

SPECIES INFORMATION SHEET

Syngnathus acus

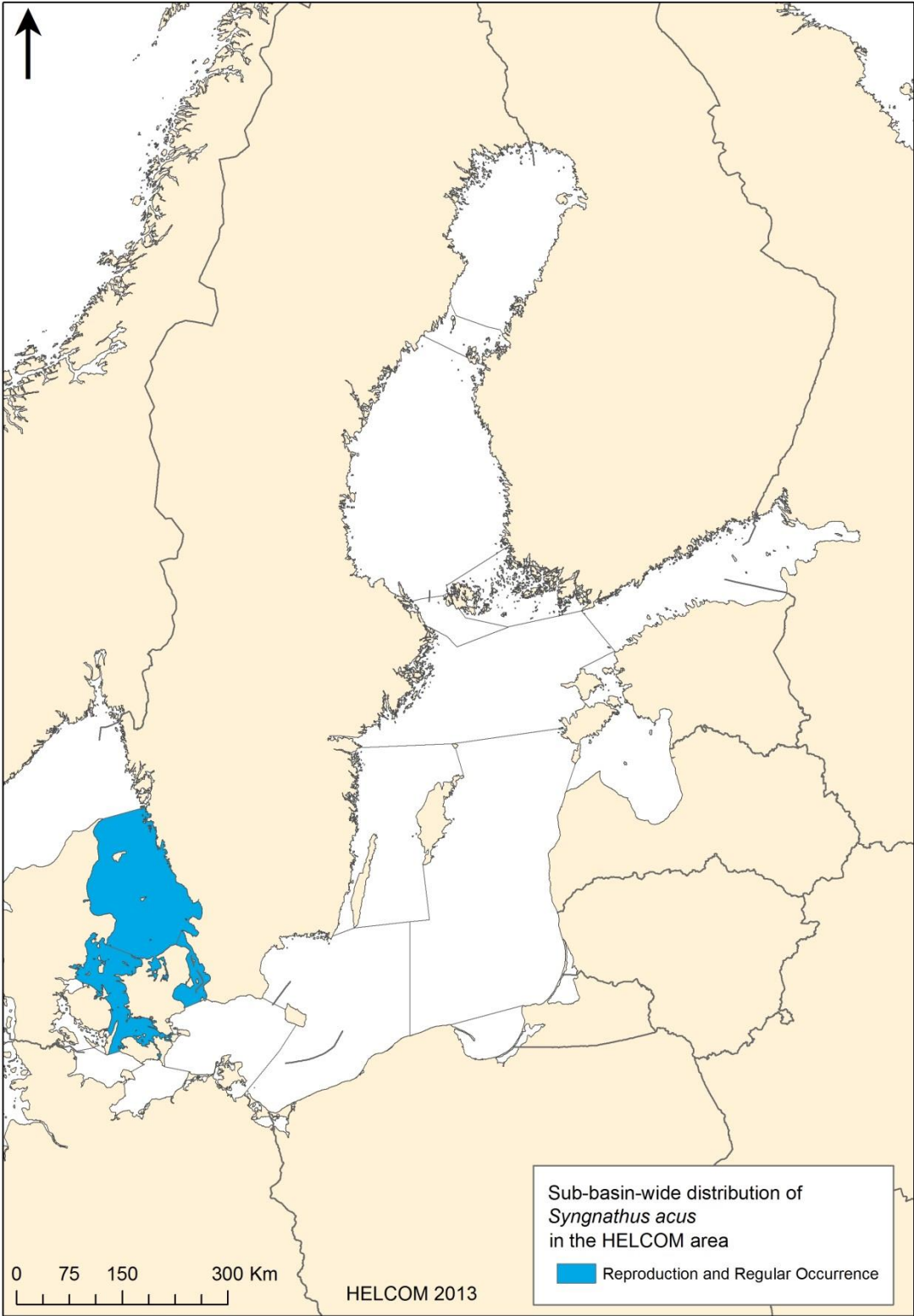
English name: Greater pipefish	Scientific name: <i>Syngnathus acus</i>	
Taxonomical group: Class: Actinopterygii Order: Syngnathiformes Family: Syngnathidae	Species authority: Linnaeus, 1758	
Subspecies, Variations, Synonyms: –	Generation length: 1.8 years	
Past and current threats (Habitats Directive article 17 codes): –	Future threats (Habitats Directive article 17 codes): –	
IUCN Criteria: –	HELCOM Red List Category:	LC Least Concern
Global / European IUCN Red List Category NE/NE	Habitats Directive: –	
Previous HELCOM Red List Category (2007): EN		
Protection and Red List status in HELCOM countries: Denmark –/–, Estonia –/–, Finland –/–, Germany –/– (Baltic Sea), Latvia –/–, Lithuania –/–, Poland –/–, Russia –/–, Sweden –/LC		

