

FACTORS AFFECTING THE DIVERSITY OF THE ADRIATIC ICHTHYOFAUNA

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The Adriatic comprises an independent biogeographical and ecological subunit of the Mediterranean owing to peculiarities evident from the composition properties of its life communities (biocenosis). During the past ten years several papers have been published on the occurrence of new fish species in Adriatic waters, bringing the number of fish species in the Adriatic Sea to 417 in 119 families (*i.e.* 72% of the species and subspecies known in the Mediterranean). The new records are mostly of thermophilic species. The movement of these species is also cited as evidence for the warming of Mediterranean waters. The greatest part of the south Adriatic basin has not been sufficiently explored as regards its ichthyofauna, particularly not at depths of >500 m.

Most species and subspecies of Adriatic fish, apart from some endemic species (6) and subspecies, belong to the Mediterranean and Mediterranean-Atlantic biogeographic region. During the last decades the number of thermophilic species in the Adriatic increased, mainly due to the effects of oceanographic changes. Some Lessepsian migrants were also reported in the Adriatic in recent years. On the other hand some native and even endemic species became endangered due to certain anthropogenic factors, notably uncontrolled fishing, eutrophication and different kinds of pollution.

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