

Media Release:

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Marine Scientist Tracking New Immigrant Fish

Department of Natural Resources, Environment and The Arts Marine Biodiversity Scientist Dr Barry Russell is collaborating with scientists in Italy and Turkey in tracking a new immigrant species of fish in the Mediterranean Sea.

Dr Russell said he was first contacted by scientists from the University of Rome to identify a species of threadfin bream they had discovered in the catch of fishermen from Tyre in southern Lebanon.

"The fish is a species of threadfin bream (*Nemipterus randalli*) that I first described in 1986 from the Western Indian Ocean," Dr Russell said.

"The species also occurs in the Red Sea and it appears to have migrated through the Suez Canal, and has now established itself in the eastern Mediterranean Sea.

"More than 60 species of fishes – known as Lessepsian migrants, after the famous constructor of the Suez Canal, Ferdinand de Lesseps - have entered the Mediterranean since the Suez Canal was opened in 1869, but this species appears to a relatively recent arrival."

Dr Russell said that at almost the same time as being contacted by the Italian scientists, he was approached also by a Turkish scientist who had discovered the same species of fish from the coast of Turkey, where it has also suddenly appeared in commercial fish catches.

"The appearance of the threadfin bream now on the coast of Turkey represents a considerable range extension for this fish in the Eastern Mediterranean," Dr Russell said.

"The discovery of this species, apparently well established in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, is an exciting one, as threadfin breams form a significant part of commercial fish catches elsewhere in the world, and there is the potential for this species to become an important food fish also in the Mediterranean."

The discovery of the threadfin bream in the Eastern Mediterranean will be published in the international scientific journal *Journal of Fish Biology*.

Dr Russell is a taxonomist and international expert on tropical demersal fishes.

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Media Note – For more information contact Dr Barry Russell on 8920 9241

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