

Abstract

Gobies (Gobiidae, Perciformes) are small, inconspicuous fishes occupying marine, brackish and freshwater environments. They are very abundant group, with more than 1,700 species and around 260 genera currently recognised. Gobies have worldwide geographical distribution in coastal waters with exceptions of Arctic and Antarctic areas. More than half species occur in tropical seas. In the Mediterranean Sea, 61 species are known up to date, which inhabit four main types of habitats: benthic, cryptobenthic, hyperbenthic and nektonic. The European gobies were assigned to three distinct lineages. In all these lineages, north-east Atlantic and Mediterranean species are placed together, which evidences common evolution of the gobies from these two water masses. A variety of ecological and biological traits can be seen within each of the European goby lineage. The nektonic way of life evolved three times independently in the course of evolution. Although Gobiidae are the most specious fish family in the Mediterranean, there is still little information about most of the species. In some cases, the assumption on geographical distribution is based just on several findings. The life-span and reproduction is known for about one third of species. This work is a summarization of the published data about the gobies in the Mediterranean Sea. There are considerable gaps in knowledge of many aspects of biology and ecology for large part of the species. The most studied species are those, which are easily collected by common fisheries techniques.