

Ichthyoplankton of the Egyptian Mediterranean waters III- Distribution and occurrence of *Sphyraena* Larvae

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The present paper entails results on the abundance and distribution of *Sphyraena* larvae (*S. sphyraena* and *S. chrysotaenia*) recorded in the plankton samples collected seasonally from the S.E. Mediterranean waters overlying the continental shelf off the Egyptian coast between longitudes 29° 45' E and 33° 45' E, throughout the period from January 1982 to October 1984. The study area extends from Agami to Arish and is divided into 12 sections. The sections were from west to east: Agami (Ag.), Abu Qir (A.Q.), Rosetta (Ros), Burullus (Bur), Damietta (Dam.), Diba (Di), Gamil (Ga), Port Said (P.S.), Tena (Tn), Bardawil I, II (Brd.I, II), Arish (Ar.). With few exceptions 3 stations were sampled in each section representing inshore (< 50 m), middle (50 - 100 m) and offshore zones (> 100 m). Plankton samples were collected using an ichthyoplankton net of 100 cm mouth opening, 0.5 mm mesh size, fitted with a flowmeter. In each sample the larvae of *Sphyraena* were sorted and counted, the counts were converted to represent numbers/1000 m³. The length of the larvae was measured to the nearest 1mm.

A total of 671 larvae of *Sphyraena sphyraena* and *Sphyraena chrysotaenia* were recorded in the plankton samples collected in summer and autumn cruises only, i.e. from July to October. About 64% of the total collected *Sphyraena* larvae were recorded during August. The larvae of *S. sphyraena* were recorded during July and August, the length composition may indicate that the spawning probably begins during June or early July and ends in late August early September. On the other hand, the length composition of *S. chrysotaenia* larvae may indicate that the breeding of this species extends to late October. The water temperature ranged between 24° - 29.5° C.

As shown in table (1) *Sphyraena* larvae were abundant in the inshore waters during early July and August. The highest density (111 L./1000 m³) was recorded in the inshore water of Agami during August, while in October, the larvae were abundant in the middle zone.

Table 1: Average density of total *S. sphyraena* and *S. chrysotaenia* larvae (larvae/m³) in different zones.

Month	Inshore	Middle	Offshore
August 1982	10.4	3.6	0.1
July 1984	13.3	4.2	not recorded
October 1984	4.5	68.2	9.2

Figure (1 A) shows the distribution and abundance of the different size groups of *Sphyraena* larvae during July. The distribution pattern during the beginning of the spawning season (July) indicates that the recorded larvae of *Sphyraena* represent a new brood where 67% of which were distributed in the inshore waters off Rosetta, Burullus and Arish. About 62% of *Sphyraena* larvae recorded, belong to *S. sphyraena* and 38% belong to *S. chrysotaenia*.

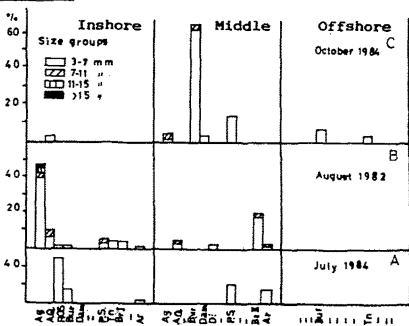


Figure 1 : Distribution and abundance of the different size groups of total *Sphyraena* larvae in the study area.

During August (peak of larval occurrence; figure 1-B) the newly hatched larvae up till 7 mm represented 86 % of the larvae, and most of which were distributed in the coastal water of the area (from Agami to Arish). *S. sphyraena* larvae contributed 35% of *Sphyraena* larvae, they varied in length between 5 - 17 mm and were confined to the inshore and middle zones of the western area (Agami - Abu Qir). This finding agrees with Riskalla (1985) working on the fishery biology of these fishes who reported that *S. sphyraena* migrates towards the coastal water during the spawning season. The pattern of distribution of *S. chrysotaenia* larvae during August (figure 1-B) indicated that the newly hatched larvae were abundant in the inshore and middle zones of the eastern area between Port Said and Arish, while during October (figure 1-C) about 94% of the recorded larvae represent a new brood and were common in the middle zones of the eastern part (Burullus, Damietta and Port Said) and also recorded in the offshore water. This is probably attributed to the sensitivity of these larvae to the rapid changes in water temperature near the shore, thus moving towards the deeper water during the autumn where changes of temperature occur less rapidly (De Sylva, 1963).

References :

- De-Sylva, D. P., 1963. *Stud. Trop. Oceanogr. Miami*, 1 (VIII):179 pp.
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