A collaboration for mapping the Mediterranean’s elasmobranchs by public participation through social media

Adi Barash, Shira Sallingré, Periklis Kleitou, Vasilis-Orestis Stoilas, Ioannis Giovos

Introduction
The drastic declines of cartilaginous fishes in the Mediterranean present an urgent need to collect large data sets, which will enable to look at Mediterranean population as connected ones, to see movement, and seasonal patterns, and to point out hot spots, nursing ground and migration routes for the different species.

Paucity of data is amongst the fundamental challenges in formulating any conservation effort. Citizen science can be an effective alternative to otherwise complicated and expensive large-scale surveys aimed to evaluate species occurrence and distribution patterns.

Methods
We make use of social media platforms to collect current sightings and records of elasmobranchs along the Mediterranean coast. Only photographed, verified records are entered into the database, using a uniform format for all areas. So far, over 1000 records have been logged in Israel, 102 in Greece, and 15 in Cyprus. However in the last two countries the project started in May 2017. Recorded include species that are critically endangered and/or rarely reported such as Gymnura altavela and Isurus oxyrinchus. Other reports revealed previously unrecorded events, such as large schools of Rhinoptera marginata close to coast.

Results
We are looking for colleagues from other Mediterranean countries to join the project and form a united effort throughout the Mediterranean Sea.

Join our team!!!

For more information contact adibarash@hotmail.com