MEDLEM Database, A data collection on large cartilaginous fishes in the Mediterranean basin

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It is presented the analyses on the MEDLEM (Mediterranean Large Elasmobranchs Monitoring) database that, up to now, contains more than 2000 records and over 2700 individuals of large elasmobranchs in the Mediterranean coming from 20 different countries. The main species represented in the archive are devil rays (736 individuals), basking sharks (about 636 individuals), blue sharks (524 individuals), and white sharks (258 individuals). Regarding the devil ray it is important underlining that about 500 individuals were recently captured off the coasts of Gaza. In the last decades other species such as shortfin mako (137 individuals), thresher shark (122 individuals), and bluntnose six-gill shark (74 individuals) are reported with a greater intensity, possibly due to a higher public awarness on the conservation status of sharks, and consequent development of monitoring programs. Unfortunately, MEDLEM does not cover with equal sampling effort all mediterranean sectors. Scientific monitoring in the south eastern Mediterranean is generally lower than in the northern European sectors and therefore the absence of some species from these regions in our database does not imply their actual absence from the area. From 1800 to 1870 the average recording rate is 1.2 specimens/year, and then up to 1990 average recording grows to 5 specimens/year, mainly due to bibliographic sources. In the last 20 years, the recording rate has further increased to 59 specimens/year. The geographical distributions of the main species recorded are represented as well as some consideration on fishing gears and size structure for the area where most data are available.

Keywords: by-catch, large elasmobranchs, data base, Mediterranean Sea

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