

Elasmobranchs of the mediterranean and black sea: status, ecology and biology, biographic analysis

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Abstract: The authors have compiled published information on taxonomy, distribution, status, statistics, fisheries, bycatch, biologic and ecologic parameters on age and growth, food and feeding habits, reproductive biology and stock assessment of elasmobranchs in the Mediterranean and Black Sea. This bibliographic analysis, through 661 papers dealing with elasmobranchs in the GFCM area, shows that cartilaginous species, including sharks, rays and chimaeras, are by far the most endangered group of marine fish in the Mediterranean Sea, with 31 species (40 percent of all) critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable. The biological characteristics of elasmobranchs (low fecundity, late maturity, slow growth) make them more vulnerable to fishing pressure than most teleost fish. Overfishing, wide use of non-selective fishing practices and habitat degradation are leading to dramatic declines of these species in the Mediterranean Sea. In general, elasmobranchs are not targeted but are caught incidentally. In many fisheries they are, however, often landed and marketed.