

Pollution threat assessment and conservation status of Mediterranean shark species: how far have we gone? (O)

Consales G.^{1,2}, Bottaro M.², Marsili L.^{1,3}*

¹Department of Physical, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Siena, via Mattioli, 4, 53100 Siena, Italy

²Department of Integrative Marine Ecology, Stazione Zoologica Anton Dohrn, Villa Comunale, 80121 Naples, Italy

³Inter-University Center of Cetacean Research (CIRCE), Siena, Italy

*e-mail: consales@student.unisi.it

Overfishing is the main threat for cartilaginous fishes. In particular, unintentionally caught sharks and rays account for much of the catch yet developing markets and depleting fishery targets have made this “bycatch” increasingly welcome. Intentional killing of sharks and rays due to the perceived risk that they pose to people, fishing gear or target species is contributing to the threatened status of many species. Moreover, habitat depletion and environmental contamination can be additional risk for chondrichthyans, mainly in semi-closed sea basin as the Mediterranean Sea. Pollution in the Mediterranean is, in fact, one of the major issues to date. Being a landlocked sea with large urban and industrial concentrations along its shores and supporting heavy maritime traffic, it is particularly prone to the accumulation of significant amounts of anthropogenic impact at every marine level. The Mediterranean Sea is also characterized by a remarkable occurrence of chondrichthyan species most of them considered as “endangered” or “critically endangered” by the last IUCN regional assessment. At the moment, the IUCN Red List considers pollution threat as, in the Mediterranean subpopulations but also at global level, a threat only for few different chondrichthyan species. This study was conducted to highlight the lack of information about pollution in cartilaginous fishes which play a key role in aquatic ecosystem.