**Upeneus moluccensis**
(Bleeker, 1855)

**SHORT DESCRIPTION**
Body elongated subcylindrical in the first half of body, becoming somewhat compressed towards the tail. Two well-separated dorsal fins. First dorsal spine minute, second spine the largest. Second dorsal fin opposite the anal fin. Caudal fin deeply forked. A pair of barbles on the chin not reaching rear of preoperculum margin. Viliiform teeth on both jaws, vomer and palatine. 5 - 7 scales between dorsal fins.

**color:** back pinkish-red; belly white. A distinct single longitudinal yellow stripe running from eye to caudal fin base. Upper caudal fin lob striped.

**common size:** 7 - 20 cm (max. 27 cm).

**DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS**
- **Upeneus pori:** no yellow longitudinal stripe; both caudal fin lobes striped; seven dorsal spines.
- **Mullus spp.:** no teeth in upper jaw.
- **Pseudupeneus prayensis:** spine on opercular margin; no stripes on caudal fin.
- **Parupeneus forsskali:** black longitudinal stripe and a black dot on the caudal peduncle.

Relevant synonyms: Upeneoides moluccensis
Misidentification: Mulloidichthys auriflamma, Mulloidichthys flavolineatus, Mulloidichthys auriflamma
Meristic formula: D1, VIII; D2, 8-9; A, I + 6-8; P, 15-16; V, I + 5;
LL, 35-38; GR, 23-31.
**BIOLOGY / ECOLOGY**

Feeds on benthic and sub-benthic organisms detected by chemoreceptor-rich barbles on the chin. Crustaceans dominate its diet, with fish becoming progressively important as size increases. Spawning season from end of July to September. Ripe eggs diameter 0.3-0.4 mm. Eggs and larvae are planktonic. Benthic settlement at size of 4-5 cm. Maturity at age of 12 months, when size is ca. 10 cm.

**habitat:** benthic. Sandy or muddy substrate to 100 m (single record at 200 m).

**DISTRIBUTION**

**Worldwide:** Indo-Pacific.

**Mediterranean:** recorded first in Palestine as *Mulloides auriflamma* by Haas and Steinitz (1947); successively recorded in Rhodes Island (Serbetis, 1947), Egypt (Benuvia, 1966), Cyprus (Demetropoulos and Neocleous, 1969), Libya (Stirns, 1970).

**MODE OF INTRODUCTION**

Via the Suez Canal.

**ESTABLISHMENT SUCCESS**

Very abundant in the Eastern Levant.

**IMPORTANCE TO HUMANS**

Commercially important in trawl fishery.

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**KEY REFERENCES**