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Fish Reverse Ring Test Bulletin – FRRT17

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MODULE / EXERCISE DETAILS

Module:	Fish Reverse Ring Test - FRRT
Exercises:	FRRT17
Specimen Request Circulated:	17 th November 2025
Specimen Submission Deadline:	6 th February 2026 (extended)
Number of Subscribing Laboratories:	10
Number of Submissions Received:	9

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Table 1 Summary specimens and data received from participating laboratories FRRT17

Number of specimens submitted: **128**

Number of species: **48**

Number of taxonomic errors (TE): **5**

Number of taxonomic discrepancies (TD; *synonym, **unaccepted, ***other): (0*, 3**, 8***)

Number of problematic taxa submitted (†): **1**

Class	Order	Family	Species	Common name	No. of spms	No. of TE	No. of TD
Teleostei	Atheriniformes	Atherinidae	<i>Atherina presbyter</i>	Sand smelt	2		
		Belonidae	<i>Belone belone</i>	Garfish	1		
		Blenniidae	<i>Parablennius gattorugine</i>	Tompot blenny	1		
		Callionymidae	<i>Callionymus lyra</i>	Common dragonet	6		
	Carangiformes	Carangidae	<i>Trachurus trachurus</i>	Atlantic horse mackerel/Scad	4		
	Clupeiformes	Clupeidae	<i>Clupea harengus</i>	Herring	3		
			<i>Sprattus sprattus</i>	Sprat	4		
		Engraulidae	<i>Engraulis encrasicolus</i>	European anchovy	1		
	Cypriniformes	Gobiionidae	<i>Gobio gobio</i>	Gudgeon	1		
	Eupercaria incertae sedis	Labridae	<i>Symphodus melops</i>	Corkwing wrasse	1		1**
			<i>Labrus bergylta</i>	Ballan wrasse	2		
		Moronidae	<i>Dicentrarchus labrax</i>	Bass	4		
	Gadiformes	Gadidae	<i>Gadus morhua</i>	Cod	1		
			<i>Melanogrammus aeglefinus</i>	Haddock	1		
			<i>Merlangius merlangus</i>	Whiting	5		2***
			<i>Trisopterus luscus</i>	Bib/Pouting	4		
			<i>Trisopterus minutus</i>	Poor cod	4		†

	Lotidae	<i>Ciliata mustela</i>	Five-bearded rockling	3		
		<i>Ciliata septentrionalis</i>	Northern rockling	1	1	
	Merlucciidae	<i>Merluccius merluccius</i>	European hake	1		
Gobiiformes	Gobiidae	<i>Aphia minuta</i>	Transparent goby	5	1	
		<i>Pomatoschistus microps</i>	Common goby	1		
		<i>Pomatoschistus minutus</i>	Sand goby	5	1	
Mugiliformes	Mugilidae	<i>Chelon ramada</i>	Thin-lipped grey mullet	1		1**
		<i>Chelon auratus</i>	Golden grey mullet	1		1**
Mulliformes	Mullidae	<i>Mullus surmuletus</i>	Striped red mullet	3		
Osmeriformes	Osmeridae	<i>Osmerus eperlanus</i>	Smelt	1		
Perciformes	Agonidae	<i>Agonus cataphractus</i>	Pogge	4		
	Ammodytidae	<i>Ammodytes tobianus</i>	Lesser sandeel	2		
	Cottidae	<i>Myoxocephalus scorpius</i>	Bull rout	1		
		<i>Taurulus bubalis</i>	Long-spined sea scorpion	2		
	Liparidae	<i>Liparis liparis</i>	Common sea snail	1		
	Trachinidae	<i>Echiichthys vipera</i>	Lesser weever	3		
	Triglidae	<i>Chelidonichthys cuculus</i>	Red gurnard	1		1***
		<i>Chelidonichthys lucerna</i>	Tub gurnard	3		2***
		<i>Eutrigla gurnardus</i>	Grey gurnard	3		
Pleuronectiformes	Bothidae	<i>Arnoglossus laterna</i>	Scaldfish	5		
	Pleuronectidae	<i>Glyptocephalus cynoglossus</i>	Witch	1		
		<i>Limanda limanda</i>	Dab	4		
		<i>Platichthys flesus</i>	Flounder	4		1***
		<i>Pleuronectes platessa</i>	Plaice	4		
	Soleidae	<i>Buglossidium luteum</i>	Solenette	5		2***

