

Northward Expansion of Robust Cusk-Eel, *Benthocometes robustus* (Pisces: Ophiidiidae), from the Aegean Sea

Sercan YAPICI¹, Halit FİLİZ¹

¹Department of Basic Sciences/Faculty of Fisheries, Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, TURKEY

sercanyapici@mu.edu.tr

Aim of the study: The aim of this study represents range expansion of the sporadic fish species, *Benthocometes robustus*, in the Aegean Sea.

Material and Methods: A specimen of *B. robustus* was captured on board F/V TURANLAR on 23 November 2011 by traditional bottom trawl, called as Ottoman nets has a 24 mm stretched mesh size codend, at 158 meters from Kuşadası Bay (38.5° to 38.0° N). Sampled specimen was preserved by 4% formalin solution and deposited in the Museum of Faculty of Fisheries, Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University (MUSUM/PIS/2011/2). Morphometric characters were measured with digital caliper of 0.01 mm precision, and meristic counts were made under the stereomicroscope with x10 magnification. Morphometric and meristic features of one specimen: Head length 24.25% of SL; eye diameter 15.47% and interorbital distance 3.26% of head length; snout short and stubby, its length 11.81% head length; preorbital and postorbital length 2.72% and 4.91% of head length, respectively. Predorsal length 39.02% of SL; preanal length 56.91% SL; body depth 21.20% SL and head length 24.25% SL. Dorsal fin rays 96; anal fin rays 81, pectoral fin rays 28 and pelvic fin rays 8.

Results: Eastern Atlantic; few specimens caught off the Mediterranean. Western Atlantic; throughout the Caribbean (Nielsen, 1986). The species were reported from different depths by several authors. The maximum depth was reported by Mincarone et al. (2008) for Atlantic with 2300 m. In the Mediterranean Sea, there are a few studies where conducted different sampling depth; e.g: 432 m (D'Onghia et al., 2010), 570 m (Mérigot et al., 2007), 678 m (Mastrototaro et al., 2010), 700 m (Mytilineou et al., 2005), 1200 m (D'Onghia et al., 2004). For Aegean Sea, the maximum depth, where collected *B. robustus*, was reported as a 600 m (Bilecenoglu et al., 2002). The results of reported studies showed that robust cusk-eel occurring mainly 400-2300 m. Recent paper has indicates to report a new extending area and the lowest sampling depth of *Benthocometes robustus*.

Acknowledgements: We would like to thanks Erol Kalayci, captain of the F/V TURANLAR, and his crew for their help during the field works.

Keywords: *Benthocometes robustus*, rare fish, Aegean Sea