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The northernmost record of the blue-spotted cornetfish from the Mediterranean Sea

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Abstract

*A school of *Fistularia commersonii* was sighted off Laigueglia (Italy), Northwestern Ligurian Sea, in August 2008. This fast spreading invasive Indo-Pacific fish was first recorded in the Mediterranean from Israel, and it has since spread clear across the sea. This is the northernmost record from the Mediterranean.*

Keywords: *Fistularia commersonii*; Ligurian sea; Mediterranean; Invasive; Alien.

The blue-spotted cornetfish, *Fistularia commersonii* Rüppell, 1838, is the fastest and furthest spreading alien fish species in the Mediterranean Sea (GOLANI *et al.*, 2007). Widely distributed in the Indo-Pacific Ocean, from the Red Sea to the Eastern Central Pacific, it was first collected in the Mediterranean Sea in 2000 from the coasts of Israel (GOLANI, 2000). Eight years later it was observed and collected clear across the Mediterranean along the Southern coasts of Spain (Herradura, Almuñécar, Granada) and northernmost in Palamos (Girona, Catalonia) (SÁNCHEZ-TOCINO *et al.*, 2007).

A school of *F. commersonii*, composed of approximately 15-20 individuals

about 30-40 cm long, was sighted near Laigueglia, Savona (Italy), along the Northwestern coast of the Ligurian Sea (43° 59' 15" N 8° 9' 43" E), on 30 August 2008 by the senior author. The school swam just below the sea surface in very shallow waters (3-4 m depth). The sea surface temperature at the time was 28° C. Inquiries revealed that the species was noticed by locals during the last week of August.

Concerning Italian waters, *F. commersonii* was first recorded in 2002 from the strait of Sicily (FIORENTINO *et al.*, 2004; AZZURRO *et al.*, 2004). In the following year it was recorded from the Gulf of Castellammare in the southern Tyrrhenian Sea (PIPITONE *et al.*, 2004),

and seems to have established populations along the central Tyrrhenian coasts soon after (MICARELLI *et al.*, 2006; LIGAS *et al.*, 2007; PSOMADAKIS *et al.*, 2008). In 2005, a specimen was collected off the east coast of Sardinia (PAIS *et al.*, 2007). Most sightings in Italian waters occurred in October-December and involved full grown specimens (PSOMADAKIS *et al.*, 2008; DULČIĆ *et al.*, 2008). It is likely that the small school of young *F. commersonii* sighted off the Savona coast arrived with the prevailing currents from the established populations along the Latium and Tuscany coasts. This in turn may suggest that *F. commersonii* is able to reproduce successfully in the Tyrrhenian Sea. If indeed so, we may expect the Ligurian current to allow the further dispersal of this Indo-Pacific alien to Southern France. A single individual of the species has been already observed along the northern coast of the Iberian Peninsula (SÁNCHEZ-TOCINO *et al.*, 2007).

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