		<i>Microchirus variegatus</i>	Thickback sole	1	
		<i>Solea solea</i>	Common sole	5	
Syngnathiformes	Syngnathidae	<i>Syngnathus acus</i>	Greater pipefish	1	
		<i>Syngnathus rostellatus</i>	Lesser pipefish	8	2
Zeiformes	Zeidae	<i>Zeus faber</i>	John dory	2	

Species names according to World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS) and FishBase (Froese and Pauly, 2026), accessed August 2026

Table 2. Summary of taxonomic errors, discrepancies and problematic taxa for FRRT17

Laboratory identification		APEM Ltd. identification
Taxonomic errors		
F3203	<i>Syngnathus acus</i> , Greater pipefish	<i>Syngnathus rostellatus</i> Nilsson, 1855
F3203	<i>Syngnathus typhle</i> , Deep-snouted pipefish	<i>Syngnathus rostellatus</i> Nilsson, 1855
F3204	<i>Pomatoschistus microps</i> , Common goby	<i>Pomatoschistus minutus</i> (Pallas, 1770)
F3206	<i>Ciliata mustela</i> , Five-bearded rockling	<i>Ciliata septentrionalis</i> (Collett, 1875)
F3207	<i>Crystallogobius linearis</i> , Crystal goby	<i>Aphia minuta</i> (Risso, 1810)
Taxonomic discrepancies (unaccepted synonyms)		
F3203	<i>Liza ramada</i> Thin lipped grey mullet	<i>Chelon ramada</i> (Risso, 1827)
F3209	<i>Liza aurata</i> , Golden grey mullet	<i>Chelon auratus</i> (Risso, 1810)
F3210	<i>Crenilabrus melops</i> , Corkwing wrasse	<i>Symphodus melops</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)
Taxonomic discrepancies (synonyms/spelling)		
F3204	<i>Chelidonichthys lucernus</i> , Tub Gurnard	<i>Chelidonichthys lucerna</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)
F3204	<i>Solenette luteum</i> , Solenette	<i>Buglossidium luteum</i> (Risso, 1810)
F3205	<i>Merlangius merlangus</i> , Whiting	<i>Merlangius merlangus</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)
F3207	<i>Buglossidium luteum</i> , Solenette	<i>Buglossidium luteum</i> (Risso, 1810)
F3208	<i>Chelidonichthys cucullus</i> , Red farnard	<i>Chelidonichthys cuculus</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)
F3208	<i>Plathichthys flesus</i> , Flounder	<i>Platichthys flesus</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)
F3208	<i>Merlangius merlangus</i> , Whiting	<i>Merlangius merlangus</i> Linnaeus, 1758
F 3210	<i>Chelidonichthys lucernus</i> , Tub Gurnard	<i>Chelidonichthys lucerna</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)
Problem Taxon		
F3207	Unknown	<i>Trisopterus minutus</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)

Taxonomic errors and problematic taxa

This section describes those submitted specimens that were found to have been identified incorrectly or noted as problematic taxa in the original submission. The key identification features to separate these and similar taxa are given.

