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# RECENT RECORD OF THE ATLANTIC POMFRET BRAMA BRAMA (BONNATERRE, 1788) (SCOMBRIFORMES: BRAMIDAE) IN THE GULF OF TRIESTE (NORTHERN ADRIATIC SEA)

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# ANNALES

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RECENT RECORD OF THE ATLANTIC POMFRET *BRAMA BRAMA*  
(BONNATERRE, 1788) (SCOMBRIFORMES: BRAMIDAE) IN THE  
GULF OF TRIESTE (NORTHERN ADRIATIC SEA)

*Nicola BETTOSO*

Agenzia Regionale per la Protezione dell'Ambiente del Friuli Venezia Giulia (ARPA FVG), Via Cairoli 14, 33057 Palmanova (UD), Italy  
e-mail: nicola.bettoso@arpa.fvg.it

*Diego BORME*

National Institute of Oceanography and Applied Geophysics - OGS, 34151 Trieste (TS), Italy

ABSTRACT

*On 20 June 2023 a specimen of Atlantic pomfret Brama brama (Bonneterre, 1788) (Bramidae) was caught by trammel net at 5 m depth in the Gulf of Trieste. B. brama is a pelagic neritic oceanodromous species distributed throughout temperate and warm-temperate oceans at depth ranging from 0 to 1,000 m and occasionally coming close to the shore. It is considered a rare species in the eastern Mediterranean and Adriatic Sea. The present record is the most recent in the Gulf of Trieste, after those historical deposited in the Natural History Museum of Trieste.*

**Keywords:** Atlantic pomfret, *Brama brama*, Gulf of Trieste, northern Adriatic Sea

RECENTE SEGNALAZIONE DEL PESCE CASTAGNA *BRAMA BRAMA*  
(BONNATERRE, 1788) (SCOMBRIFORMES: BRAMIDAE)  
NEL GOLFO DI TRIESTE (ALTO ADRIATICO)

SINTESI

*Un esemplare di pesce castagna Brama brama (Bonneterre, 1788) è stato catturato il 20 giugno 2023, con una rete tramaglio alla profondità di 5 metri. B. brama è una specie oceanodroma neritico-pelagica distribuita in tutti gli oceani temperati e temperato-caldi a profondità comprese tra 0 e 1.000 m, ma che occasionalmente si avvicina alla costa. Nel Mediterraneo orientale e nell'Adriatico è considerata una specie rara. La presente segnalazione è la più recente per il Golfo di Trieste, dopo quelle storiche depositate nel Museo di Storia naturale di Trieste.*

