

## **Evaluation of Bivalves of the Southern Sicily (Mediterranean Sea)**

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### **Abstract**

The results of a research program launched in 1996 by Regione Siciliana (Italy), with the aim of evaluating the abundance of stocks of natural bivalves along the southern coasts of Sicily, are presented. The smooth bottoms lying within the coastal strip (0-10 m; about 210 km of coastline) formed the study area. A systematic design was adopted and about 100 lines were uniformly placed perpendicular to the coastline; up to five stations were located on each line at different depth levels. A fishing vessel (4.4 GRT), and a mechanical “dry” dredge (11 mm mesh side in the bag) were used to sample the stations (from September to November 1996). Beside the 51 samples collected on the beaches, 428 stations were explored, and 260 of these were dredged covering 6,175 m<sup>2</sup>. Fifty-six species of living bivalves were identified, but the catch was everywhere poor and only *Donax trunculus* and *Macra stultorum* were relatively well represented in the samples. Present results discourage the beginning of any significant exploitation of the bivalves of the southern coasts of Sicily although a future increment in the population abundance could not be excluded *a priori*.