Syngnathus rostellatus Nilsson, 1855

This specimen was incorrectly identified as *Syngnathus acus* and *Syngnathus typhle*. *Syngnathus rostellatus*, submitted specimens (Figure 1), can be distinguished from other Syngnathidae by the number of abdominal rings, dorsal fin rays and the relative shape of the snout and head, which can be hard to distinguish in smaller individuals. *S. rostellatus* has 13–17 abdominal rings compared to 17–21 in *S. acus* and 16–18 in *S. typhle*. Adult *S. acus* have a distinct head profile with a hump behind the eyes, at smaller sizes this feature is less distinctive and the two species have relatively similar head profiles (Figure 2). *S. typhle* has a broader snout which is laterally flattened and not round in cross section.



Figure 1. Submitted specimens of *Syngnathus rostellatus* Nilsson, 1855



Figure 2. Head profile of *Syngnathus rostellatus* (A) and *Syngnathus acus* (B)

Pomatoschistus minutus (Pallas, 1770)

Pomatoschistus minutus can be distinguished from *P. microps* (Figure 3) by the size of the scales, position of attachment of the branchiostegal membrane on the isthmus and colouration patterns. *P. minutus* has smaller scales (58 to 70 in lateral series) compared to moderate scales (39–52 in lateral series) in *P. microps*. Although colour can be quite variable, *P. minutus* tends to be a lighter sandy-brown with less colouration on the head. Males of both species can have a dark spot on the dorsal fin however the spot on *P. minutus* tends to have a white rim. Males of *P. microps* can have a dusky orange patch on the throat (Figure 4). Please see Fish Ring Test Bulletin [FRT14](#) for more detailed photos of membrane attachment.

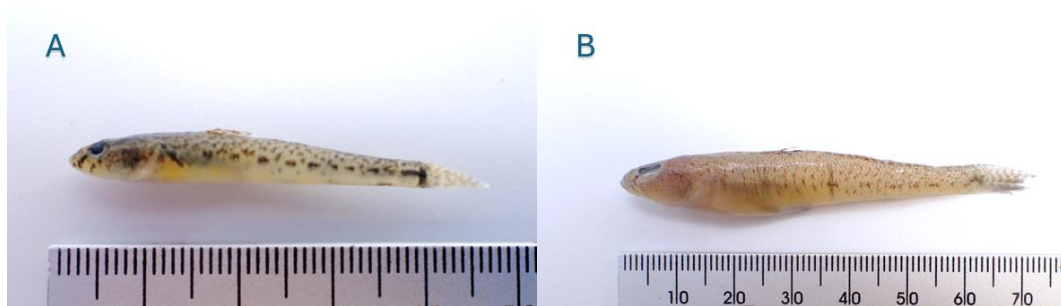


Figure 3. Specimens of *Pomatoschistus microps* (A) and *Pomatoschistus minutus* (B)

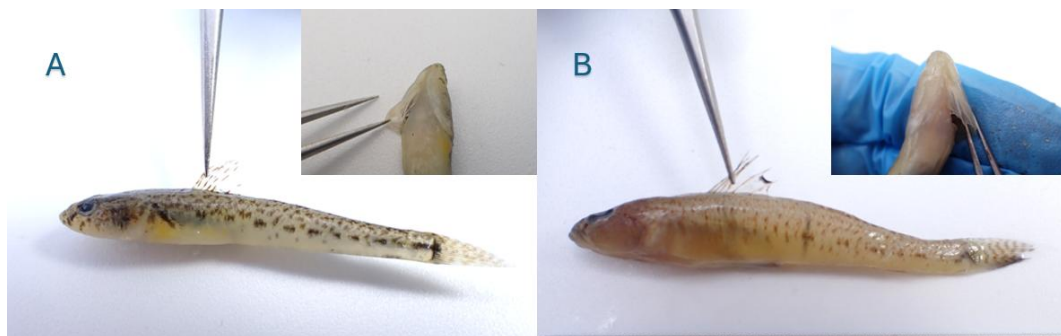


Figure 4. Colouration and membrane attachment of *Pomatoschistus microps* (A) and *Pomatoschistus minutus* (B)

Ciliata septentrionalis (Collett, 1875)