**Parole chiave:** pesce castagna, *Brama brama*, Golfo di Trieste, Alto Adriatico

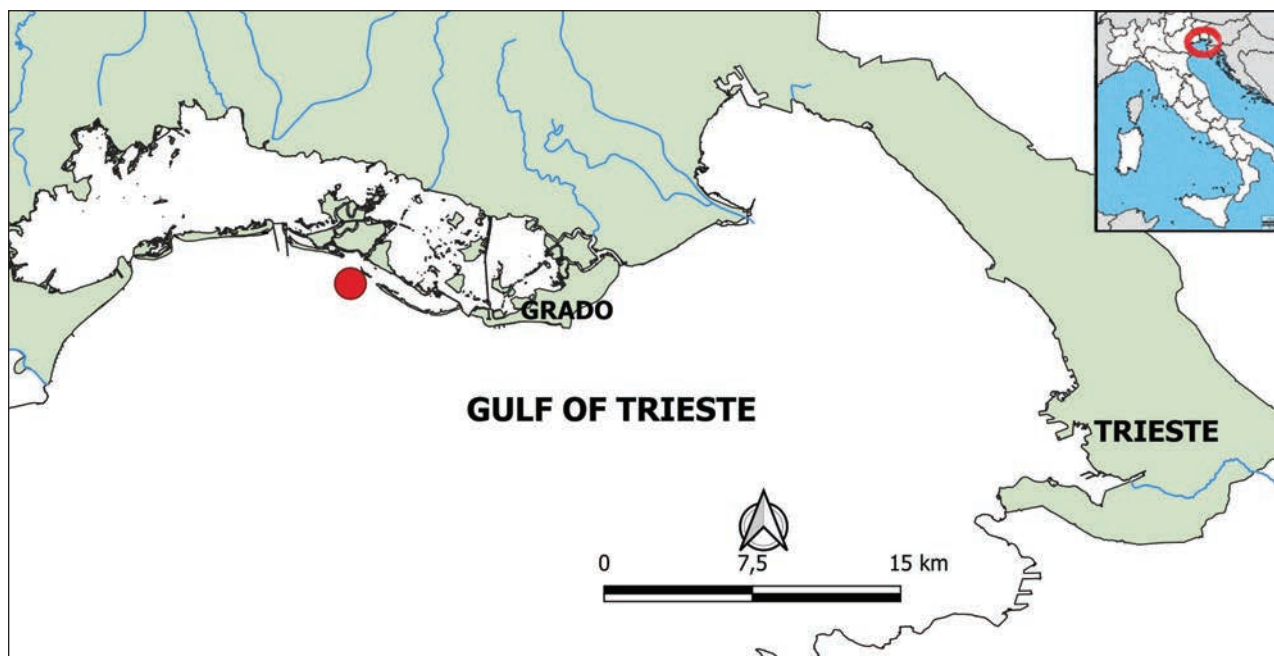
## INTRODUCTION

Pomfrets belong to a relatively small family (Bramidae) comprising 7 genera and 22 species of highly migratory, oceanodromous, pelagic, benthopelagic and bathypelagic marine fishes, found in tropical and warm temperate waters of the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans (Quigley, 2008). The Atlantic pomfret *Brama brama* (Bonnaterre, 1788) is the unique species representing the genus *Brama* in the Mediterranean Sea and its occurrence in this basin is considered rare (Golani *et al.*, 2006; Ergüden *et al.*, 2019). *B. brama* is a pelagic neritic oceanodromous species found throughout temperate and warm-temperate oceans at depths ranging from 0 to 1,000 m, generally on the continental slope (Bianchi *et al.*, 1999), occasionally coming close to the shore (Smith, 1986; Bensahla-Talet, 2020). Being a cosmopolitan and highly migratory species, its geographical distribution is widespread from 65°N to 70°S of latitude and 180°W to 180°E of longitude (Bensahla-Talet, 2020). In the eastern Atlantic it occurs from central Norway to Algoa Bay in South Africa. *B. brama* is considered a valuable by-catch resource of semi-industrial fishing, purse seines, trawls, gillnets, but it becomes a seasonal target only for the semi-pelagic longlines in Galicia (North western Spain), Portugal and off North West Africa (Quinzán *et al.*, 2016). It is also occasionally caught in the western Mediterranean (Bensahla-Talet, 2020). The species is classified

as Least Concern in the IUCN Red List (Bensahla-Talet, 2020). On regard the Mediterranean Sea, this species reaches some economic importance in the Strait of Gibraltar and in the Ligurian Sea (Lobo & Erzini, 2001; Czerwinski *et al.*, 2008), but it is rare in the eastern Mediterranean (Golani *et al.*, 2006; Corsini-Foka, 2009; Mytilineou *et al.*, 2013; Bo *et al.*, 2020). Perugia (1866) included this species in his catalogue of Adriatic fishes, while Stossich (1876) described it as rare in the eastern Adriatic (then identified as *Brama rayi* Bloch). Later, Jardas (1996) considered it fairly rare in the Adriatic Sea. The last official record in the Adriatic dates back to 2002, when a specimen was caught with a bottom trawl in the central Adriatic (Dulčić *et al.*, 2003). The present paper represents the most recent record of this species for the Gulf of Trieste, the northernmost area of the Adriatic Sea and also the Mediterranean.

