

NOTE

New data on the occurrence of *Pontinus kuhlii* (Bowdich, 1825) (Osteichthyes: Scorpaenidae) in the western Mediterranean*PAOLO MERELLA¹, FRANCESC ALEMANY¹ and AMÀLIA GRAU²¹Centre Oceanogràfic de les Balears - I.E.O., Moll de Ponent s/n, Ap. 291, 07080 Palma de Mallorca, Spain.²Servicios Marinos S.A. (SEAMASA), C/ Foners 10, 07006 Palma de Mallorca, Spain.

SUMMARY: The second documented capture of one specimen of *Pontinus kuhlii* (Bowdich, 1825) (Osteichthyes: Scorpaenidae) is reported from the Western Mediterranean, including a description of the specimen and formulating a hypothesis about the distribution of this species in the area.

Key words: Scorpaenidae, *Pontinus kuhlii*, new record, western Mediterranean.

RESUMEN: NUEVOS DATOS SOBRE LA PRESENCIA DE *PONTINUS KUHLII* (BOWDICH, 1825) (OSTEICHTHYES: SCORPAENIDAE) EN EL MEDITERRÁNEO OCCIDENTAL. – Se presenta la segunda cita documentada de un ejemplar de *Pontinus kuhlii* (Bowdich, 1825) (Osteichthyes: Scorpaenidae) para el Mediterráneo Occidental, incluyendo una descripción del ejemplar y formulando una hipótesis sobre la distribución de esta especie en el área.

Palabras clave: Scorpaenidae, *Pontinus kuhlii*, nueva cita, Mediterráneo occidental.

The offshore rockfish *Pontinus kuhlii* (Bowdich, 1825) is a benthic scorpenid which commonly inhabits hard bottom areas between 100 and 450 m (Hureau and Litvineko, 1986). It is an Eastern Atlantic species, distributed from Madeira, the Azores, Portugal and Morocco to Mauritania and Cape Verde Island (Hureau and Litvineko, 1986) (Fig. 1). The presence of this species in the Mediterranean has been controversial. In 1878 Sauvage described as *Sebastes bibroni* n. sp. one specimen of this species fished in Sicily (Eastern Mediterranean) (Fig. 1), but Doderlein (1891) con-

sidered it as a variety of *Sebastes (Helicolenus) dactylopterus* Delaroche 1809. Finally, Massutí and Massó (1975) proved definitively the presence of *Pontinus kuhlii* in the Mediterranean, capturing one specimen in the Cabo de Palos bank (Western Mediterranean) (Fig. 1), which was described by Tortonese (1979) on the basis of one picture.

On 11 March 1997 one specimen of *Pontinus kuhlii* was fished during a commercial bottom trawling at about 12 nautical miles off the western coast of Mallorca (Western Mediterranean), between the co-ordinates 39°33.3'N-2°04.6'E and 39°34.4'N-2°02.6'E (Fig. 1). The haul was performed at about 300-450 m deep, along a muddy channel surrounded by a vast rocky area.

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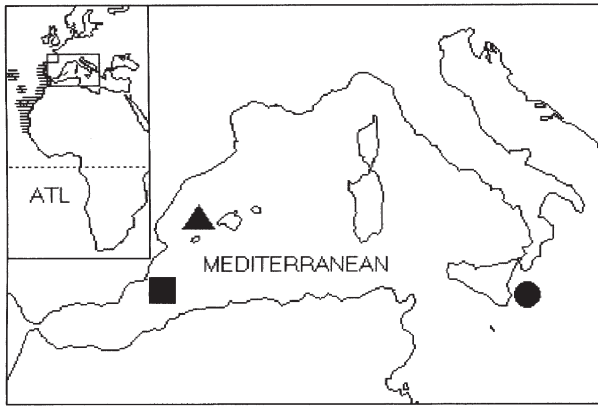


FIG. 1. – Distribution of *Pontinus kuhlii* in Atlantic and Mediterranean waters. (u) Sauvage, 1878; (n) Massutí and Massó, 1975; (s) this record.

