

**FIRST RECORDS OF THE RARE STARFISH *MARGINASTER CAPREENSIS* (GASCO, 1876)
(ECHINODERMATA, ASTEROIDEA, PORANIIDAE) IN THE STRAIT OF SICILY AND FURTHER
INFORMATION ON ITS RECENT FINDING IN THE IONIAN SEA**

Daniela Massi ¹, Paola Rinelli ² and Francesco Mastrototaro ³ *

¹ IAMC-CNR - Mazara del Vallo, Trapani, Italy

² IAMC-CNR - Messina, Spianata S. Raineri, 86 - 98122 Messina, Italy

³ Department of Zoology, University of Bari, Bari, Italy - apofeta@unime.it

Abstract

First records of the rare starfish *Marginaster capreensis* (Echinodermata: Poraniidae) for the Strait of Sicily are reported. Two specimens were collected in 2004 at 87m and 136m depth on the off-shore African shelf. Detailed information on the first specimen, recently reported in literature from the Ionian Sea, is also given. It was collected in 2000 at 707-742 m depth off the Corfù island (Eastern Ionian).

Keywords : *Echinodermata, Sicilian Channel, Ionian Sea, Eastern Mediterranean, Western Mediterranean.*

Marginaster capreensis (Gasco, 1876) is a small sized starfish living in a wide depth range (between 50 and 2500m) [1]. It is considered as "one of the rarity of the Mediterranean fauna" [1], where it was found in the Gulf of Naples (Tyrrhenian Sea), between 70 and 84m [2], in the Southern Aegean Sea (597m) [3] and in the Levant Sea (315m) [1]. Recently the species was reported on the bathyal bottoms of the Eastern Ionian Sea [4]. The two specimens of *M. capreensis* from the Strait of Sicily were collected during the 2004 trawl survey (Italian GRUND program). The specimen from the Ionian Sea was collected during a campaign carried out within the Italian-Greek INTERREG program [4]. The main information on catch data and biometrics of the two individuals found in the Strait of Sicily and of the specimen from Ionian Sea [4] are reported in Table 1.

Tab. 1. Main information related to the findings of *M. capreensis*. R and r according to [1].

Area	Date	Appr. Lat.	Appr. Lon.	Depth (m)	Diameter (mm)	R/r	Weight (g)
Sicily Strait	19/09/2004	34°30.00'	12°49.00'	87	23	1.2	1.15 (wet)
Sicily Strait	12/10/2004	34°21.50'	13°23.50'	135-137	21	1.2	1.15 (wet)
Ionian Sea	22/7/2000	39°18.00'	19°55.00'	707-742	25	1.3	0.41 (dry)

Biology of this species is unknown and the information on biogeographical distribution is scanty both in Eastern Atlantic and in Mediterranean. Including the new records from the Strait of Sicily, only eight individuals were reported for the Mediterranean. The specimen from the Eastern Ionian Sea was the deepest record of the Mediterranean. According to available data, the species in the Eastern basin seems to prefer habitats deeper than those of the Tyrrhenian Sea and the Strait of Sicily.

References

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