While *Ciliata* species have five barbels on the head, those of *C. mustela* are equally well developed and *C. mustela* lacks the lobed fold of skin along the upper jaw seen on *C. septentrionalis* (Figure 5). *C. septentrionalis* tends to be a lighter salmon-colour in colour and smaller than *C. mustela* (Figure 6)



Figure 5. *Ciliata septentrionalis* (Collett, 1875) showing number of barbels and lobes along upper jaw (insert)



Figure 6. *Ciliata mustela* (Linnaeus, 1758) showing number and position of barbels

Aphia minuta (Risso, 1810)

Aphia minuta was misidentified as *Crystallogobius linearis*. The specimen provided had five dorsal fin rays, a developed pelvic fin disk and relatively large oblique mouth. All of these features are absent or reduced in *C. linearis* and the mouth is strongly oblique.



Figure 7. Specimen of *Aphia minuta* (Risso, 1810)

Taxonomic discrepancies

This section provides further information on those submitted specimens for which other taxonomic irregularities (e.g. spelling mistakes, synonyms) were noted.

Synonyms

The World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS) and FishBase, accessed August 2026, were used for currently valid species names. Three specimens were submitted using unaccepted synonyms, see Table 2 for the list of submissions against the valid scientific names.

Synonyms/spelling

Eight specimens were submitted with slight spelling errors. It was hoped that using the electronic form only would reduce any spelling errors. General spell checkers in word processing software can sometimes autocorrect scientific names, and is something to watch.

Authority Errors

Only 15 specimens were submitted with an authority (one submission). The authority and year were incorrect for half the submissions, mostly missing brackets around the authors name indicating the species has been moved to a different genus that originally assigned. One submission had an incorrect authority, possibly as a result of flash filling the electronic form.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all participants for contributing a wide array of species to this year's ring test.

References and key literature

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APPENDIX

FRRT17 individual summary reports for participating laboratories with specimen details as provided by participants and taxonomic errors, discrepancies and comments (updated) given by APEM.

EXERCISE DETAILS

Fish Reverse Ring Test (F-RRT17)

Return Deadline - 02/02/26

Laboratory Code - F3203

Key to codes:

TE - Taxonomic error

TD - Taxonomic discrepancy

* - Problem taxa indicated

Specimen No.	Laboratory identification (scientific name; common name)	APEM identification (if different)	Code / Comments
RRT17_F3203_01	Ciliata mustela, Five-bearded rockling		
RRT17_F3203_02	Syngnathus acus, Greater Pipefish	Syngnathus rostellatus	TE - 13-17 abdominal rings
RRT17_F3203_03	Arnoglossus laterna, Scaldfish		
RRT17_F3203_04	Pomatoschistus minutus, Sand Goby		
RRT17_F3203_05	Buglossidium luteum, Solenette		
RRT17_F3203_06	Agonus cataphractus, Hooknose		
RRT17_F3203_07	Syngnathus typhle, Deep-snouted pipefish	Syngnathus rostellatus	TE - 13-17 abdominal rings
RRT17_F3203_08	Aphia minuta, Transparent Goby		
RRT17_F3203_09	Syngnathus rostellatus, Lesser Pipefish		
RRT17_F3203_10	Liza ramada, Thin lipped grey mullet	Chelon ramada	TD unaccepted
RRT17_F3203_11	Mullus surmuletus, Striped red mullet		
RRT17_F3203_12	Dicentrarchus labrax, Bass		
RRT17_F3203_13			
RRT17_F3203_14			
RRT17_F3203_15			

EXERCISE DETAILS

Fish Reverse Ring Test (F-RRT17)

Return Deadline - 02/02/26

Laboratory Code - F3204

Key to codes:

