

### **Distinctive characters**

Body oblong, compressed, moderately deep. Upper part of head profile strongly convex, mouth horizontal and comparatively small, the maxilla reaching to below anterior eye margin or just beyond, eye large, posterior nostril oblong and larger than the anterior; preopercle scaleless. Both jaws anteriorly with canine-like teeth, 4 in upper and 6 in lower jaw; laterally with 2 rows of molar-like teeth. Gillrakers, 8-10 lower, 6-8 upper. Doral fin with 12 spines not preceded by a small forward-directed spine and usually with 10 soft rays (D XI-XII + 9-10); anal fin with 3 spines and 8 soft rays (A III + 7-8); pectoral fins long, reaching to anal fin spines when appressed; caudal fin moderately forked. Lateral line scales 50-57 to caudal base.

### **Habitat**

Inshore waters on hard or sandy bottoms, young on *Posidonia* beds, demersal on shelf and continental slope to 250 m, mainly to 100 m; sometimes young enter Atlantic lagoons.

### **Distribution**

Mediterranean common in warmer waters, rarer in the North; absent in Black sea; Atlantic from British Isles (records only) to 15° N (rare south of 20° N), Madeira and the Canaries. Throughout the Gulf of Mexico, and off Northern Cuba, extending northward to Cape Cod (rare). Occurs in Bermuda records from Jamaica and the Bahamas have been questioned.

### **SOURCE:**

1. Fishes of the North-eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean, Volume II. Editors P.J.P. Whitehead, M.L. Bauchot, J.C. Hureau, J. Nilsen, E. Tortonese. UNESCO, 1986.
2. FAO species identification sheets for fishery purposes. Western Central Atlantic, Fishing Area 31, Volume V. FAO, Rome, 1978.