

POMACENTRIDAE

damselfishes

Abudefduf vaigiensis

(Quoy and Gaimard, 1825)



Photo : A. Vaits

Relevant synonyms: None
 Misidentification: None
 Meristic formula: D, XIII+12-14; A, II+11-13; P, 16-20;
 V, I+5; LL, 19-23

SHORT DESCRIPTION

Body deep and compressed. Dorsal fin continuous, base of spinous portion much longer than soft ray portion base. Dorsal soft rays increase gradually until 4-6 ray and then sharply decrease in size. Small 48-52 uniserial close-set teeth on the jaws. No teeth on palatine or vomer. Hindmargin of operculum smooth. Relatively large ctenoid scales. Most of the head and the base of the median fins are scaled. Lateral line divided into two parts, the anterior part has tubed scales, while the posterior part (on the caudal peduncle) has pored scales.

color: Back bluish-grey often with touch of yellow. Belly silver-white. Five broad vertical bars on body, the first from dorsal fin origin to pectoral fin base, the fifth on the caudal peduncle reaching the posterior margin of dorsal and anal fins.

common size: 5-15 cm (max. 18 cm).

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

- *Abudefduf saxatilis*: the last dark vertical body bar reaches the posterior margin of dorsal and anal fins.
- *Chromis chromis*: body uniformly brown, no vertical bars.
- **Sparidae**: two pairs of nostrils; continuous lateral line.
- **Apogonidae**: two dorsal fins.

Recent studies (Dragičević *et al.*, 2021) have shown that major morphological characters previously used to distinguish *A. saxatilis* from *A. vaigiensis* are not consistent within the species and thus not sufficiently reliable for their discrimination.

BIOLOGY / ECOLOGY

Inshore species. Lives in small to very large groups Feeds on small planktonic invertebrates, small fishes, as well as colonial anemones and algae. Eggs attached to hard substrate and guarded by the adults.

habitat: shallow waters to depth of 20 m near rocks and coral reefs, also sandy substrates and tide pools.

DISTRIBUTION

Worldwide: Indo-Pacific including the Red Sea.

Mediterranean: Israel (Goren and Galil, 1998), Malta (Vella *et al.*, 2016) and Italy (Vacchi and Chiantore, 2000; Occhipinti-Ambrogi *et al.*, 2011).

MODE OF INTRODUCTION

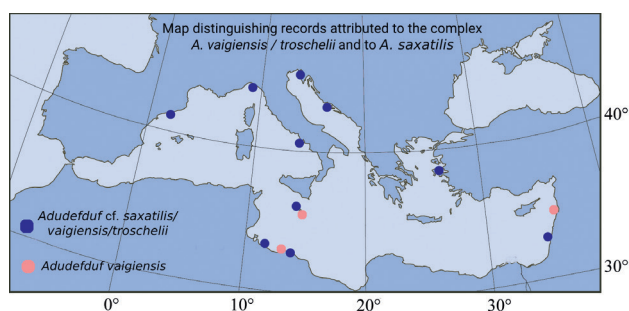
Via the Suez Canal.

ESTABLISHMENT SUCCESS

Not clear due to possible confusion with *Abudefduf saxatilis* and a *A. troschellii*.

IMPORTANCE TO HUMANS

None.



1st Med. record
Israel, 1998.

KEY REFERENCES

- Goren M. and Galil B.S. 1998. First record of the Indo-Pacific, coral-reef *Abudefduf vaigiensis* (Quoy and Gaimard, 1825) in the Levant. *Israel Journal of Zoology*, 44: 57-59.
- Occhipinti-Ambrogi A., Marchini A., Cantone G., Castelli A., Chimenz C., Cormaci *et al.* 2011. Alien species along the Italian coasts: an overview. *Biological Invasions*, 13: 215-237.
- Tardent P. 1959. Capture d'un *Abudefduf saxatilis vaigiensis* (Pisces, Pomacentridae) dans le Golfe de Naples. *Revue Suisse de Zoologie*, 66: 347-351.
- Vacchi M. and Chiantore M.C. 2000. *Abudefduf vaigiensis* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1825): a tropical damselfish in Mediterranean Sea. *Biologia Marina Mediterranea*, 7(1): 841-843.
- Vella A., Darmanin S.A. and Vella N. 2016. The first records of Indo-Pacific sergeant *Abudefduf vaigiensis* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1825) and further notes on the occurrence of sergeant major *A. saxatilis* (Linnaeus, 1758) in Malta: expanding populations of an invasive genus in the Mediterranean Sea. *Journal of Black/Mediterranean Environment*, 22(1): 1-15.