

Five additional records of fishes in the Gulf of Aqaba, including *Mola mola* (Forskål, 1775), new for the Red Sea

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Abstract. Five species are reported for the first time in the Gulf of Aqaba: *Chanos chanos* (family Chanidae), *Novaculichthys macrolepidotus* (family Labridae), *Grammatorcynus bilineatus* (Family Scombridae), and *Arothron immaculatus* (family Tetraodontidae) were already known to occur in the Red Sea, but the pelagic, oceanodromous species *Mola mola* (family Molidae) is reported for the first time from the Red Sea. For each of the records a set of diagnostic characters is given, based on specimens from Aqaba.

Kurzfassung. Aus dem Golf von Aqaba werden fünf Arten von Meeresfischen erstmals gemeldet: *Chanos chanos* (Familie Chanidae), *Novaculichthys macrolepidotus* (Familie Labridae), *Grammatorcynus bilineatus* (Familie Scombridae) und *Arothron immaculatus* (Familie Tetraodontidae) waren bereits aus dem Roten Meer bekannt, doch die pelagische, ozeanodrome Art *Mola mola* (Familie Molidae) wird erstmals für das Rote Meer nachgewiesen. Für alle Nachweise werden auf Grundlage des neuen Materials diagnostische Merkmale gegeben.

Key words. Gulf of Aqaba, Red Sea, Jordan, *Mola mola*, new records.

Introduction

The Gulf of Aqaba is a narrow depression, with a maximum depth of 1,830 m, at the north-easternmost end of the Red Sea basin, from which it is semi-isolated by the 252-m deep 'Sill of Tiran'. Its hydrographic conditions are characterised by elevated temperatures of 20.5–27.6 °C and increased salinities of 40.3–41.6 ‰ throughout the water column. The minimum temperature of deep water is 20.9 °C. Due to these hydrographic peculiarities and to its geographic position and climate, the surface light penetration into the waters is strong (REISS & HOTTINGER 1984). The Red Sea ichthyofauna is comparatively well known. In their checklist, GOREN & DOR (1994) reported 1248 fish species from this north-western branch of the tropical Indian Ocean. Since then, many more species have been recorded from the Red Sea (RANDALL 1994, PAULUS 1992, KHALAF & KRUPP 2003). With more than 1300 species on record, the Red Sea has the highest fish species richness of any enclosed or semi-enclosed water body in the world.

Fish diversity is also remarkably high in the Gulf of Aqaba, a narrow and deep north-eastern extension of the Red Sea. In 1993, the Marine Science Station in Aqaba, Jordan, started compiling an inventory of the fish fauna of the Gulf of Aqaba (KHALAF & DISI 1997). As a result of this study, KHALAF (in prep.) recorded 507 species from the Gulf of Aqaba.

Several fish species, which had previously been known from various parts of the Indo-Pacific, but not from the Red Sea, have been reported from the Jordanian coast at the north-