

The round goby *Neogobius melanostomus* is colonising the NE Baltic Sea

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Abstract

After being first detected in the Baltic Sea in early 1990s, the round goby *Neogobius melanostomus* has expanded its distribution area afterwards and first found in Estonian waters in 2002. There are evidences to suggest that the species is relatively common in leisure fishermen catches at the southern coast of the Gulf of Finland. Thus, this demersal fish is slowly, but continuously colonizing northern parts of the Baltic Sea.

Key words: demersal alien fish, expansion of distribution area, Baltic Sea

The round goby *Neogobius melanostomus*, a demersal fish species of the Ponto-Caspian origin, was first found in the Baltic Sea in the Puck Bay (Poland) early 1990's (Skora and Stolarski 1993). The species has colonised more deep waters and expanded its distribution area both to south and north during the following years (Sapota and Skora 2005).

In April 2002, one individual of the species (TL 17.8 cm, Tw 84.7g, male) was caught by a commercial fishermen with a trapnet at 5 m depth in Parnu Bay (NE part of the Gulf of Riga) (Shpilev and Ojaveer 2003). Despite of our efforts – continuous communication with local fishermen – no more representatives of the fish has been found in this area afterwards.

However, the recent contacts with leisure fishermen in Muuga Bay (at the south-western coast of the Gulf of Finland) gave us confidence that the fish has further colonised north-eastern parts of the Baltic Sea. According to fishermen reports in this area, *N. melanostomus* is a relatively common fish species in their catches (although not very abundant) and if caught, fishermen eat it with pleasure. Basic biological parameters of the two males caught in Muuga Bay

on 6 October 2005 (Annex) were: TL 17.3 cm, Tw 95.9 g and TL 20.1 cm, TW 168.8 g, respectively.

These observations, supplemented by the most recent personal communications with Erkki Leppäkoski (Turku University, Finland) and Atis Minde (Latvian Fish Resource Agency, Latvia) which confirm that the species has also been found in their coastal waters, show that this demersal vertebrate alien species is slowly, but continuously colonising the north-eastern part of the Baltic Sea.

References

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Annex

Records of *Neogobius melanostomus* in the north-eastern Baltic Sea*

Location	Geographic coordinates		Record date	Species abundance	Collector
	Latitude, N	Longitude, E			
Pärnu Bay (Gulf of Riga)	58°22'	24°22'	23.04.2002	1 individual	Shpilev and Ojaveer 2003
Muuga Bay (Gulf of Finland)	59°30'	24°57'	06.10.2005	2 individuals	H. Ojaveer

*Full reference to the data: Ojaveer H (2006) The round goby *Neogobius melanostomus* is colonising the NE Baltic Sea. Aquatic Invasions 1(1): 44-45