

LEAPING GREY MULLET, *LISA SALIENS* RISSO

As for the golden mullet, the leaping grey mullet prefers waters with higher salinity, hence it rarely enters near shore lakes. Out of the 3 species considered, the leaping grey mullet is most resistant to lowering of the sea water temperature. The biological characteristics of the mullets hibernating off the Bulgarian coast are investigated in detail by Alexandrova (1964, 1967, 1973). She showed that the percentage composition of mullet species during their wintering in Varna bay, Varna and Gebedje lakes was determined mainly by the water salinity. In sea waters (Varna bay) the leaping grey mullet predominate (98.5%) in wintering concentrations of mullets. In the channel connecting the Sea with the Varna lake, where the salinity is still high, the same species represented 75.9%, while in Varna and Gebedje lakes the proportion of the leaping grey mullet decreased to 37 and 21.4% respectively. The grey mullet was infrequent in the Varna bay (1.5%) while it predominated in the Gebedje lake.

The leaping grey mullet spawns both in the Black Sea and Sea of Azov from the end of May to the middle of August. Its fecundity varies between 1 and 2 million eggs. It attains sexual maturity early - the males at age 2 (2+ year old) and length 21-23 cm, and the females at age 3 (3+ year old) and length 26 cm. According to Alexandrova (1967) 2+ year old fish have a mean length and weight of 31.2 cm and 277 g respectively. These figures show again that fishery biologists from different Black Sea countries do not always read mullet ages in the same manner.

The leaping grey mullet abundance is not high and specialized fishery is not conducted. In Ukraine it is fished together with the other two species during the migrations to the Sea of Azov, on the way back, and partially on the wintering grounds -from Sevastopol to Gilendjik. According to Alexandrova's data (1973) leaping grey mullet catches both in the Black Sea and the near shore lakes, average to 12.5% of mullet catches. Based on this account, its stock in the Black Sea probably does not exceed 5 000 tonnes, i.e. the total mullet biomass (all species) presumably is around 20 000-25 000 tonnes.