

**A RECORD OF BLUESPOTTED CORNETFISH, *FISTULARIA COMMERSONII*
(ACTINOPTERYGII: SYNGNATHIFORMES: FISTULARIIDAE), OFF THE COAST
OF BENGHAZI, LIBYA (SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN)**

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Abstract. A record of bluespotted cornetfish *Fistularia commersonii* Rüppell, 1835, (Fistulariidae) from the depth of 30 m, caught off the coast of Benghazi, Libya (Southern Mediterranean), is reported herewith.

Keywords: bluespotted cornetfish, *Fistularia commersonii*, first record, Mediterranean, Libya

The opening of Suez Canal in 1869 connected the Red Sea to the Mediterranean and allowed the introduction of numerous Indo-Pacific species into the Mediterranean (Golani 1998a, 1998b, Kasapidis et al. 2007), including bluespotted cornetfish, *Fistularia commersonii* Rüppell, 1835 (cf. Golani 2000, Karachle et al. 2004, Golani et al. 2007).

The bluespotted cornetfish *F. commersonii* is distributed in tropical and subtropical seas, common among reefs, shallow sandy bottoms, and on sea grass beds (Fischer and Bianchi 1984, Golani et al. 2002). It lives either solitarily or in small groups preying chiefly on small fishes and small crustaceans such as shrimps, mysids, euphasiids, crabs, and other benthic crustaceans (Fischer and Bianchi 1984, Nakamura et al. 2003, Karachle et al. 2004, Froese and Pauly 2007). It is a Lessepsian migrant, recorded for the first time in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Israel by Golani (2000). Its geographical distribution has extended rapidly in the basin, with records from the Gulf of Gokova, Turkey (Bilecenoglu et al. 2002, Gokoglu et al. 2002), from the Rhodes Island, Greece (Corsini et al. 2002, Kalogirou et al. 2007), and from the Chalkidiki Peninsula, Greece (Karachle et al. 2004). It was also, recently reported from the central Mediterranean in Sicily, (Azzurro et al. 2004, Fiorentino et al. 2004) and Sardinia, Italy (Pais et al. 2007), Tyrrhenian Sea, Italy (Micarelli et al. 2006, Psomadakis et al. 2008), from Tunisian Coast (Ben Souissi et al. 2004, Charfi-Cheikhrouha 2004), from Libya (Shakman et al. 2007), and from as far as Granada, Spain (Sanchez-Tocino et al. 2007). To date, the most recent records of the species was from the Adriatic Sea (Dulčić et al. 2008, Joksimović et al. 2008) and along

the Algerian coasts, in Skikda Bay (eastern Algeria) and offshore of Bou Ismail Bay (central Algeria) at the Mediterranean (Kara and Oudjane 2008).

In this short note, a record of the bluespotted cornetfish, *F. commersonii*, in the Libyan waters is reported.

The specimen of *F. commersonii* was caught in November 2007 by a commercial bottom trawl, 5 nautical miles off the coast of Benghazi, Southern Mediterranean, Libya, (lat 32°06'N, long 20°03'E, Fig. 1) at the depth of approximately 30 m. The fish was frozen on board the ship by fishermen. Once in the laboratory, the specimen was photographed (Fig. 2), and identified based on FAO Species Identification Sheets (Fischer and Bianchi 1984), and has been deposited in the Natural Museum of the Zoology Department, Faculty of Science, Garyounis University, Benghazi, Libya. The specimen had the typical morphometric and meristic diagnostic features of *F. commersonii* (cf. Golani 2000, Froese and Pauly 2007).

The specimen was 95.5 cm long (TL) and it weighed 395 g. It has very long tubular mouth, extremely elongated body shape and whip-like filamentous caudal middle rays. The body colouration was brownish to olive, with rows of blue spots and a pair of blue stripes along the back. White belly, fins with orange crest, transparent at base. Fin rays counts were: 16 dorsal, 15 anal, 14 pectoral, and 6 pelvic.

Stomach contents consisted of 3 small fish vertebral columns and remains of small euphasiids and crabs.

Over the last decade several investigators have reported the occurrence of new fish species in the Mediterranean basin (Dulčić and Grbec 2000, Dulčić et al. 2006, Francour 2008) including the Lessepsian

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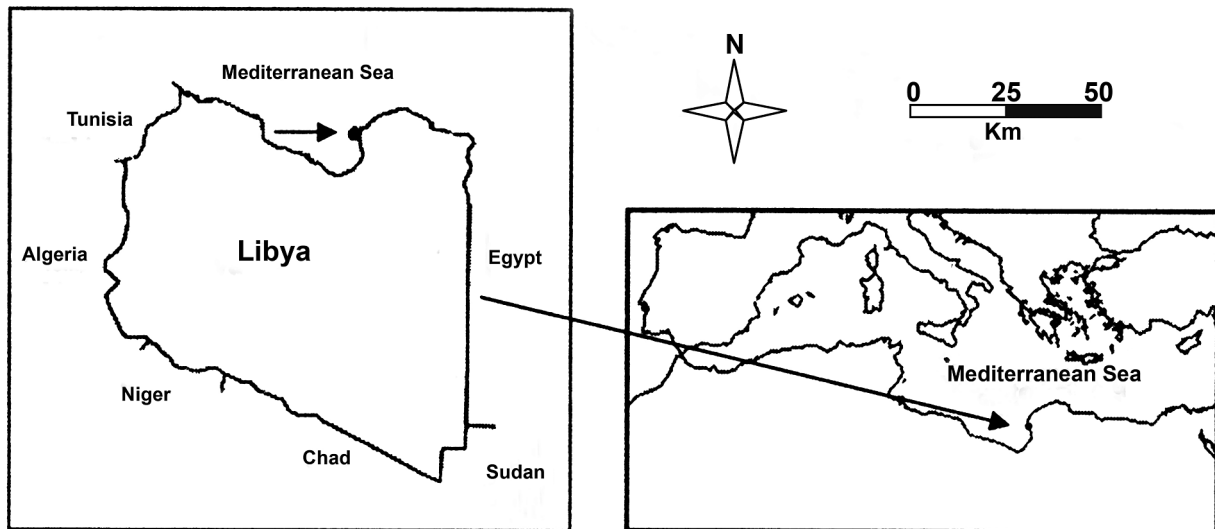


Fig. 1. Map showing where the herein reported specimen of *Fistularia commersonii* was collected off Benghazi, Libya



Fig. 2. Bluespotted cornetfish, *Fistularia commersonii*; inset shows head of the specimen

migrant fish *F. commersonii* that migrate from Red Sea via the Suez Canal (Golani et al. 2007). The presently reported finding represents the second record of this species in the coast of Benghazi, Libya, thus confirms its expansion in the southern Mediterranean. The cause of the increase could be a sign of climate changes, and water warming in the Mediterranean Sea and/or adaptation of the species to local condition (Dulčić et al. 2008, Garibaldi and Orsi-Relini 2008, Kara and Oudjane 2008).

Although, *F. commersonii* is now well established in the Mediterranean (Golani et al. 2007), the exact begin-

ning of colonization or establishing a breeding population of the present record in the Libyan waters is difficult to determine. Therefore, more studies need to be done in the area where many new exotic species has been found recently (Elbaraasi et al. 2007).

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