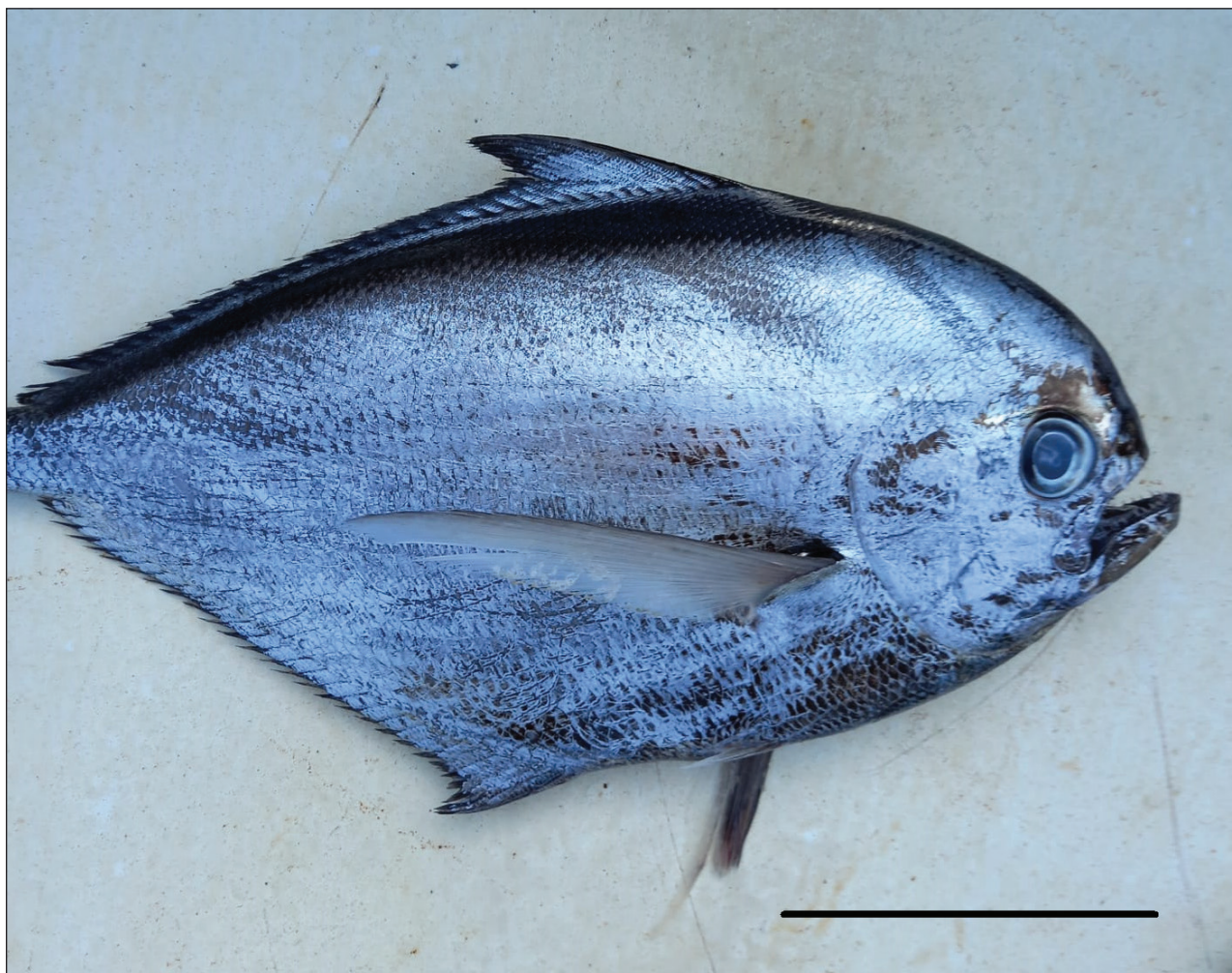
## MATERIAL AND METHODS

A specimen of *Brama brama* was caught on 20 June 2023 by a trammel net targeting cuttlefish. The capture site was located close to Grado (45° 41' 35" N; 013° 17' 43" E) (Fig. 1) at 5 m depth on a *Cymodocea nodosa* meadow. The fisherman photographed the specimen with a smartphone (Fig. 2), weighed it and sold at the Marano Lagunare fish market and therefore it was not possible to obtain the main morphometric data. The species identification was based on Bensahla-Talet (2020), who gave



**Fig. 1:** Map of the recent record of *B. brama* in the Gulf of Trieste (northern Adriatic Sea).  
**Sl. 1:** Zemljevid najnovejšega primera pojavljanja vrste *B. brama* v Tržaškem zalivu (severni Jadran).





**Fig. 2:** Lateral view of the body without the caudal fin of the *Brama brama* specimen caught in the Gulf of Trieste on 20 June 2023; scale bar = 10 cm (Photo: M. Regeni).

**Sl. 2:** Pogled s strani na primerek kostanjevke brez repne plavuti, ujete 20. junija 2023 v Tržaškem zalivu. Merilo = 10 cm (Foto: M. Regeni).

the following morphological description according to Haedrich (1986) and Gomes (1990): moderate body height and somewhat compressed; head very compressed with a very convex dorsal profile; very rounded interorbital space; large sloping mouth; wide and scaly upper jaw extending at least to the centre of the eye; lower edge of the mandibles in close contact on the ventral median line behind the symphysis, with the isthmus between them not visible; pectoral fins extending beyond the lobe of the anal fin; pelvic fin inserted below the base of the pectoral fins or slightly further back and surmounted by a large axillary scale; lateral line barely visible in adults; smooth scales, with uneven edges, covering the head, the body and extending to the anal fins; coloration characterized by a silvery black, anal fins slightly lighter.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The total weight (TW) of the specimen was about 700 g, while the total length (TL) was estimated between 400 and 450 mm. The commercial catches of Atlantic pomfrets off the coast of Morocco and Mauritania consisted mainly of large adult fish, with a TL between 400 and 480 mm (Gulyugin & Maslyankin, 2019). The maximum TL of *B. brama* was reported to be 1,000 mm in the waters of Cuba, the published maximum weight was 6,000 g (Claro, 1994), while longevity was estimated to be at least 25 years (Paul *et al.*, 2004). The largest specimen in the Mediterranean was recorded in the Greek waters of the Aegean Sea, with 710 mm TL and 5,696 g TW (Akyol & Ulaş, 2019). The specimens analyzed by Ergüden *et al.* (2019) in the eastern

