# Invasive silver-cheeked toadfish poses safety risks and threatens Adriatic tourism



Researchers in Croatia have issued a warning about the increasing presence of an invasive and toxic fish species, the silver-cheeked toadfish, in the Adriatic Sea, raising concerns about potential risks to both public safety and local tourism. This species, originally from the Indo-Pacific region, has been spreading rapidly across the Mediterranean since its initial sighting in 2003, likely entering through the Suez Canal.

A recent study conducted by the Faculty of Natural Sciences at Juraj Dobrila University of Pula alongside the Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries in Split has confirmed a fourth sighting of the silver-cheeked toadfish in the Adriatic Sea. The latest sighting occurred in May last year in Medulin Bay, Croatia, a popular destination among tourists, including over a million visitors from the United Kingdom annually. The fish was caught at a depth of almost 20 metres, measured 52 centimetres in length, and weighed 1.3 kilogrammes. This particular sighting is noted as the northernmost recorded in the region to date.

The study emphasises the species’ aggressive nature and the dangers it poses to humans. The toadfish’s powerful bite has been associated with severe injuries, including partial finger amputations. "Alarmingly, recent evidence from the southern and eastern Mediterranean shows that these bites can result in severe injuries, such as partial amputations of fingers," the researchers remarked. Moreover, the fish’s flesh and internal organs contain a potent neurotoxin that can be lethal if ingested.

The report highlights not only the direct injury risk to swimmers but also the broader implications for tourism. "These risks not only create safety concerns for swimmers but also threaten the image and appeal of tourist destinations, potentially leading to economic losses in local tourism and related industries," the study stated. Given that the Adriatic Sea is a major attraction for tourists, such developments may have significant economic repercussions for coastal communities dependent on visitors during the holiday season.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://aiep.pensoft.net/article/146945/> - This article reports the first capture of Lagocephalus sceleratus in the northern Adriatic, specifically Medulin Bay at a depth of 19.7 meters, confirming the latest and northernmost sighting of the silver-cheeked toadfish in the region as described.
* <https://blog.pensoft.net/2025/03/24/a-toxic-pufferfish-that-could-bite-off-your-fingers-has-been-found-in-croatian-waters/> - This source corroborates the invasive and aggressive nature of the silver-cheeked toadfish, its Indo-Pacific origin, entry via the Suez Canal, and details of the individual caught in May 2024 in Medulin Bay, including size and weight. It also confirms the species’ powerful bite causing severe injuries and presence of neurotoxin.
* <https://www.earth.com/news/invasive-pufferfish-caught-in-the-adriatic-raises-safety-concerns/> - This article confirms the details of the recent catch in the Adriatic Sea, its size and depth, and warns about public safety risks due to the fish’s strong bite and lethal tetrodotoxin content, matching the warnings about human injury potential and tourist safety.
* <https://scitechdaily.com/highly-invasive-deadly-pufferfish-found-in-northern-mediterranean-waters-raising-alarm/> - This source emphasizes the rapid spread and invasiveness of the silver-cheeked toadfish in the Mediterranean and its northernmost appearance in the Adriatic Sea, supporting the concerns about ecological impact and the species’ expanding range.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lagocephalus_sceleratus> - The Wikipedia entry details the physical description, feeding habits, toxic nature (presence of tetrodotoxin), and the dangers to humans posed by Lagocephalus sceleratus, corroborating the article’s claims about toxicity and injury risks.