

Research article**First record of juvenile Atlantic tripletail, *Lobotes surinamensis* (Bloch, 1790), from Antalya Bay, Eastern Mediterranean, Türkiye****Aybala Gökçen GÜNCAN*** 

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Abstract: A juvenile Atlantic tripletail, *Lobotes surinamensis* (Bloch, 1790), was seen and recorded in the surface waters of Antalya Bay (36°50'59"N, 31°03'26"E) on August 26, 2025, around 08:30 in the morning. The individual measured approximately 7–10 cm in total length and displayed typical leaf-like movements characteristic of the species' juveniles. During the observation, the juvenile fish, which is the Atlantic tripletail actively attempted to capture and feed on small, unidentified juvenile fish in its immediate vicinity. Water conditions at the time were calm, with a surface temperature around 28°C, allowing clear visual confirmation of its morphological features. This observed juvenile is morphologically and behaviorally identical to *Lobotes surinamensis*, previously observed and reported in the other areas of Türkiye, such as Izmir, Muğla, Mersin, and Iskenderun coasts. This observation represents the first record of juvenile *Lobotes surinamensis* from Antalya Bay and fills the geographical distribution gap between Mersin and Muğla in the eastern Mediterranean region.

Keywords: Antalya Bay, Atlantic tripletail, first record, juvenile, *Lobotes surinamensis*

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Introduction

The Atlantic tripletail, *Lobotes surinamensis* (Bloch, 1790), belongs to the order Perciformes, family Lobotidae, and is the sole representative of its genus documented in the Mediterranean Sea (Daban & Cabbar, 2021; Ergüden et al., 2020).

The species is defined by its triangular-shaped, deep, and laterally compressed body, with extended soft portions of the dorsal and anal fins that reach or overlap the caudal peduncle, creating the characteristic “three-tail” appearance (Breder, 1949; Daban & Cabbar, 2021; Ergüden et al., 2020; Queiroz et al., 2016).

The Atlantic tripletail, *Lobotes surinamensis* (Bloch, 1790), is widespread in the Mediterranean region and occurs in tropical and subtropical waters of the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans (Akyol & Kara, 2012; Froese & Pauly, 2025). Although historically rare

in the Mediterranean, records have increased in recent years (Hemida et al., 2003; Akyol & Kara, 2012; Dulčić & Dragičević, 2011; Bilge et al., 2017). Its expanding range within the Mediterranean basin is largely attributed to prevailing currents and warming isotherms (Jakov et al., 2014).

Previous records show observations of the species in Izmir Bay, Mersin Bay, Iskenderun Bay, and other areas (Akyol & Kara, 2012; Bilge et al., 2017; Daban & Cabbar, 2021; Ergüden et al., 2018, 2020), yet there is no prior record from Antalya Bay.

Material and Methods

The observation of the juvenile *Lobotes surinamensis* was made on 26 August 2025 at around 08:30. The juvenile specimen was located approximately 20 meters offshore near the pier structure, in the surface waters of Antalya Bay (36°50'59"N, 31°03'26"E) (Fig. 1).

The sea surface exhibited a mild bubbly appearance, likely due to organic matter, but lacked floating debris. The individual was initially mistaken for a dead fish; however, it began swimming upon closer inspection. It was observed alone, among other unidentified juvenile fish, displaying the species' distinctive lateral and leaf-like swimming movements (Breder, 1949; Ergüden et al., 2018).

Environmental conditions at the time included an air temperature of 31°C, a sea surface temperature of 30–31°C, and light winds averaging 10 km/h.

The observation was supported with photographs, and species identification was confirmed by comparison with published images and descriptions in the literature (Breder, 1949; Ergüden et al., 2018, 2020).

