

First record of the blackmouth catshark, *Galeus melastomus* (pisces, scyliorhinidae) in the gulf of Hammamet (Eastern Tunisia, Central Mediterranean)

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ملخص

اول اشارة لقرش فتي *Galeus melastomus* ذكر تم اصطياده أول مرة بجهة الحمامات : تم اصطياد أول مرة بجهة الحمامات قرش فتي *Galeus melastomus* ذكر وذلك في عمق 600 م. هذا النوع معروف من قبل بالمياه الشمالية في أعماق تتراوح من 200 إلى 600 م.
المفاتيح : قرش فتي، خليج الحمامات

RESUME

Première signalisation d'un chien espagnol *Galeus melastomus* dans le golfe de Hammamet (Est tunisien) :

Un chien espagnol *Galeus melastomus*, de sexe mâle et juvénile, est capturé pour la première fois dans le golfe de Hammamet par une profondeur de 600 m. Cette espèce a été signalée auparavant que sur les côtes nord de la Tunisie par 200 à 600 m de profondeur.

Mots clés - Elasmobranches, Scyliorhinidae, *Galeus melastomus*, MED, côtes tunisiennes, golfe de Hammamet.

ABSTRACT

A juvenile male, *Galeus melastomus*, is captured for the first time in the Gulf of Hammamet at depth of 600 m. Previously, the species was only recorded off the northern coast of Tunisia from 200 to 600 m depth.

Key words.- Elasmobranchs, Scyliorhinidae, *Galeus melastomus*, MED, Tunisian coasts, Gulf of Hammamet.

INTRODUCTION

Previously, the blackmouth catshark, *Galeus melastomus*, was only recorded off the northern coast of Tunisia, from the Algerian frontier to Bizerta (Bourgois & Farina, 1961; Davidson, 1963; Ben Mustapha, 1966; Quignard & Capapé, 1971 a; Capapé, 1987). The blackmouth catshark is commonly caught in these areas and chiefly in the Bank of Esquerquis, 50 km north Bizerta, where it is the dominant elasmobranch (Capapé & Zaouali, 1976). Observations were provided on its diet (Capapé & Zaouali, 1976), its reproductive biology (Capapé & Zaouali, 1977) and its morphology (Capapé & Ben Brahim, 1984). Recent investigations made in the Gulf of

Hammamet (central eastern Tunisia) allow us to mention the first record of the species in this marine area, which form the subject of this brief note.

MATERIAL AND RESULTS

The first of August 1999, a blackmouth catshark was captured by trawlings in the Gulf of Hammamet at depth of 600 m approximately (fig. 1). The coordinates at the beginning and at the end of the trawlings were 12° 10' 59" E / 36° 21' 25" N et 12° 07' 05" E / 36° 22' 12" N respectively. The total length (TL) of the specimen was 205 mm and it weighed 29.23 g. The mouth, the upper and

lower teeth and the scutellae were observed with binocular web (x 10) in order to confirm the diagnosis of the specimen. These latter were taken under the first dorsal fin and from the dorsal caren of the caudal fin. All these observations agree with Tortonese (1956), Springer (1979), Capapé & Ben Brahim (1984), Fischer *et al.* (1987), Notabartolo & Sciara (1998) and allow us to confirm that the observed specimen was a blackmouth catshark. It is conserved in the ichthyological collections of the Institut national des Sciences et Technologies de la Mer (ref.: INSTM / SCYLIO 02).

DISCUSSION

Its TL and its weight mean that it was a juvenile specimen. Off the northern coast of Tunisia, Capapé & Zaouali (1977) wrote that size at sexual maturity occurred over 420 mm TL by both males and females caught. Off the Languedocian coast, Capapé *et al.* (2000) noted that the blackmouth catshark both males and females were sexually mature over 530 mm TL.

G. melastomus is recorded off the coasts of Scandinavia (Muus & Dahlstrøm, 1964-1966) and off the British Islands (Wheeler, 1969). The species occurred off the eastern Atlantic coast from France (Bougis, 1959) to Morocco (Collignon & Aloncle,

1972). South the coast of Morocco, its closely relative species, is only recorded (Maurin & Bonnet, 1970).

In the Mediterranean, *G. melastomus* occurs in the western basin and the coast of Greece (Ondrias, 1971; Economidis, 1973) seems to be its eastern frontier.

Off the Tunisian coasts, Quignard and Capapé (1971 a) included *G. melastomus* among the species commonly caught off the northern coast of Tunisia but not yet recorded off the eastern coast. According to them, this phenomenon is due to fact that, in this latter area, deep muddy bottoms where live *G. melastomus* are located too far off the shore. Formerly, these bottoms were not trawled by fishermen. Actually, this not the case. This record of *G. melastomus* in the Gulf of Hammamet corroborates the opinion even if it is difficult to conclude on a single specimen capture. However, it was a juvenile specimen and we consider it unable to migrate from the northern coast to the site of its capture. Moreover, migrations of adult elasmobranchs do not exceed 50 km to a maximum (Quignard & Capapé, 1971 b) in these areas. *G. melastomus* could live in the Gulf of Hammamet but this hypothesis needs new records. We can only suggest off the Tunisian coasts, the captures are related to depth rather than latitude.

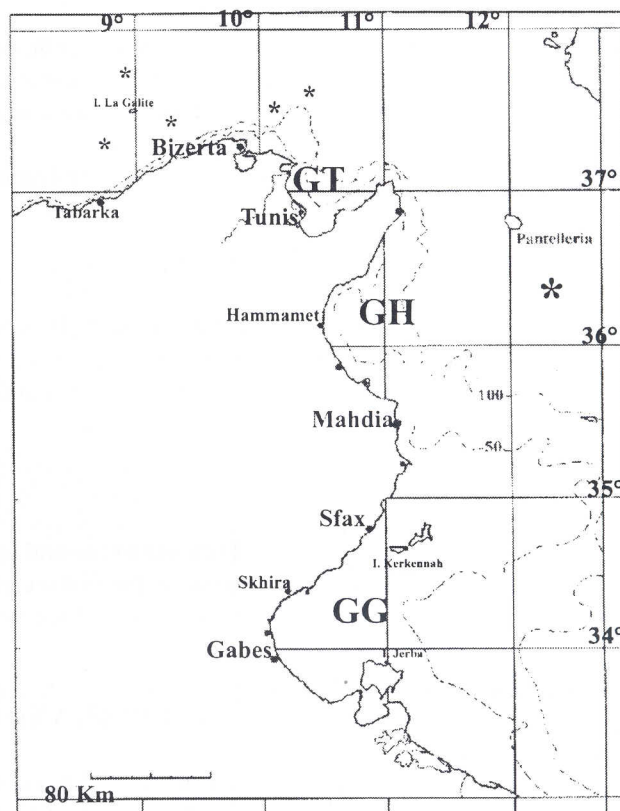


Fig. 1. Map of Tunisia showing the places where blackmouth catsharks were captured. Small black stars: off the northern coast, great black star: in the Gulf of Hammamet. GG: Gulf of Gabes; GH: Gulf of Hammamet; GT: Gulf of Tunis.

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