

First record of Facciola's sorcerer *Facciolella oxyrhyncha* (Anguilliformes, Nettastomatidae) from Israel

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Facciolella oxyrhyncha was recorded for the first time from the Mediterranean coast of Israel. The present record extends considerably its eastward distribution from the Bay of Antalya which was considered hitherto its most eastern point of distribution.

Key words: *Facciolella oxyrhyncha*, first record, Israel

INTRODUCTION

The family of Nettastomatidae consists of ca. 38 species inhabiting tropical and warm temperate waters in all major marine regions. According to NELSON (2006), there are six genera in this family, of which three, *Facciolella* Whitley, 1938, *Nettastoma* Rafinesque, 1810 and *Saurenhelys* Peters, 1864 are found in the Mediterranean (SALDANHA, 1986). The first consists of six species, three of them, *F. castlei* (Parin & Karmovskaya, 1985), *F. equatorialis* (Gilbert, 1891) and *F. gilbertii* (Garman, 1899), occupying the eastern Pacific, *F. saurenheloides* (D'Ancona, 1928) inhabiting the western Indian Ocean, *F. karreri* (Klausewitz, 1995) being endemic to the Red Sea and only *F. oxyrhyncha* (BELLOTTI, 1883) being found in the Mediterranean and the eastern Atlantic from Portugal to Angola.

The species was first described from its larval stage by BELLOTTI (1883) as *Leptocephalus oxyrhynchus*. In later literature the synonyms *Nettostomella physonema* and *Facciolella physonema* were in use (FACCIOLÀ, 1914).

A single 330 mm (TL) specimen of *Facciolella oxyrhyncha* (Fig. 1.) was collected by a commercial trawler conducting a haul between Haifa and Hadera off the Mediterranean coast of Israel at depths of 90-150 m. The haul commenced at 20:30 on 4 November 2008 and terminated at 04:45 on 5 November 2008. The specimen was deposited in the Hebrew University Fish Collection (HUJ) and received the catalogue number HUI 19786.

Facciolella oxyrhyncha was first described from the Straits of Messina in the central Mediterranean (BELLOTTI, 1883), this, along with the STRAMIGIOLI *et al.* (2002) record from the southern Adriatic Sea (41°06'40"N; 17°29'28"E), were considered the most eastern points of its dis-

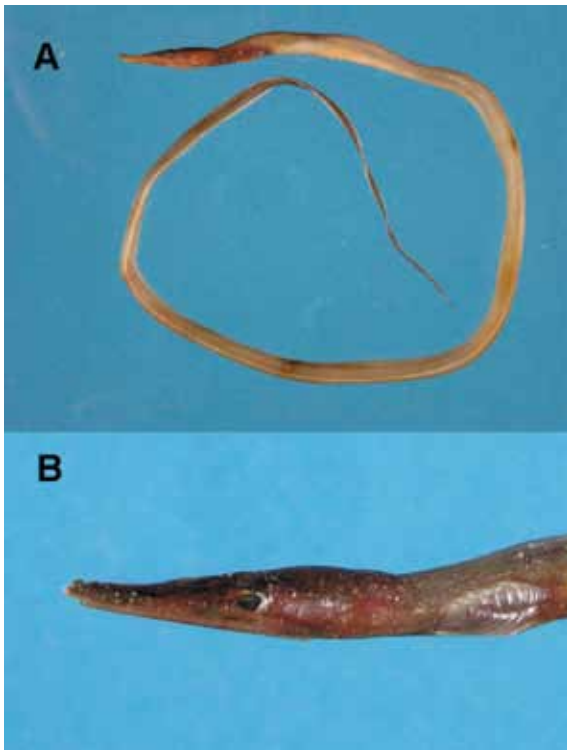


Fig. 1. *Facciolella oxyrhyncha* (HUJ 19786), 330 mm TL from the Mediterranean coast of Israel. A – the entire body, B – head

tribution. Recently GOLANI *et al.* (2006) recorded the occurrence of this species from the Bay of Antalya, Turkey. Therefore the present record extends its eastward distribution by nearly 600 km (Fig. 2).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Body extremely elongated sub-cylindrical from head to anus, tapering to a pointed tail. Head (9.1%), predorsal (10.8%), preanal (28.5%), all in TL. Snout long (32.6%) and slightly flat, round eye (6.3%), narrow inter-orbital (3.6%), all in head length. Long jaws, upper jaw longer than the lower; jaws reach back, well beyond posterior margin of eye. Teeth in bands in both jaws and visible when mouth closed. Outer teeth small and conical. In the anterior half are larger, slightly recurved teeth. In the upper jaw above the tip of the lower jaw, there is a small gap without teeth. At the tip of the upper jaw there is a patch of conical teeth. Long and relatively wide vomer teeth patch, originating slightly behind lower jaw tip and

