

**Quantifying catches of the sport fishing community along the Maltese coast.**

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**Abstract**

Coastal fish communities suffer from various anthropogenic activities. To improve integrated coastal zone management and conservation, recreational sport fishing along the coast of Malta, unstudied before, is the focus of research that started in July 2012. 1029 roving-access creel surveys were conducted during 50 sport fishing competitions totalling a fishing effort of 4781 hours held till December 2014 along the coast. Information on the mortality rate, rigs, setups and bait used was recorded while also documenting each angler's catch through photographs. The overall catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) was 0.19kg angler<sup>-1</sup>h<sup>-1</sup>. Benthic species were predominant in catches with catch-and-release (C&R) practices implemented by all Maltese Sport fishing Clubs whenever conditions permit the use of keep nets during tournaments. Mortality rate varied between 5 and 100% indicating that more effort is required to improve the survival of fish. This scientific study in collaboration with sports and recreational fishermen allows for conservation measures to be increasingly considered and integrated in these activities. Stakeholders participate and learn from the scientific process while working closely with conservation scientists.

**Keywords:** Sport fishing, coastal fish communities, conservation, Malta

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