

FIRST RECORD OF *BATHYPOLYPOUS SPONSALIS* (CEPHALOPODA: OCTOPODIDAE) IN THE IONIAN SEA

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Abstract

The occurrence of *Bathypolypous sponsalis* (P. Fischer & H. Fischer, 1892) off the western coast of Peloponnesos is reported. Four specimens were collected in September 2003 during experimental trawl fishing at 546-655 m of depth. This is the first record of the species in the Ionian Sea, extending its northern latitudinal distribution in the central Mediterranean.

Key-words : *Cephalopods, Ionian Sea*

Introduction

Bathypolypous sponsalis is the only species of the subfamily Bathypolypodinae in the Mediterranean Sea, first recorded by Wirtz in 1954 (1). Its origin is considered Lusitanian (2) and further records in the Mediterranean Sea have been reported mainly for the western part (3-11) up to the strait of Sicily (12,13). In the eastern Mediterranean *B. sponsalis* has been reported only from the Aegean Sea (14, 15, 16). The species has not been cited previously either in the Ionian or in the Adriatic Sea.

Materials and methods

The present specimens were collected during a mission carried out in September 2003 in the southeastern Ionian Sea, for a study of trawl selectivity in the framework of the project "Development of an Integrated Management System to support the sustainability of Greek Fisheries resources (IMAS-Fish)". Two professional trawlers equipped with bottom trawl-nets with cod ends of 20 and 40 mm stretched mesh size, were used. Hauls lasting from 60 to 180 minutes were performed at a total of 39 sampling stations and depth ranging from 31 to 650 m. The species was identified following the keys in Mangold and Boletzky (17). The ventral mantle length (VML) and the total weight (TW) of individuals per haul were recorded on board.

Results and discussion

B. sponsalis was caught during three hauls carried out at depths between 546 and 655 m (Fig. 1). Four specimens were collected, two (46 and 55 mm VML, 45 and 35 g TW) by 20 mm and two (42-50 mm VML, 85 g TW) by 40 mm cod end mesh size. This is the first finding of the species in the Ionian Sea although several trawl surveys have been conducted on the slope of the eastern and western Ionian Sea during the last years (18,19). The closest areas where the species has been recorded are the Strait of Sicily and the slope off the eastern coasts of Peloponnesos. *B. sponsalis* is considered a bathy-benthic species of eastern Atlantic affinity, extending from 120 m to 1835 m

of depth but relatively more common between 400-700 m. The large size of female's oocytes indicate birth of rather large benthic hatchlings and the lack of any pelagic phase in its life-cycle which is limiting factor for the species dispersal. Thus, the present finding could be most probably due to the species migration from the southern Aegean slope around Peloponnesos coastline than to eastward migration from the slope off southern Sicily. Deep-water mass circulation due to the gyre activity in this region (20) could probably favor the suspected migration pattern by creating suitable temperature conditions, which are generally regulating cephalopod species distribution.

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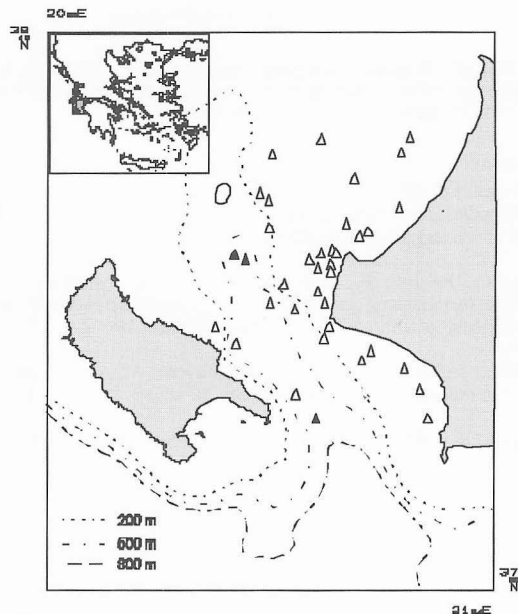


Fig. 1. Map of the southeastern Ionian Sea showing the locations of the hauls performed (white triangles), as well as, of the hauls where *B. sponsalis* was caught.