TE - Taxonomic error

TD - Taxonomic discrepancy

* - Problem taxa indicated

Specimen No.	Laboratory identification (scientific name; common name)	APEM identification (if different)	Code / Comments
RRT17_F3204_01	Clupea harengus, Herring (C. harengus)		
RRT17_F3204_02	Merlangius merlangus, Whiting (M. merlangus)		
RRT17_F3204_03	Pomatoschistus microps, Common goby (P. microps)	Pomatoschistus minutus	TE
RRT17_F3204_04	Trisopterus minutus, Poor cod (T. minutus)		
RRT17_F3204_05	Aphia minuta, Transparent goby (A. minuta)		
RRT17_F3204_06	Trachurus trachurus, Atlantic horse mackerel/Scad (T. trachurus)		
RRT17_F3204_07	Sprattus sprattus, Sprat (S. sprattus)		
RRT17_F3204_08	Syngnathus rostellatus, Nilsson's pipefish (S. rostellatus)		
RRT17_F3204_09	Trisopterus luscus, Bib (Pouting) (T. luscus)		
RRT17_F3204_10	Chelidonichthys lucernus, Tub Gurmard (Chelidonichthys lucernus)	Chelidonichthys lucerna	TD spelling
RRT17_F3204_11	Echiichthys vipera, Lesser weaver (E. vipera)		
RRT17_F3204_12	Zeus faber, John Dory (Z. faber)		
RRT17_F3204_13	Pomatoschistus minutus, Sand goby (P. minutus)		
RRT17_F3204_14	Arnoglossus laterna, Scaldfish (A. laterna)		
RRT17_F3204_15	Solenette luteum, Solenette (B. luteum)	Buglossidium luteum	TD spelling

EXERCISE DETAILS

Fish Reverse Ring Test (F-RRT17)

Return Deadline - 02/02/26

Laboratory Code - F3205

Key to codes:

TE - Taxonomic error

TD - Taxonomic discrepancy

* - Problem taxa indicated

Specimen No.	Laboratory identification (scientific name; common name)	APEM identification (if different)	Code / Comments
RRT17_F3205_01	Chelidonichthys lucerna, Tub Gurnard		
RRT17_F3205_02	Callionymus lyra, Common Dragonet		
RRT17_F3205_03	Pomatoschistus minutus, Sand Goby		
RRT17_F3205_04	Merlangius merlangus, Whiting	Merlangius merlangus	TD spelling
RRT17_F3205_05	Arnoglossus laterna, Scaldfish		
RRT17_F3205_06	Solea solea, Common Sole		
RRT17_F3205_07	Aphia minuta, Transparent Goby		
RRT17_F3205_08	Eutrigla GURNADUS, Grey Gurnard		
RRT17_F3205_09	Buglossidium luteum, Solenette		
RRT17_F3205_10	Syngnathus rostellatus, Lesser Pipefish		
RRT17_F3205_11	Ciliata mustela, 5 Bearded Rockling		
RRT17_F3205_12	Echiichthys vipera, Leser Weaver		
RRT17_F3205_13	Sprattus sprattus, Sprat		
RRT17_F3205_14	Platichthys flesus, Flounder		
RRT17_F3205_15	Limanda limanda, DAB		

EXERCISE DETAILS

Fish Reverse Ring Test (F-RRT17)

Return Deadline - 02/02/26

Laboratory Code - F3206

Key to codes:

TE - Taxonomic error

TD - Taxonomic discrepancy

* - Problem taxa indicated

Specimen No.	Laboratory identification (scientific name; common name)	APEM identification (if different)	Code / Comments
RRT17_F3206_01	Trisopterus luscus, Bib		
RRT17_F3206_02	Echiichthys vipera, Lesser weever		
RRT17_F3206_03	Merlangius merlangus, Whiting		
RRT17_F3206_04	Ciliata mustela, Five-bearded rockling	Ciliata septentrionalis	TE - lobes (x) barbels on upper lip
RRT17_F3206_05	Belone belone, Garfish		
RRT17_F3206_06	Agonus cataphractus, Pogge		
RRT17_F3206_07	Taurulus bubalis, Long-spined sea scorpion		Spine > eye, gill membrane flap
RRT17_F3206_08	Callionymus lyra, Common dragonet		
RRT17_F3206_09	Myoxocephalus scorpius, Bull rout		Spine </= eye, gill membrane attached
RRT17_F3206_10	Solea solea, Common sole		
RRT17_F3206_11	Limanda limanda, Dab		
RRT17_F3206_12	Gadus morhua, Cod		
RRT17_F3206_13	Liparis liparis, Common sea snail		Anal fin attached to tail
RRT17_F3206_14	Syngnathus rostellatus, Lesser pipefish		
RRT17_F3206_15	Sprattus sprattus, Sprat		