The specimen studied, deposited in the ichthyological collection of the Centre Oceanogràfic de les Balears (ref. number COB3/1997), was a female of 286 mm of total length and 298 g of total weight (Fig. 2). Morphometric and meristic data are reported in Table I. Herewith follows a brief description. Head relatively long, with eyes in high position and mouth cavity pale rose. Two supra-ocular tentacles on the left side. Pectoral fin rays unbranched, second and third dorsal fin spines elongate. Scales ctenoid, on lateral line 26 tubular scales. Swimbladder well developed. Colour pale red with yellow spots on body side and impair fins, yellow zones on maxillar, preoperculum and operculum. Ventral area pale rose, little black spots in the occipital region and at the base of dorsal fin,

one black spot on distal-inferior portion of caudal fin. The ovary was typical of an oviparous species, similar to all the members of the subfamily Sorpaeninae that have been described (Washington *et al.*, 1984). The macroscopic and histological examination of the gonad showed a spent ovary, indicating the beginning of the post-spawning period.

This new record of *Pontinus kuhlii* in the Mediterranean may be considered as the second documented case for the Western Mediterranean. Formerly, Massutí (1983) and Riera *et al.* (1995) reported the capture of other specimens in Mallorca on the basis of information from fishermen. These references must be considered as doubtful because they do not provide descriptions of the specimens or precise data on sites of captures. This species seems relatively abundant in the Atlantic, especially off Madeira and the Canary Islands (Lozano Rey, 1952; Blanc and Hureau, 1973; Pizarro, 1984). Uiblein *et al.* (1996) reported a yield of 0.39-0.21 individuals per 300 longline hooks at the depth of 100-500 m off the Canary Islands. The scarcity of records of *Pontinus kuhlii* in the Mediterranean is probably due to its rarity, but the possibility that fishermen of this area might confound this species with other commercial scorpenids and the difficulty of taking samples in its habitat (non trawlable rocky bottoms) also may be two important factors to take into account, as proposed Lozano Rey (1952) and Fredj and Maurin (1987), respectively. The capture of a post-spawning adult suggests the possibility of the existence of a Mediterranean population.

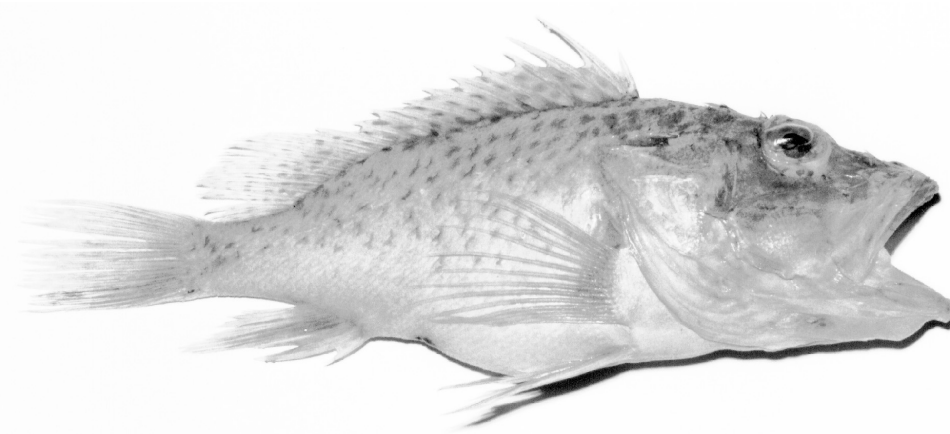


FIG. 2. – *Pontinus kuhlii* (Bowdich, 1825). Centre Oceanogràfic de les Balears ichthyological collection (ref. number COB3/1997). 286 mm total length.

TABLE I. Morphometric and meristic data of the *Pontinus kuhlii* specimen found.

CHARACTERS		
Morphometric	mm	% SL
Total length	286	---
Standard length (SL)	226	---
Predorsal length	92	40.7
Prepectoral length	93	41.2
Preventral length	93	41.2
Preanal length	155	68.6
Head length	103	45.6
Eye diameter	23	10.2
Snout length	30	13.3
Interorbital width	8	3.5
Body depth	80	35.4
Body width	49	21.7
Caudal peduncle length	32	14.2
Caudal peduncle depth	23	10.2
Dorsal fin base length	115	50.9
Spinous dorsal fin base length	77	34.1
Soft dorsal fin base length	36	15.9
Pectoral fin length	71	31.4
Pelvic fin length	62	27.4
3rd (longest) dorsal spine length	42	18.6
3rd (longest) dorsal ray length	44	19.5
2nd (longest) anal spine length	36	15.9
2nd (longest) anal ray length	53	23.5
Meristic		
Dorsal fin	XI+I,10	
Anal fin	III,5	
Pectoral fin	17	
Ventral fin	I,5	
Branchiostegal rays	7	
Gill-rakers on first arch	21	
Tubular scales in lateral line	26	

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