

An obscure fish in Chile, *Balystes polylepis*, Steindachner (1876) (Tetraodontiformes: Balistidae)

Un pez poco conocido en Chile *Balystes polylepis* Steindachner, 1876 (Tetraodontiformes: Balistidae).

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ABSTRACT: It mentions the finding of a specimen of the species *Balystes polylepis* Steindachner (1876) (Pisces: Tetraodontiformes: Balistidae), incidentally caught by a purse seine net off the coast of the city of San Antonio, Valparaíso Region (33°36'00"S 71°37'00"W), this being the third specimen collected for the region.

Keywords: Tetraodontiformes, Balistidae, San Antonio, collected specimen, chilean coast.

RESUMEN: Se menciona el hallazgo de un ejemplar de la especie *Balystes polylepis* Steindachner (1876) (Pisces: Tetraodontiformes: Balistidae), capturado de forma incidental por una red de cerco frente a la costa de la ciudad de San Antonio, Región de Valparaíso (33°36'00"S 71°37'00"O), siendo este el tercer ejemplar colectado para la Región.

Palabras claves: Tetraodontiformes, Balistidae, San Antonio, espécimen colectado, costa chilena.

INTRODUCTION:

Although very common in all tropical and subtropical seas worldwide, Tetraodontiformes, which encompass such enigmatic species as pufferfish, boxfish, sunfish, and triggerfish, are very rare off the coast of Chile (Brito, 2003). There are only a few incidental capture records for this area (Medina *et al.*, 2004), a situation that also occurs for other species listed in the catalog of Chilean coastal marine species based on isolated capture records, such as the Peruvian catfish, *Galeichthys peruvianus* (Méndez-Abarca, 2011; 2015; Méndez-Abarca *et al.*, 2021). Twenty-two species of Tetraodontiformes, belonging to 6 families, are described for the Chilean coast (Bahamonde & Pequeño, 1975; Pequeño, 1989, 1997), of which only four are recorded for the coast of continental Chile, with the remaining species inhabiting tropical waters of insular Chile (Moyle & Cech, 1982; Springer, 1982; Brito, 2003).

Of the seven native species of triggerfish that inhabit Chile, only *Balystes polylepis*, Steindachner (1876) is found in continental coastal waters. This species has some records due to incidental captures off the coast of this country (Medina *et al.*, 2004). Despite the species' wide distribution, it ranges from the northern hemisphere, from San Francisco, California (USA), to the Galapagos Islands (Ecuador) and Lobos de Afuera (Peru) (Hildebrand, 1946; Berry & Baldwin, 1966; Chirichigno, 1974; Vélez *et al.*, 1984; Chirichigno & Vélez, 1998; Brito, 2003). There are very few records for the species in Chilean coastal waters. The first and oldest record for the species was made off the coast near the city of Iquique (20°16'S) in 1957, followed by a record in the same area in 1984 (De Buen, 1959; Kong *et al.*, 1985). There are also captures off the coast of the city of Antofagasta (23°39'S) for the years 1977, 1983, and 1984 (Meléndez *et al.*, 1993; Kong *et al.*, 1985; Kong & Bolados, 1987). Subsequently, there are two capture records for the Valparaíso Region, one in 1988 in the San Antonio area and the other west of the Cartagena Resort (33°32'S) in 1999 (Brito, 2003).

On March 26th, 2016, Mr. Nicolás Rojas Porras received as a donation a specimen of *B. polylepis* (Fig.1), incidentally caught by a purse seine net off the coast of the city of San Antonio, Valparaíso Region (33°36'00"S 71°37'00"W). The specimen was identified as a male measuring 33 centimeters in length. The identification was based on meristic and morphometric characteristics indicated by Chirichigno (1974), Medina *et al.* (2004), and Méndez-Abarca and Pepe-Victoriano (2020). Currently, the specimen is part of the collections of the Natural History Museum and Exhibition Center NARP, located in the city of Melipilla, Metropolitan Region. Due to the rarity of *B. polylepis* on the coast of Chile, it is necessary to conduct a record of incidental capture, as further sampling could indicate that the species might be more common than thought and even native to Northern Chile, as has been the case with other species such as *Galeichthys peruvianus* (Méndez-Abarca *et al.*, 2021).



Figura 1. On March 26th, 2016, Mr. Nicolás Rojas Porras received as a donation a specimen of *Balystes polylepis*.

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