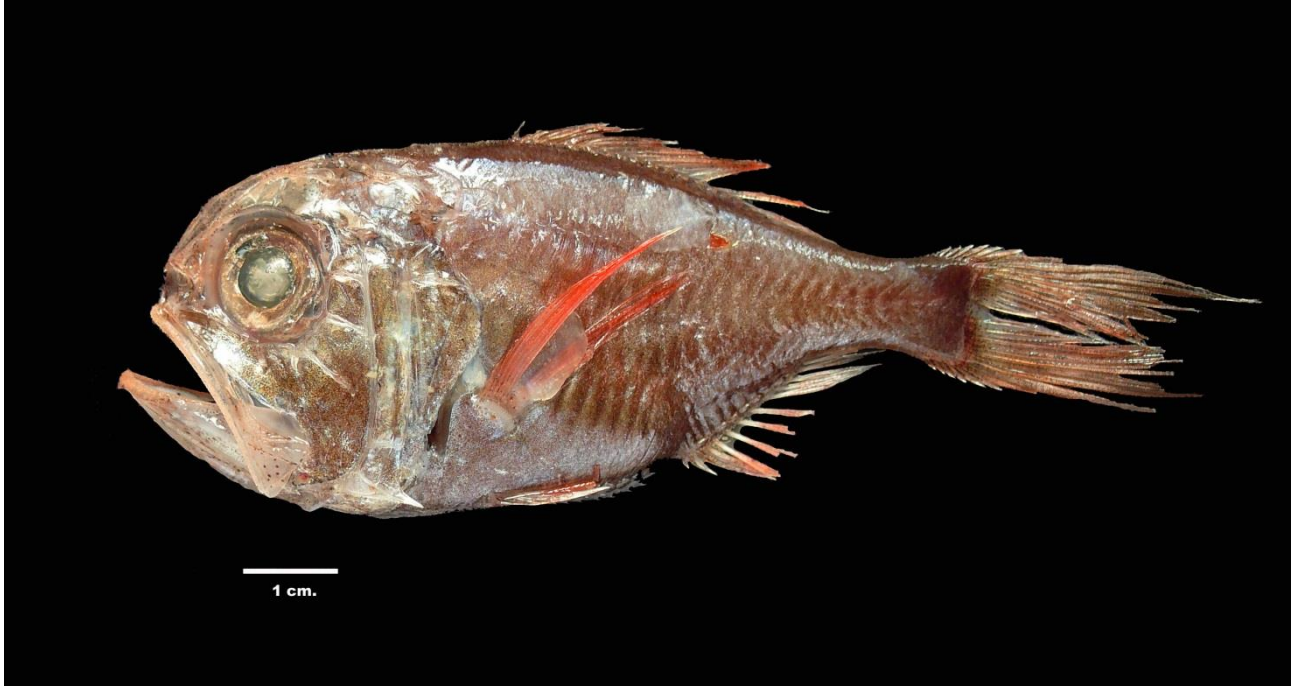


PRESS RELEASE

FIRST TURKISH DEEP SEA WORKSHOP

19 June 2017, Gökçeada, Turkey

The First National Deep Sea Workshop was held in Gökçeada Island, Turkey, located in the North Aegean Sea, by Marine Biology Department, Faculty of Fisheries, and Istanbul University with the sponsorship of the Turkish Marine Research Foundation (TUDAV). Approximately 30 researchers from 11 institutions attended and made significant contribution for this workshop.



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Deep sea fishes collected in Finike Seamounts, Turkey

Deep sea studies in the Turkish seas have been started only in recent years and more attention should be given to this field. Over 60% of the Turkish seas are deep sea, meaning deeper than 200 m which is called Deep Sea. Main goal of this workshop is to provide a national road map and recommendations for deep sea researches in Turkey, besides, to bring together researchers of different disciplines such as physical, chemical and biological oceanography. Some of them have performed studies in deep seas and have shared their knowledge around the Turkish seas. For this purpose, gaps, and lack of knowledge was defined and possible actions and solutions were discussed and elaborated. The importance of intensive researches for the deep sea ecosystem in the Turkish seas was especially underlined. Cost of research and joint studies to increase the knowledge on deep seas were the main topics of the discussion of the workshop.

Deep sea regions cover extreme habitats with very little information of physical, geochemical and biological properties. Finike (Anaximender) Seamounts and cold seep as well as hydrothermal vents in the Sea of Marmara are poorly known. Detailed studies in those areas carry great importance. It is also important to note that deep sea species are vulnerable because nutrition and food sources are limited. Their life cycles are completely different than those in the pelagic ecosystem. Although there is limited knowledge, deep sea species are generally known to grow slowly and capable of different reproductive strategies.

One of the invited speakers, Dr. Mustafa YÜCEL from the METU, presented valuable information on deep sea researches worldwide. Revealing his recent participation in deep sea sampling by Submarine “Alvin” attracted the attention of the workshop participants. Dr. Yücel mentioned in particular the importance of continuous researches in a selected area to understand the dynamics of the system. This was the main suggestion for also specific areas like Finike (Anaximender) Seamount in the Mediterranean Sea. Other scientists presented their findings on deep sea fish, mollusks, sponges, corals, crustaceans, echinoderms, Polychaeta etc.

Deep sea life or biodiversity is known as comparable to the world's richest tropical rainforests. Because deep sea species live in environments rarely disturbed by humans and tend to be slow growing, late maturing and endemic, they are exceptionally vulnerable in the Mediterranean Sea. Deep-sea coral and sponge communities are largely untapped sources of natural products with enormous potentials for pharmaceuticals, enzymes, pesticides, cosmetics and other commercial products. In the Mediterranean Sea we don't know much about deep sea habitats such as Abyssal plains, Sea mounts, hydrothermal vents, and Cold water corals. As for the Black Sea, there is little life below 200m depth due to hydrogen sulfide, but again marine life in anoxic conditions is very poorly known.

Governing the deep seas habitats are recently discussed in several forums. Most recently the UN calls in the states to protect deep-sea ecosystems from destructive deep-sea fishing practices. In addition, the European Union issued the regulation for the management of deep-sea fisheries, including a ban on deep-sea bottom trawling below 800 m, which will enter into force this year.

General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) has already made some

recommendations for sensitive deep sea habitats, such as banning of deep sea trawling in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea like Erasthostanes areas.

The workshop was concluded by Dr. Bayram ÖZTÜRK, the workshop convener and Director of TUDAV, with some of the recommendations, such as establishing an working group, elaborating a national road map for studies on deep sea ecosystem, collaboration with all stakeholders, mainly around the Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea, and local institutions. Concerted action plans for the protection of the deep sea habitats and species around Turkey should be elaborated.

