

**Maltese fisheries and conservation of large predators,  
including sharks and dolphins**

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Upon accession to the EU, Malta's 25 nm Exclusive Economic Zone became a Fisheries Conservation and Management Zone which demands scientific research and monitoring of the marine ecosystem, habitats and species present in this area. Research which would integrate the various scientific methods to assess the status of fisheries stocks and wildlife have been developed locally by the Conservation Biology Research Group, UoM, focusing on marine predators including groupers, bluefin tuna, sharks, dolphins and whales. Understanding the distributions and connectivity of these species' populations from local to regional to global, where applicable, determines the extent of their vulnerability to exploitation and human impacts.

Conservation genetics, field surveys, fish market and fisheries related surveys are all integrated to provide a holistic view of the conservation status of the species' population at various levels to identify early warning signals for relevant conservation measures where required. Spatial-temporal relationships between fisheries' activities and predators, such as dolphins, have been investigated in a long-term field research effort that has been undertaken since 1997 and is still ongoing in this central Mediterranean region. Research data shows that the increasing competition for marine resources between fishermen and predators needs integrated management action from local to regional level and depends on accurate holistic knowledge of the problems and requirements these predators face.

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