ON THE RANGE EXTENSION TWO EXOTIC DECAPOD CRUSTACEAN ALONG THE LEVANT SEA COAST OF TURKEY

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Abstract
The decapods of Fethiye bay, on the southwestern coast of Turkey were collected by gill net between 2004 and 2006. For two exotic decapod crustaceans, *Melicertus hathor* and *Charybdis hellerii*, the records constitute significant extension of their range.
Keywords : Decapoda, Crustacea, Red Sea, Levantine Basin.

31 species of exotic decapods are known to occur along the Turkish coast [1,2], most are found along the southeastern coast. In recent years many species extended their range westwards along the Turkish coast [3]. of Fethiye bay, on the southwestern coast of Turkey were collected by gill net at depths between 3-20 m, between 2004 and 2006 . Two species of Red Sea origin were found, both new record for Fethiye Bay, and a significant range extensions within Turkey.

Melicertus hathor (Burkenroad, 1959) was recorded for the first time in the Mediterranean Sea from the coast of Israel [4]. The first Turkish record was collected in Yumurtalik Bight [5], and subsequently off Kaş Peninsula [6], and Antalya Bay [7]. The two male specimens (TL 15.2, 15.8 mm) were collected on sandy bottom from the Fethiye Bay.

The records of *Charybdis hellerii* (A. Milne Edwards, 1867) in Turkey were collected off Iskenderun and Mersin [8,9], and Kaş Peninsula [6]. In September 2004, *C. helleri* was collected off Göcek. The Göcek specimens (1 male CL 56 mm, 5 females CL55-61 mm) were fully developed adults, 4 of 5 females were ovigerous. The eggs were bright yellow in color, their diameter 0.224 - 0.266 mm. The minimum, maximum and average number of the eggs from 4 ovigerous females of *C. hellerii* were examined as 42016, 93913, 106994, 152583 and 98876 respectively. In 2006 the species was widespread in the region. This is the westernmost record of *C. hellerii* along the Turkish coast, and nearly 450 km west of the previous record. *C. hellerii*, like *C. longicollis*, occupies the entire Levantine coast of Turkey. It seems that the habitat preferences, spawning period, egg number and egg diameter do not differ significantly from known records for *C. hellerii* , though the maximum carapace length of both species is very close to the highest values of the early reports.

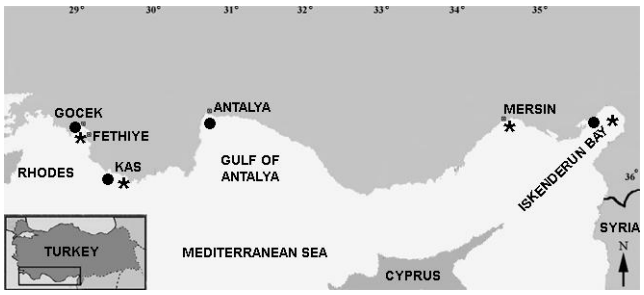

Fig. 1. Distribution of *Charybdis helleri* and *Melicertus hathor* in Turkish coast. (Star: *Charybdis helleri*; Point: *Melicertus hathor*).

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