

Citizen science and local ecological knowledge in fishery and ichthyological research in the eastern Adriatic Sea

Dragičević Branko, Dulčić Jakov, Tutman Pero and Nika Staglicic

Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries, Meštrovićeve šetalište 63, Split, Croatia
E-mail: brankod@izor.hr

In the last decades, we are witnessing a broad array of biodiversity changes occurring in the Adriatic Sea. These changes are a consequence of a variety of factors, but climate change and various anthropogenic activities are the greatest threat to biodiversity of the Adriatic Sea. Changes are diverse and are happening on a broad temporal and spatial scale. Researchers are few and are sometimes unable to adequately investigate these issues using traditional data collection methods. In the world of fishes, we are witnessing phenomena such as bio-invasion, tropicalization, meridionalization, overfishing and others. To enhance our data collection capacities, we are using all possible means to expand the pool of data collectors. In the last decade we have tried to raise awareness of the issue of invasive and alien fish species; we have engaged citizens to help us in the effort to detect occurrences of certain species; through various projects we have had the opportunity to approach fishermen directly and to encourage them to bring to our attention occurrences of unknown and rare species; we have used various media channels to pass on the important information about toxic species etc. For the last two years, we have been engaged in large-scale survey of local ecological knowledge (LEK) through which we have gathered precious information on the current status of Adriatic ichthyofauna and fishery related information and changes they are subjected to. The data, along with other data gathered through various scientific surveys, is helping us to form a more complete picture of changes occurring in the Adriatic Sea. Here we present the most notable efforts in citizen science and local ecological knowledge as tools in biodiversity research in the Adriatic Sea.

Keywords: local ecological knowledge; citizen science; fisheries; invasive fishes