Distribution and status in the Baltic Sea region

The distribution of the species in the HELCOM area is restricted to the Kattegat and the Sound. Outside the HELCOM area, the greater pipefish occurs from the Black Sea through the Mediterranean Sea and the north-eastern Atlantic to Norway (Kullander et al. 2012). Like most species of the *Syngnathidae* family, the distribution and abundance of *S. acus* is not monitored well with standardized test fishing nets because of its thin/snake-like body form and behaviour.

Distribution map

The map shows the subbasins in the HELCOM area where the species is known to occur regularly and to reproduce (HELCOM 2012).



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Habitat and ecology

The greater pipefish is a mainly marine species that lives along the coast or further offshore down to about 100 meters depth. It prefers vegetated rocky or sandy bottoms, often with algae and eelgrass (*Zostera marina*). It can also be found in brackish water (i.e. estuaries). The diet consists of fish larvae and small invertebrates. Spawning takes place in pairs in dense vegetation in May to August and the eggs are deposited in the male's brood pouch. Larvae hatch at a length of 2.5 cm and initially live planktonically (Dawson 1986, Froese & Pauly 2012, Kullander et al. 2012).

Description of major threats

At present the species is not considered threatened. However, its population has probably been negatively affected by loss of suitable habitats, e.g. fragmentation of *Zostera* beds.

Assessment justification

There are small catches of the species in Swedish nuclear power plant cooling water intake in the Kattegat showing no trend from 1988 to 2011 but a distinct peak in abundance in late 1990s and an almost statistically significant decrease during the last decade. This is, however, probably a return to more normal values. The extent of occurrence (EOO) is below the threshold for Near Threatened (< 40 000 km²) according to the B1 criterion however none of the required additional criteria of severe fragmentation, continuing decline or extreme fluctuations in population size or habitat is fulfilled. The estimated area of occupancy is above the threshold for being threatened according to the IUCN criteria. An important habitat of the species, *Zostera* meadows and possibly also other macrophyte rich habitats have declined or deteriorated within the HELCOM area and it could be assumed that the population of the species has also declined together with the habitat changes. However, these changes have in most areas happened several decades ago and currently the situation has stabilized, if not improved. As the greater pipefish is a short-lived species for which the time-period of population decline evaluation is only 10 years, the most drastic habitat changes, as well as the possible population decline, have no effect on the assessment under criterion A. The species is categorized as Least Concern (LC). Not assessed globally.

Recommendations for actions to conserve the species

No protection actions currently needed in the HELCOM area but more information should be collected on the status of this species.

Common names

D: Große seenadel; DK: Stor tangnål; FI: Istoneula; GB: Greater pipefish; LI: Didžioji jūrų adata; LV: Lielā adatzivs; PL: Iglicznia wielka; RU: Bol'shaja igla-ryba; SE: Större kantrål

References

- Dawson, C.E. (1986). Syngnathidae. p. 628–639. In: Whitehead, P.J.P., Bauchot, M.-L., Hureau, J.-C., Nielsen, J., Tortonese, E. (eds.) Fishes of the North-eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Vol. 2. UNESCO, Paris.
- Froese, R., Pauly, D. (eds.) (2012). FishBase. World Wide Web electronic publication. Available at: www.fishbase.org, version (10/2012).
- HELCOM (2007). HELCOM Red list of threatened and declining species of lampreys and fish of the Baltic Sea. Baltic Sea Environmental Proceedings No. 109. Helsinki Commission, Helsinki. 40 pp.

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- HELCOM (2012). Checklist of Baltic Sea Macro-species. Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings No. 130. Helsinki Commission, Helsinki. 203 pp.
- Kullander, S.O., Nyman, L., Jilg, K., Delling, B. (2012). Nationalnyckeln till Sveriges flora och fauna. Strålfeniga fiskar. Actinopterygii. Artdatabanken, SLU, Uppsala. 517 pp. [in Swedish]

