

KUTUM

Jewel of the Caspian Sea

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سرشناسه	: ولی پور، علیرضا ، ۱۳۴۷ - Valipour, Alireza
عنوان و نام پدید آور	: Kutum: jewel of the Caspian Sea/ Alireza Valipour, Ali : Asghar Kanipour; editors Majid Khadivi Nia Moghaddam and Toraj Valinassab
مشخصات نشر	: تهران : موسسه تحقیقات شیلات ایران ، ۱۳۸۸ = ۲۰۰۹ م .
مشخصات ظاهری	: ۸۶ ص. : مصور
شابک	: 978-964-5856-58-6
یادداشت	: انگلیسی
آوانویسی عنوان	: کاتوم ...
موضوع	: ماهی سفید
موضوع	: ماهی ها -- پرورش و تکثیر
شناسه افزوده	: خانی پور، علی اصغر، ۱۳۴۵ -
شناسه افزوده	: Khanipour, Ali Asghar :
شناسه افزوده	: موسسه تحقیقات شیلات ایران
شناسه افزوده	: Iranian Fisheries Research Organization :
رده بندی کنگره	: ۱۳۸۸ ک ۲ / ۵ / ۸ / ۱۵۵ / SH
رده بندی دیویی	: ۶۳۹ / ۳
شماره کتابشناسی ملی	: ۱۹۲۱۱۹۵

Title: KUTUM, Jewel of the Caspian Sea

Author(s): Ali Reza Valipour and Ali Asghar Khanipour

Technical Editor(s): Majid Khadivi Nia Moghaddam and Toraj Valinassab

Publisher: Iranian Fisheries Research Organization - Scientific Information Director

Publissing: Abzian Scientific Publishing

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Circulation : 600

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P.O.Box: 14155-6116, TEHRAN-IRAN, Iranian Fisheries Research Oraganization

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ISBN 978-964-5856-58-6

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Preface

The Caspian Sea, the world's largest enclosed water body, is set like a gem surrounded by the five Caspian states; the Islamic Republic of Iran, The Russian Federation, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. One of the main features of this sea is its unique and valuable aquatic community that includes the sturgeons and several bony fish species, of which *Rutilus frisii kutum*, found only in the Iranian coasts of the Caspian Sea, is the most important. The *kutum* is the most popular fish with the highest economic value consumed by the people of Iran particularly in the north of Iran. More than 12000 fishermen are engaged in kutum catch, which comprises more than 60% of the catch composition of bony fishes in the Iranian coasts of the Caspian Sea. However several factors such as over fishing, loss of a major part of the natural spawning grounds for this species in the Anzali Lagoon and the rivers as well as environmental pollution in the recent years have restricted natural reproduction of this species and the seasonal stocks for kutum in the Caspian Sea are greatly dependent on restocking programs conducted by the Iranian Fisheries Organization. Although possessed with outstanding features, very little research has been conducted on kutum and information available on this species is also very scarce. Therefore we need the concerted efforts of all researchers, scientists, academicians and students in the field of fishery sciences and biology to conduct extensive research to address issues related to conservation of the genetic pool and natural stocks and sustainable use of this species in the Caspian Sea and also to develop aquaculture of *kutum* in the country.

This book is a compilation of all information available on scientific research conducted on *Rutilus frisii kutum* with the objective to introduce the outstanding potentials of this species to relevant authorities and scientists and students in the field of fishery sciences and biology as well as coastal dwellers of the Caspian Sea.

We are sincerely grateful to everyone who provided us with scientific and financial support to conduct scientific research on *Rutilus frisii kutum* and to compile the information published in this book. We would like to specially thank Dr. Abassali Motallebi, Director of the IFRO and Mr. Mohammad Reza Hosseini, Head of the Scientific Information Department, Dr. Ghaffarzadeh, Manager of Caspian Environment Programme (CEP) and his colleagues Ms. Melina Seifollahzadeh and Dr. Ali Mohammadi. Our thanks are also due to our colleagues at the Inland Waters Aquaculture Research Institute, The Sefidrud Fisheries Research Station and the Anzali Lagoon Research Station who collaborated in the research on artificial breeding of the autumn form of *Rutilus frisii kutum* and Sepideh Malek Shomali, Seyed Abdollah Saeednia and Reza Ladani who assisted us with the typing and designing the layout of this book and also Uma Arshad and Majid Khadiviniaie Moghaddam and Dr. Touraj Valinasab who cooperated in translating and editing of the book to English.

We appreciate any kind of constructive scientific comments and guidance and hope that this book adequately reflects the ways in which scientific research on the Jewel of the Caspian Sea, *Rutilus frisii kutum* has developed.

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