



ACTION PLAN FOR THE CONSERVATION OF CARTILAGINOUS FISHES (CHONDRICHTHYANS) IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Adopted in 2003



Photo by D. Cebrian

OBJECTIVES

The chondrichthyan Action Plan is aimed at promoting:

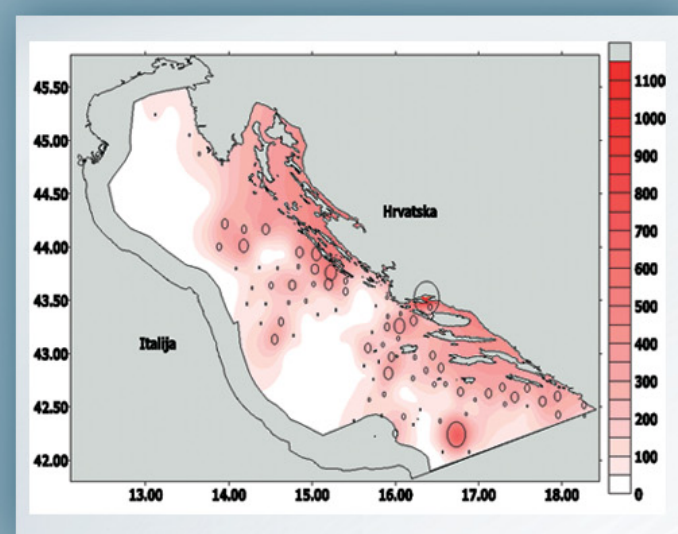
- The general conservation of the chondrichthyan populations of the Mediterranean, by supporting and promoting national and regional programmes for sustainable fisheries of commercial stocks either as they are target and accessory species
- The protection of selected chondrichthyan species, whose populations are considered endangered
- The protection and the restoration of critical habitats, such as mating, spawning and nursery grounds
- The improvement of scientific knowledge by research and scientific monitoring, including the creating of regional standardised databases;
- The recovery of depleted chondrichthyan stocks
- Public awareness and capacity-building about conservation of chondrichthyans

PRIORITIES

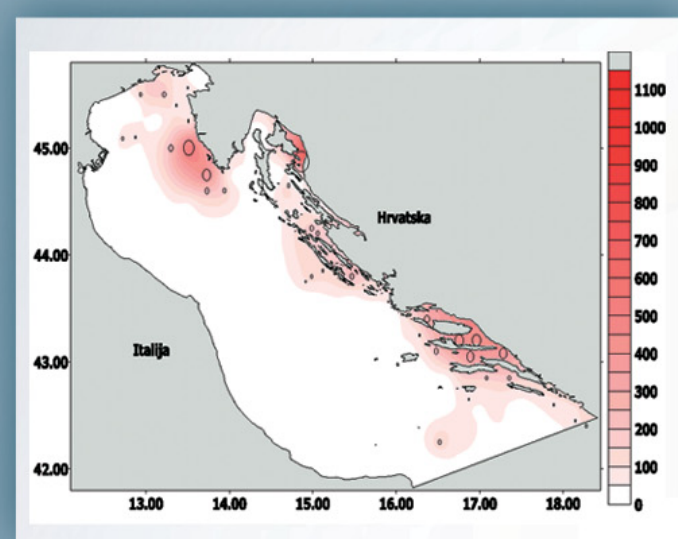
- Urgent provision of legal protection status for the endangered species identified at regional and national level
- To assess the threatened status of species such as hammerhead sharks (*Sphyrna spp.*), guitarfishes (*Rhinobatos spp.*), and the speckled skate (*Raja polystigma*)
- Develop management programmes for sustainable fisheries catching, as target or by-catch
- Encourage fishing practices that reduce unwanted chondrichthyan by-catch and/or facilitate live release and ban wasteful practices such as finning
- Identify critical habitats for their protection and restoration
- Develop research programmes
- Develop both systems for the monitoring of fisheries and fishery-independent monitoring programmes
- Develop training
- Develop information and education programmes

ACTIONS TO ATTAIN THESE OBJECTIVES

- Legal protection to be given to endangered species in accordance with national and international laws and conventions
- Fisheries management programmes to be adjusted to chondrichthyan fishes
- Precise fisheries statistics to be collected
- Implementing a permanent monitoring of fisheries where chondrichthyans are target or by-catch species
- Mediterranean countries should ban finning
- Critical habitats to be identified and mapped and legal protection warranted
- Properly funded and staffed scientific research programmes undertaken or developed
- Promote the training of specialists, fisheries officers and managers
- Information campaigns, publication materials produced to present the life history, and vulnerability, of chondrichthyans. Also, guidelines for chondrichthyan watching to be published
- Regional coordination to implement the present actions by the Mediterranean Action Plan's (MAP) Secretariat through the Regional Activity Centre for Specially Protected Areas (RAC/SPA)



Abundance of cartilaginous fish (kg/km²) in the Adriatic Sea on 1949



Abundance of cartilaginous fish (kg/km²) in the Adriatic Sea on 1998



Photo by G. Bellini



Photo by F. Gaibaldi



Photo by F. Serena



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