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FIRST RECORD OF THE DEEPSEA CARDINALFISH,
EPIGONUS TELESCOPUS (RISSO, 1810),
FROM MALTESE WATERS (CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN)
(*Pisces Epigonidae*)

SUMMARY

The Deepsea Cardinalfish *Epigonus telescopus* (Risso, 1810) is recorded for the first time from Maltese waters, 9.5 km south-southwest of Filfla Island.

RIASSUNTO

Prima segnalazione del Re di Triglie nero, Epigonus telescopus (Risso, 1810) nelle acque Maltesi (Mediterraneo centrale). L'autore segnala per la prima volta il rinvenimento del Re di Triglie nero nelle acque di Malta, a 9,5 km a sud-sudovest dell'isola di Filfla.

INTRODUCTION

Two species of the Family Epigonidae are known from the Mediterranean, namely *Epigonus denticulatus* (Dieuzeide, 1950) and *Epigonus telescopus* (Risso, 1810). *E. denticulatus* is known from the western basin of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic from Morocco south to Mauritania at depths of 200–700 metres (TORTONESE, 1975). *E. telescopus* is present in the North Atlantic, from Iceland to the Canary Islands. It is also known from the South East Atlantic, the Indian Ocean and from the South West Pacific, off south western Africa to New Zealand; a single specimen has been recorded off North America (MAUGÉ & MAYER, 1990). In the Mediterranean it has been first recorded by TORTONESE (1975) from material taken in the Gulf of

Genoa, Messina and Nice. WHITEHEAD *et al.* (1986) reported it from the western and central part of the Mediterranean. To date the genus *Epigonus* has not been recorded from Maltese waters (LANFRANCO, 1993).

Epigonus telescopus (Risso, 1810)

Material examined. MALTA, 9.5 km south-southwest of Filfla Island, 300-350 m., adult taken on line and hook, 24.VII.2007, N. Magro leg.

Description. Length 36.5 cm. Overall colouration dark violet-brown. Eyes large and very conspicuous (see Figs 1-2). Six dorsal spines with the second anterior being the longest (see Fig. 3).

Habitat. The species is known to inhabit bathybenthic bottoms on continental slope at 75–1,200 metres, being most abundant at depths of 300-800 metres.

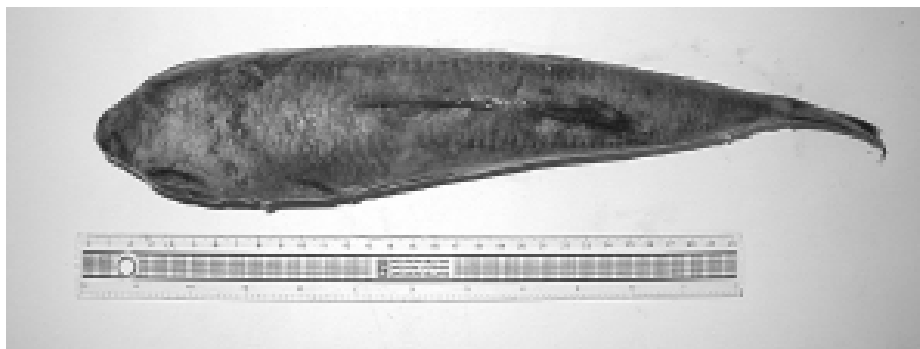


Fig. 1 — Dorsal side of *Epigonus telescopus* from near Filfla.



Fig. 2 — Lateral side of *Epigonus telescopus* from near Filfla.

Remarks. The specimen now forms part of the National collections at the National Museum of Natural History, Mdina. Malta. It has come to the author's attention that another specimen was caught some days earlier from the same locality by the same person, but this specimen was cooked and eaten.



Fig. 3 — Dorsal spines.

Conclusion. During these last years the Mediterranean has seen an increase of alien species passing either through the Suez Canal (Lessepsian migrants) or from the Atlantic through the Straits of Gibraltar. SCIBERRAS & SCHEMBRI (2007) listed 10 species of new species of alien fish occurring in Maltese waters. They are:

Lessepsian: *Alepes djedaba* (Försskal, 1775), *Fistularia commersonii* (Rüppell, 1838), *Siganus luridus* (Rüppell, 1829), *Siganus rivulatus* Försskal, 1775, *Sphyræna chrysotaenia*, Klunzinger, 1884, *Stephanolepis diaspros* Fraser-Brunner, 1940, *Etrumeus teres* (De Kay, 1842).

Atlantic immigrants: *Pisodonophis semicinctus* (Richardson, 1848), *Spherooides pachygaster* (Müller et Troschel, 1848), *Seriola fasciata* (Bloch, 1793), *Seriola carpenteri* Mather, 1971.

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