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Short paper

Occurrence of Slender Sunfish Ranzania *Laevis pennant*, 1776, (Molidae) in the Eastern Part of the Libyan Coast (Southern Mediterranean)

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Abstract

The first occurrence of slender sunfish *Ranzania laevis* from the eastern coast of Libya (Southern Mediterranean) is reported herewith. The present finding appears to be the first record from the Libyan waters.

Keywords: Sunfish, *Ranzania laevis*, Mediterranean, Libya.

Libya Sahilinin (Güney Akdeniz) Doğusunda Uzun Pervane Balığı Ranzania *Laevis pennant*, 1776, (Molidae)

Özet

Libya'nın batı sahilinde (Güney Akdeniz) uzun pervane balığı *Ranzania laevis* ilk olarak bu makalede bildirilmektedir. Bu makaledeki bulguların, Libya sularından elde edilen ilk kayıt olduğu görülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Uzun pervane balığı, *Ranzania laevis*, Akdeniz, Libya.

The slender sunfish, *R. laevis* is an epipelagic species which is found in tropical and temperate seas of the world, preferring areas well offshore (Hutchins, 2001; Froese and Pauly, 2008; Tortonese, 1986; Castro and Ramos, 2002). It feeds on small fishes, planktonic crustaceans and jelly fishes. It lives either solitary or in small groups. It is occasionally thrown up on beaches by storms (Hutchins, 2001; Parenti, 2003; Froese and Pauly, 2008).

The Molidae family is reported in the Mediterranean and considered as non exotic species, but the slender sunfish *R. laevis* is very rear in the Mediterranean basin (Parenti, 2003; Froese and Pauly, 2008; Tortonese, 1986). In this short note, the first occurrence of the slender sunfish, *R. laevis*, in the Libyan waters (Southern Mediterranean) is reported.

The specimen of *R. laevis* was found on beach of Shatt-Elbdeen (120 km west of Benghazi, 31°17′ N; 20°07′ E, Figure 1), Libya on 14 August 2007 by a fisherman, the fish was photographed (Figure 2) and sent to the Zoology Department, Garyounis University, Benghazi, Libya. Once in the laboratory, the specimen was identified based on FAO Species Identification Sheets (Fischer and Bianchi, 1984; Matsuura, 2002).

The specimen was 35.5 cm long (TL) and it weighed 1,295 g. Body elongate and mouth slit vertical. Skin smooth, consists of small, hard hexagonal plates. Dorsal and anal fins long, slender with 17 and 18 rays, respectively. Pectoral fins long, pointed with 13 rays. Tail profile oblique without rear extension.

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; Elbaraasi *et al*., 2007). However, *R. laevis* rather rear in the Mediterranean. This finding represents the first occurrence of this species in the Libyan waters, thus confirms the extension in the latitude of its geographical distribution to the Southern Mediterranean. The cause of expansion could be a sign of climate changes, and water warming in the Mediterranean Sea and/or due to the changeable atmospheric conditions coincided with increased productivity in the Mediterranean and increased number of zooplankton and small pelagic fish, which are the main food for *R. laevis* (Castro and Ramos, 2002; Dulčić *et al*., 2006; Kabasakal and Karhan, 2007).

The exact beginning of colonization or establishing a

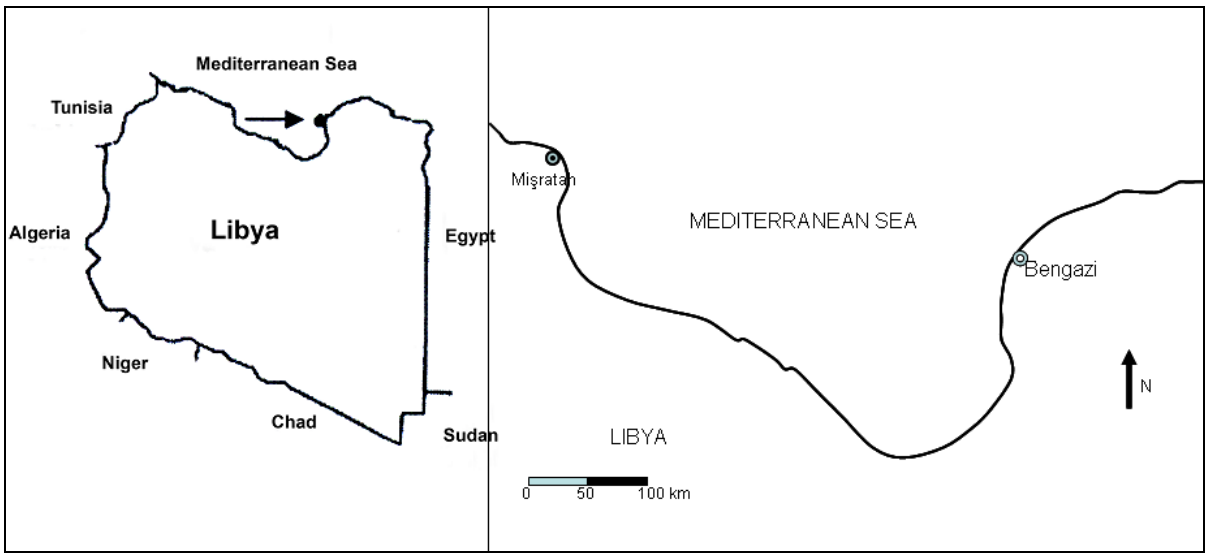

Figure 1. Map showing Shatt-Elbdeen (120 km west of Benghazi), Libya.

breeding population of the present record in the area is difficult to determine. The present finding is the first record of the Molidae family in the Libyan coasts, thus provides new data about the structure and diversity of pelagic fish communities of Libyan ichthyofuna.

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