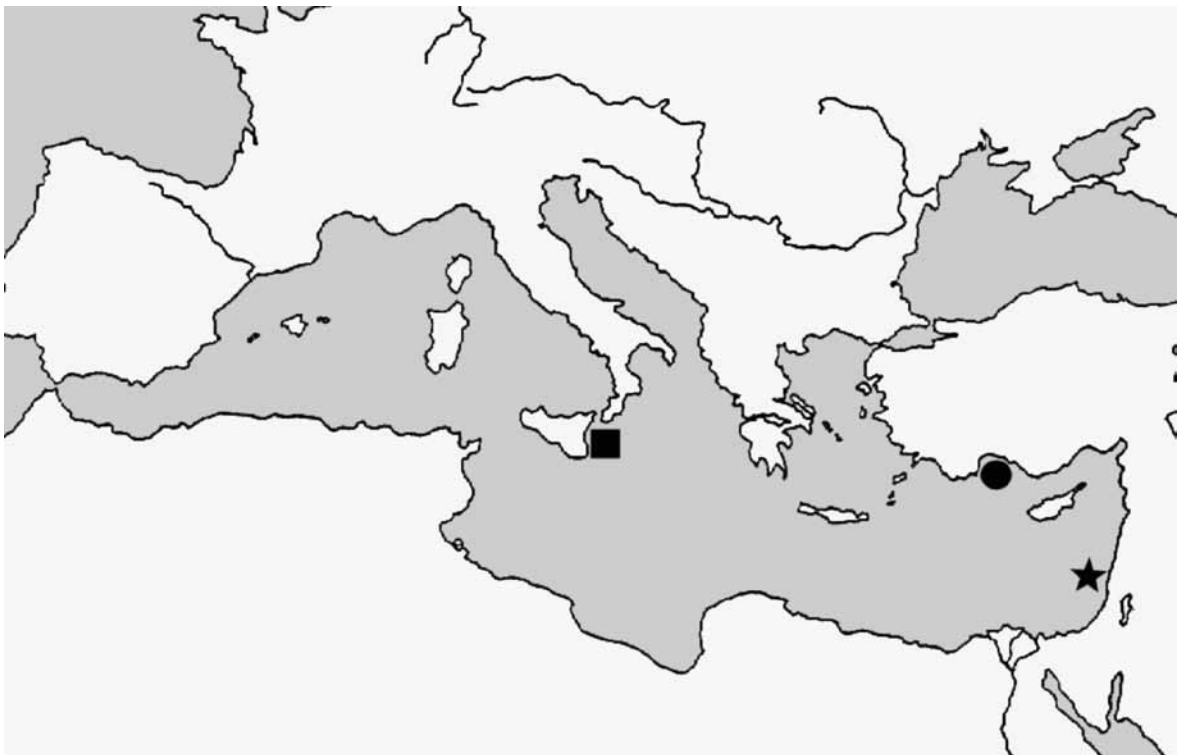


Fig. 2. Map of the Mediterranean showing the location of the original description of *Facciolella oxyrhyncha* at the Straits of Messina (■), Antalya Bay (Golani *et al.*, 2006) (●) and the present study (★)

terminating in front of eye, leaving a narrow space between the vomer patch and jaw patch. Anterior nostril on the tip of the snout, the posterior nostril slit-like located at the level of the lower quarter of the eye, its length sub-equal to eye diameter. On the dorsal tip of the snout is a small fleshy extension. Enlarged throat. Gill opening crescent and located ventrally. Pectoral and pelvic fins absent.

Color of the fresh specimen: body light gray, the anterior part of the head from the enlarged throat to snout brownish-red. Eye is silver with black pupil.

The morphometrical characters and the color agree with the description of *Facciolella oxyrhyncha* given by SALDANHA (1986) and GOLANI *et al.* (2006).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As indicated by GOLANI *et al.* (2006), this species may have been overlooked in earlier collections due to the superficial resemblance to its confamilial *Nettastoma melanurum*. In addition, the body shape of *F. oxyrhyncha* is extremely slender, lithe and flexible, allowing it to escape most collection devices.

F. oxyrhyncha can be distinguished from *N. melanurum* by the former having a small fleshy extension on the dorsal tip of the snout and the location of the slit-like posterior nostril at the level of the lower rim of the eye as opposed to an oval shaped nostril at the upper level of the eye rim. The Mediterranean confamilial *Saurenehelys canerivora* does not have a fleshy extension on the tip of the snout and, unlike *F. oxyrhyncha*, has two elongated palato-pterygoid teeth patches.

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Prvi nalaz čarobnog patkocljunića, *Facciolella oxyrhyncha* (Anguilliformes, Nettastomatidae) iz Izraela

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SAŽETAK

Autori opisuju prvi nalaz čarobnog patkocljunića *Facciolella oxyrhyncha* na mediteranskoj obali Izraela. Ovaj nalaz je zabilježen u istočnom dijelu Zaljeva Antalya koja se ujedno smatra najistočnijom točkom na kojoj je ova vrsta zabilježena.

Ključne riječi: *Facciolella oxyrhyncha*, prvi nalaz, Izrael