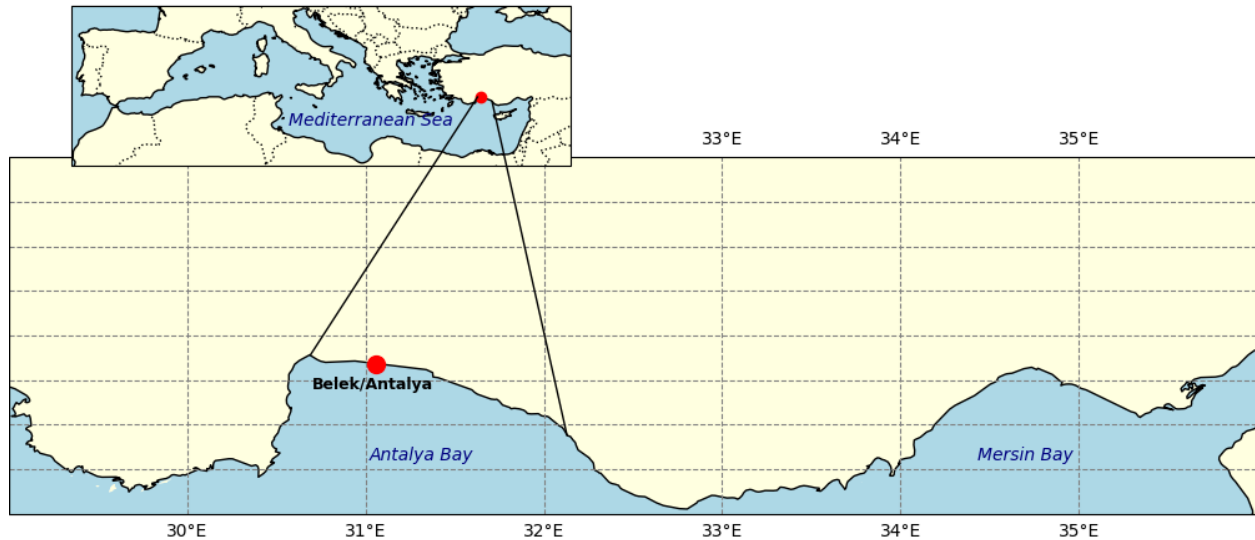


Figure 1. Map of Antalya Bay indicating the observation site (36°50'59"N, 31°03'26"E)

Results

Juvenile records of *L. surinamensis* in the eastern Mediterranean are relatively rare (Akyol and Kara, 2012; Hemida et al., 2003; Jakov et al., 2014). Previous records in Türkiye include specimens from İskenderun Bay, Mersin Bay, and İzmir Bay. This observation complements previous records and expands the known distribution of the species in Turkish waters (Akyol & Kara, 2012; Bilge et al., 2017; Daban & Cabbar, 2021; Ergüden et al., 2018, 2020).

This observation represents the first confirmed juvenile record of *L. surinamensis* from Antalya Bay, Eastern Mediterranean, Türkiye (Figs. 2 and 3).

The individual showed the compressed body characteristic of juveniles, along with mottled brown-yellow coloration and the extended soft dorsal and anal fins that form the typical “three-tail” shape (Breder, 1949; Daban and Cabbar, 2021; Ergüden et al., 2020). The body length of the specimen was estimated at 7–10 cm and the specimen demonstrated surface-floating and leaf-mimicking movements, actively attempting to prey on other juvenile fish. These behaviors match previously reported Mediterranean observations, but this is the

first documentation from Antalya Bay (Bilge et al., 2017; Ergüden et al., 2018, 2020).



Figure 2. Juvenile *Lobotes surinamensis* exhibiting characteristic leaf-like posture near the surface in Antalya Bay, Turkey (26 August 2025), observed alongside unidentified juvenile fish.



Figure 3. The same individual displaying active swimming behavior following initial disturbance

Discussion

The photographic evidence and behavioral observations support species identification. Ongoing monitoring for new records, particularly juveniles, will help clarify the establishment and potential local reproduction of *L. surinamensis* in the region. The occurrence of *Lobotes surinamensis* is linked to water temperature, which restricts the distribution of this thermophilic species (Akyol & Kara, 2012; Jakov et al., 2014). Recent observations from the Mediterranean Sea show that the warming trend in the region provides suitable thermal conditions and the species is being recorded more often, rather than only as rare or sporadic sightings (Dulčić & Dragičević, 2011; Bilge et al., 2017). Ecologically, the presence of *L. surinamensis* brings a different predatory behavior into the coastal environment. During the observations, juveniles showed leaf-like drifting behavior when attacking prey. Comparable strategies have been reported elsewhere (Breder, 1949; Queiroz et al., 2016), indicating that native juvenile fish assemblages in Antalya Bay may be affected by the presence of this predator.

Ethical Approval

No ethical approval was required for this study.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Funding Statement

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