EXERCISE DETAILS

Fish Reverse Ring Test (F-RRT17)

Return Deadline - 02/02/26

Laboratory Code - F3207

Key to codes:

TE - Taxonomic error

TD - Taxonomic discrepancy

* - Problem taxa indicated

Specimen No.	Laboratory identification (scientific name; common name)	APEM identification (if different)	Code / Comments
RRT17_F3207_01	Callionymus lyra, Common Dragonet		
RRT17_F3207_02	Pleuronectes platessa, Plaice		
RRT17_F3207_03	Mullus surmuletus, Red Mullet		Surmullet, Striped red mullet
RRT17_F3207_04	Aphia minuta, Transparent Goby		
RRT17_F3207_05	Pomatoschistus minutus, Sand Goby		
RRT17_F3207_06	Boglossidium luteum, Solenette	Buglossidium luteum	TD spelling
RRT17_F3207_07	Platichthys flesus, Flounder		
RRT17_F3207_08	Arnoglossus laterna, Common Scaldfish		
RRT17_F3207_09	Zeus faber, John Dory		
RRT17_F3207_10	Trisopterus minutus, Poor Cod		
RRT17_F3207_11	Trisopterus luscus, Bib		
RRT17_F3207_12	Trachurus trachurus, Horse Mackerel		
RRT17_F3207_13	Crystallogobius linearis, Crystal Goby	Aphia minuta	TE - dorsal fin rays and pelvic fin disc
RRT17_F3207_14	Agonus cataphractus, Pogge		
RRT17_F3207_15	unknown unknown, unknown	Trisopterus minutus	*Problem taxon

EXERCISE DETAILS

Fish Reverse Ring Test (F-RRT17)

Return Deadline - 02/02/26

Laboratory Code - F3208

Key to codes:

TE - Taxonomic error

TD - Taxonomic discrepancy

* - Problem taxa indicated

Specimen No.	Laboratory identification (scientific name; common name)	APEM identification (if different)	Code / Comments
RRT17_F3208_01	Ciliata mustela, 5 bearded rockling		
RRT17_F3208_02	Chelidonichthys cucullus, Red farnard		
RRT17_F3208_03	Trisopterus luscus, Pouting		
RRT17_F3208_04	Solea solea, Common sole		
RRT17_F3208_05	Dicentrarchus labrax, Sea bass (European)		
RRT17_F3208_06	Plathichthys flesus, Flounder	Platichthys flesus	TD spelling
RRT17_F3208_07	Merlangius merlangus, Whiting		
RRT17_F3208_08	Callionymus lyra, Common dragonet		
RRT17_F3208_09	Osmerus eperlanus, Smelt		
RRT17_F3208_10	Pleuronectes platessa, Plaice		
RRT17_F3208_11	Taurulus bubalis, Long spined sea scorpion		
RRT17_F3208_12	Limanda limanda, Dab (common)		
RRT17_F3208_13	Mullus surmuletus, Striped red mullet		
RRT17_F3208_14	Syngnathus acus, Greater pipefish		
RRT17_F3208_15	Agonus cataphractus, Pogge		

EXERCISE DETAILS

Fish Reverse Ring Test (F-RRT17)

Return Deadline - 02/02/26

Laboratory Code - F3209

Key to codes:

TE - Taxonomic error

TD - Taxonomic discrepancy

* - Problem taxa indicated

Specimen No.	Laboratory identification (scientific name; common name)	APEM identification (if different)	Code / Comments
RRT17_F3209_01	Atherina presbyter, Sand smelt		
RRT17_F3209_02	Liza aurata, GG mullet	Chelon auratus	TD unaccepted
RRT17_F3209_03	Labrus bergylta, Ballan wrasse		
RRT17_F3209_04	Pomatoschistus microps, Common goby		
RRT17_F3209_05	Callionymus lyra, Dragonet		
RRT17_F3209_06	Platichthys flesus, Flounder		
RRT17_F3209_07	Ammodytes tobianus, Lesser sand eel		Scales on tail
RRT17_F3209_08	Dicentrarchus labrax, Bass		
RRT17_F3209_09	Syngnathus rostellatus, Lesser pipefish		
RRT17_F3209_10	Merlangius merlangus, Whiting		
RRT17_F3209_11			
RRT17_F3209_12			
RRT17_F3209_13			
RRT17_F3209_14			
RRT17_F3209_15			

EXERCISE DETAILS

Fish Reverse Ring Test (F-RRT17)

Return Deadline - 02/02/26

Laboratory Code - F3210

Key to codes:

TE - Taxonomic error

TD - Taxonomic discrepancy

* - Problem taxa indicated

Specimen No.	Laboratory identification (scientific name; common name)	APEM identification (if different)	Code / Comments
RRT17_F3210_01	Atherina presbyter		
RRT17_F3210_02	Trachurus trachurus		
RRT17_F3210_03	Crenilabrus melops	Symphodus melops	TD unaccepted synonym
RRT17_F3210_04	Labrus bergylta		
RRT17_F3210_05	Chelidonichthys lucernus	Chelidonichthys lucerna	TD spelling
RRT17_F3210_06	Ammodytes tobianus		Scales on tail hard to see
RRT17_F3210_07	Dicentrarchus labrax		
RRT17_F3210_08	Clupea harengus		
RRT17_F3210_09	Gobio gobio		
RRT17_F3210_10	Solea solea		
RRT17_F3210_11	Melanogrammus aeglefinus		
RRT17_F3210_12	Pleuronectes platessa		
RRT17_F3210_13	Syngnathus rostellatus		
RRT17_F3210_14	Eutrigla gurnardus		Pectoral fins longer in juveniles
RRT17_F3210_15	Parablennius gattorugine		Notch in dorsal fin

EXERCISE DETAILS

Fish Reverse Ring Test (F-RRT17)

Return Deadline - 02/02/26

Laboratory Code - F3211

Key to codes:

TE - Taxonomic error

TD - Taxonomic discrepancy

* - Problem taxa indicated

Specimen No.	Laboratory identification (scientific name; common name)	APEM identification (if different)	Code / Comments
RRT17_F3211_01	Limanda limanda, Dab		
RRT17_F3211_02	Sprattus sprattus, Sprat		Damaged
RRT17_F3211_03	Solea solea, Dover Sole		
RRT17_F3211_04	Engraulis encrasicolus, European Anchovy		
RRT17_F3211_05	Glyptocephalus cynoglossus, Witch		
RRT17_F3211_06	Clupea harengus, Herring		
RRT17_F3211_07	Arnoglossus laterna, Scald fish		
RRT17_F3211_08	Callionymus lyra, Common Dragonet		
RRT17_F3211_09	Trisopterus minutus, Poor Cod		
RRT17_F3211_10	Microchirus variegatus, Thickback Sole		
RRT17_F3211_11	Pleuronectes platessa, Plaice		
RRT17_F3211_12	Trachurus trachurus, Horse-Mackerel (Scad)		
RRT17_F3211_13	Merluccius merluccius, European Hake		
RRT17_F3211_14	Eutrigla gurnardus, Grey Gurnard		Spines on lateral line, dorsal spot
RRT17_F3211_15	Buglossidium luteum, Solenette		