Mediterranean (Turkey) were caught at a depth of around 35 m, with TL ranging from 211 to 342 mm and TW from 103.14 to 401.44 g, while the single specimen analyzed by Bensahla-Talet (2020) from the western Mediterranean (Algeria) had a TL of 850.53 mm. On regard the Adriatic Sea, Dulčić *et al.* (2003) recorded one specimen in 2002, caught by bottom trawl in the Pomo Pit, at about 150 m depth (TL=406.2 mm and TW=644.2 g). Earlier records in the eastern Adriatic were reported in local newspapers (1980, 1981 and 1982 near Rijeka, Croatia), while another record appeared in 1984 in the Kaštela Bay-Split area with a TL=457 mm (Pallaoro & Jardas, 1996). Finally, it is noteworthy that for the first time two larval stages were recorded at a depth of 22 m (Neretva estuary, Croatia) (TL=4.36 mm and TL=5.00 mm) (Dulčić, 1999). One specimen is deposited in the Ichthyological Collection of the Natural History Museum in Rijeka, but without data (Kovačić, 1998). Seven specimens are deposited in the Civic Museum of Natural History of Trieste: the only two specimens with documented location in the Gulf of Trieste were caught in 1906 (Ic-1539) and on 18 September 1930 (Ic-1540) (Tomasin & Bressi, pers. comm.).

The Atlantic pomfret is a seasonal migrant occurring in small schools and its movements seems to be temperature related (Jardas, 1996). *B. brama* feeds

opportunisticly on small fishes, cephalopods, amphipods and euphausiids (Haedrich, 1986). The spawning period is generally comprised between July and October in the eastern Atlantic (Gulyugin & Maslyankin, 2019), with the spawning area located in the tropical waters and the feeding grounds in the northern areas of the ocean (Quinzán *et al.*, 2016). *B. brama* reaches sexual maturity at a TL >300 mm, which corresponds to the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of life (Lobo & Erzini, 2001). On this basis, Gulyugin & Maslyankin (2019) aged the specimens with a TL between 400-480 mm to 5-9 years.

Dulčić *et al.* (2003) still considered *B. brama* a rare species in the Adriatic Sea and, to our knowledge, the specimen caught near Grado represents the most recent record in the Gulf of Trieste. It is also interesting that this adult specimen was caught at a very shallow depth (5 m), as this species is more characteristic of deeper areas.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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RECENTNI ZAPIS O POJAVLJANJU KOSTANJEVKE *BRAMA BRAMA* (BONNATERRE, 1788)  
(SCOMBRIFORMES: BRAMIDAE) V TRŽAŠKEM ZALIVU (SEVERNO JADRANSKO MORJE)

*Nicola BETTOSO*

Agenzia Regionale per la Protezione dell'Ambiente del Friuli Venezia Giulia (ARPA FVG), Via Cairoli 14, 33057 Palmanova (UD), Italy  
e-mail: nicola.bettoso@arpa.fvg.it

*Diego BORME*

National Institute of Oceanography and Applied Geophysics - OGS, 34151 Trieste (TS), Italy

POVZETEK

Dvajsetega junija 2023 so ribiči v trislojno mrežo ujeli primerek kostanjevke *Brama brama* (Bonnaterre, 1788) (Bramidae) na 5 m globine v Tržaškem zalivu. *B. brama* je pelaška neritična oceanodromna vrsta, ki se pojavlja povsod v zmernih in toplih morjih v globinskem razponu med 0 in 1000 m globine, občasno pa se približa obali. V vzhodnem Sredozemskem morju in Jadranskem morju jo smatrajo za redko vrsto. Pričujoči zapis je najnovejši v Tržaškem zalivu, so pa znani zgodovinski zapisi, katerih primerki so shranjeni v Tržaškem prirodoslovnem muzeju.

**Ključne besede:** kostanjevka, *Brama brama*, Tržaški zaliv, severni Jadran

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