
Documentation of Traditional Knowledge in the British Virgin Islands: Filling the Information Gap in Fisheries Management

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Caribbean fisheries often have poor scientific knowledge and limited resources to implement conventional management tools. Yet fishers possess a wealth of knowledge on where and when fish migrate or aggregate, how they behave and how marine environmental conditions have changed over time. Fishers spend more time at sea than fisheries scientist and have built up a complex knowledge bank over the years. It is therefore important that this traditional fisheries knowledge be systematically collected, organized, and then evaluated.

This paper gives the results of a three-month documentation exercise on the traditional knowledge possessed by the local fishers in the British Virgin Islands. Seventy-one fishers with 10 to 70 years of fishing experience from five of the inhabited islands; Tortola, Virgin Gorda, Anegada, Jost Van Dyke, and Copper Island, were interviewed. Information was recorded on fish ecology, fishing methods, changes in social conditions, imposition of regulations and how fishers adjusted.

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