

General characteristics of the Turkish marine ichthyofauna

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Abstract: The general characteristics of the Turkish marine ichthyofauna are presented with respect to local conditions of abundance, habitat, depth range, feeding habits, size, geographic distribution and commercial importance. A statistical analysis was carried out for the 400 fish species belonging to 119 families. The Turkish marine ichthyofauna is characterized by a large proportion of common, medium sized species of Atlanto-Mediterranean origin inhabiting benthic soft substrates between 0–250 m in depth, feeding mainly on invertebrates.

Kurzfassung: Es wird hier eine allgemeine Charakterisierung der marinen Fischfauna der Türkei im Hinblick auf Häufigkeitsverteilung, Habitatwahl, Tiefenverteilung, Nahrungsgebiete, Größe, geographische Verteilung und wirtschaftliche Bedeutung gegeben. Dazu wurde zu den 400 Arten, die 119 Familien angehören, eine statistische Auswertung durchgeführt. Die marine Fischfauna der Türkei ist danach charakterisiert durch einen hohen Anteil von Arten Atlanto-Mediterranean Ursprungs und von mittlerer Größe, die in erster Linie weiche Substrate im Benthos in Tiefen zwischen 0 und 250 m bewohnen und sich vorwiegend von Invertebraten ernähren.

Key words: Marine ichthyofauna, Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, Sea of Marmara, Aegean Sea, Turkey, Middle East.

Introduction

General studies on the ichthyofauna of the Turkish seas are limited to a small number of works, although Turkey is surrounded by four large water masses, namely the Black Sea, the Sea of Marmara, the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. The first comprehensive approach to describe and analyse Turkey's marine fish fauna was by DEVEDJIAN (1926), who includes almost a hundred commercial fish species. A comprehensive work was carried out 39 years later by AKŞIRAY (1954) who gave a key for 361 species belonging to 82 families. However, this study and its revised edition published in 1987 include inaccuracies regarding the precise occurrence of certain species (e.g. *Pristis pectinata*, *Hygophum benoiti*, *Platycephalus indicus* etc.). In addition, SLASTENENKO's (1955–56) key for the fishes of the Black Sea basin and GELDIAY'S (1969) monograph for the Aegean Sea can be regarded as two regional studies with special emphasis on Turkey.

A database of the Turkish fauna and flora was first established by the *Environmental Problems Foundation of Turkey*, and of the 1787 marine species listed, 276 were fishes (ANONYMOUS 1987). A similar database on the Turkish vertebrate fauna including 384 marine fish species (MATER & MERİÇ 1996) was published by TÜBITAK (Turkish Scientific and Technical Research Council) in order to assess the recent status of biological diversity.