
Good practices to reduce the mortality of sharks and rays caught incidentally by the tropical tuna purse seiners.

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Abstract

The reduction of the bycatch mortality is an objective of the ecosystem approach to fisheries and a request by consumers. The involvement and the participation of the resource users is necessary to develop efficient and practical mitigation techniques. Fishers handle animals as a part of their job duties and it is essential to identify good practices that ensure the safety of the crew and optimize the survival of the released animals. Combining scientific observations and fishers (French purse seine fleet) empirical knowledge, handling/release guidelines are proposed for sharks and rays, including large ones like whale sharks and manta rays incidentally caught by tropical tuna purse seine fleet vessels. New ideas emerging from scientists/fishers exchanges are also proposed although not yet tested. These best practices on decks of fishing vessels should contribute to reduce the fishing mortality of some vulnerable species. Mitigation research is by definition an iterative process and different complementary methods must be carried out at the different steps of the fishing process to significantly reduce the mortality of these animals.

Keywords: Purse seine, bycatch, good practices

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