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OCCURRENCE OF *LEUCORAJA FULLONICA* (LINNAEUS, 1758) IN THE SOUTH ADRIATIC SEA

RITROVAMENTO DI *LEUCORAJA FULLONICA* (LINNAEUS, 1758) NELL'ADRIATICO MERIDIONALE

Abstract – Ten specimens of *Leucoraja fullonica* (Rajidae) 3 males and 7 females, were caught during the trawl surveys conducted in the South Adriatic Sea in autumn 2008 (GRUND) and spring 2009 (MEDITS). Length and weight were comprised respectively from 230 to 760 mm and from 41.5 to 2300 g. Specimens were caught in a depth range of 297 and 574 m.

Key-words: *Leucoraja fullonica*, South Adriatic Sea, trawl surveys.

Introduction – In the Mediterranean Sea, skates commonly represent a low valued by-catch of the demersal fisheries (Ragonese *et al.*, 2003). However, species of this group have generally an important ecological role, as they are top predators. Moreover, life-history traits, such as large size at first maturity and low fecundity, make the populations particularly vulnerable to fishing pressure (Serena, in press). Some of the skate species living in restricted areas (Ragonese *et al.*, 2003), such as *Leucoraja fullonica* (Linnaeus, 1758) are actually considered rare in the Mediterranean (Serena, in press).

Materials and methods – Specimens of *L. fullonica* (Fig. 1) were collected during trawl surveys (GRUND, autumn 2008; MEDITS, spring 2009) carried out in the South Adriatic Sea (GSA 18). Skates were classified following the guidelines reported by Serena (in press), and the following measures were taken: total length (TL), body weight (TW), sex and maturity stage.

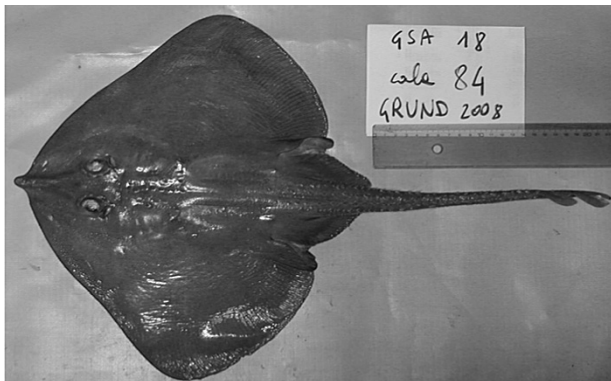


Fig. 1 - Female of *Leucoraja fullonica* caught in the South Adriatic Sea.

Femmina di Leucoraja fullonica catturata nell'Adriatico meridionale.

Results – During the two trawl surveys ten specimens of *L. fullonica* were caught in ten different hauls located on the western and eastern side of the South Adriatic Sea at 297-574 m depth (Tab. 1). Individual length and weight ranged from 230 to 760 mm and from 41 to 2300 g. Only three specimens were males, the other seven were females.

Conclusions – *L. fullonica* is generally distributed in the Western Mediterranean Sea and in the Atlantic Ocean from Iceland to Madeira and northern Morocco (Stehmann and Bürkel, 1984) In the Italian seas, this species was occasionally found in the Strait of Sicily (Ragonese *et al.*, 2003), in the South Ligurian and North Tyrrhenian (Serena *et al.*, 2003) and in the north-western Ionian Sea (Sion *et al.*, 2003). No occurrence of *L. fullonica* was recorded in the South Adriatic Sea (Marano *et al.*, 2003). This finding represents the first record in our area of *L. fullonica*, a species easily misidentified with *Leucoraja circularis* Couch, 1838 (Serena, in press). Both juveniles and adults were found at a bathymetric distribution similar to that reported by other Authors (Stehmann, 1990; Serena *et al.*, 2010). Further morphometric and genetic analyses will be carried out to better elucidate the phylogenetics of *Leucoraja* species.

Tab. 1 - Information on the specimens of *Leucoraja fullonica* caught in the South Adriatic Sea. (* the measure refers to the disc length).

Informazioni circa gli individui di *Leucoraja fullonica* catturati nell'Adriatico meridionale.
(* la misura si riferisce alla lunghezza del disco).

Geographic coordinates	Survey	Month	Year	Weight (g)	Length (mm)	SEX	Maturity	Depth (m)
42°10.32'N – 16°56.76'E	GRUNDS	December	2008	41	230	M	1	387
40°00.70'N – 16°59.75'E	MEDITS	June	2009	191	356	M	1	531.5
40°22.56'N – 18°36.91'E	MEDITS	June	2009	200	405	F	1	378
40°40.80'N – 18°59.69'E	MEDITS	June	2009	250	190*	F	1	522.5
40°32.98'N – 19°01.47'E	MEDITS	June	2009	280	400	F	1	520
40°37.88'N – 18°36.27'E	MEDITS	June	2009	350	416	F	1	574
41°06.07'N – 18°51.72'E	MEDITS	June	2009	765	530	F	1	297
40°34.69'N – 18°31.43'E	GRUNDS	December	2008	871	562	F	2	-
40°06.92'N – 17°00.39'E	GRUNDS	December	2008	1251	635	M	2	551.5
41°32.17'N – 17°09.78'E	GRUNDS	December	2008	2300	760	F	2	554.5

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