *Sillago suezensis*, ujet v zalivu Gökova, JV Egejsko morje (ref. ESFM-PIS/2022-004) (Foto: O. Akyol).

Tab. 2: Morphometric measurements in mm, also expressed as percentages of total length (%TL), and head length (%HL), meristic counts, and weights recorded in the two specimens of *Sillago suezensis* (ref. ESFM-PIS/2022-004) captured from Gökova Bay, SE Aegean Sea.

Tab. 2: Morfometrične meritve v mm in izražene kot delež telesne dolžine (%TL), in dolžine glave (HL%), meristična štetja in teža dveh primerkov vrste *Sillago suezensis* (ref. ESFM-PIS/2022-004), ujetih v zalivu Gökova, JV Egejsko morje.

Specimens	Specimen 1		Specimen 2	
Measurements	mm	Proportion %	mm	Proportion %
Total length (TL)	175		174	
Standard length (SL)	154	88.0 TL	153	87.9 TL
Predorsal fin length	51	29.1 TL	50	28.7 TL
Prepectoral fin length	44	25.1 TL	44	25.3 TL
Pre-anal fin length	88	50.3 TL	87	50.0 TL
Head length (HL)	42	24.0 TL	42	24.1 TL
Eye diameter	9	21.4 HL	9	21.4 HL
Preorbital length	17	40.5 HL	17	40.5 HL
Meristic counts				
1st Dorsal fin rays	X		X	
2nd Dorsal fin rays	I+21		I+21	
Anal fin rays	II+18		II+18	
Pelvic fin rays	I+5		I+5	
Pectoral fin rays	16		16	
Weight (g)	44.2		37.5	

the belly; a longitudinal silvery stripe present on the midlateral line; both dorsal fins and caudal fin dusky, other fins pale. All determined measurements, proportions, meristics (Tab. 2) and colour patterns are in accordance with those given for *S. suezensis* by Bilecenoğlu (2004), Golani *et al.* (2006, 2014), Innal *et al.* (2015) and Çelik *et al.* (2019).

While the *S. suezensis*, following the Lessepsian migration pattern along Anatolian coasts, has been spreading westwards as far as the Aegean Sea (Bilecenoğlu, 2004), a rising trend in the abundance of its populations in the Levant Sea has been observed (see also Table 1). This species has in fact acquired commercial value in Israel (Golani *et al.*, 2014) and in the southeastern waters of Turkey (Yemisken *et al.*, 2014; Innal, 2015). For example, in a trawl fishery survey carried out from 2004 to 2015, *S. suezensis* resulted the fifth most abundant Lessepsian

fish (4.73% of total teleost biomass) in Iskenderun Bay (Mavruk *et al.*, 2017).

This study presents the third record of *S. suezensis* from the southeastern Turkish Aegean Sea. For the time being, the occurrence of this species in the Aegean Sea appears sporadic, but the frequency of findings in the southeastern part of the basin reported in the last four years, both from Turkish and Greek waters, may be taken as indication of an ongoing establishment of this Lessepsian fish in the area. In addition, this is the second northernmost record of the species in the Mediterranean Sea.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors thank the anonymous referees for their kind contributions to the earlier version of the manuscript.

NOV ZAPIS O POJAVLJANJU RDEČEMORSKEGA MOLA *SILLAGO SUEZENSIS* (SILLAGINIDAE) V TURŠKEM EGEJSKEM MORJU

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POVZETEK

Dva primerka rdečemorskega mola Sillago suezensis sta bila 2. avgusta 2022 ujeta v trislojno mrežo v vodah blizu Akyaka v zalivu Gökova (Turčija) na 2 m globine na peščenem dnu. To je tretji primer pojavljanja vrste S. suezensis v jugovzhodnem turškem delu Egejskega morja in hkrati drugi najsevernejši primer o pojavljanju tega taksona v Sredozemskem morju.

Ključne besede: rdečemorski mol, lesepska selitev, pojavljanje, vzhodno Sredozemsko morje

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