CEPHALOPOD FAUNA OVER THE EASTERN IONIAN SLOPE: NEW INFORMATION FROM PREDATION BY LONG-LINE CAUGHT BONY FISH

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The stomach content analyses of marine predators is a unique source of information for the documentation of prey species distribution and particularly of pelagic cephalopod species rarely caught by conventional fishing gears and sampling devices. A total of 153 cephalopod beaks were identified from the stomach and intestine content of 12 bony fish species, which were caught during the two surveys of experimental long-line fishing in June and October 2010, at depths 365 – 750 m off the coasts of Cefalonia island. The examined predator species were *Brama brama*, *Conger conger*, *Helicolenus dactylopterus, Epigonus telescopus, Lepidopus caudatus, Mora moro, Pagelus bogaraveo, Phycis blennoides, Polyprion americanus, Schedophilus ovalis, Scorpaena elongata*, and *Xiphias gladius*. Calibrated digital images of lower and upper beaks were obtained to enable measurement of standard beak dimensions and calculation of prey species size. Sixteen cephalopod species, belonging to 10 families have been identified, including 10 oegopsid squids, 3 sepiolids and 3 octopods. Pelagic species comprised the vast majority of preyed cephalopods, among which *Heteroteuthis dispar* dominated, followed by the small sized enoploteuthid squids, supposed to participate to a hyper-benthic community at the boundary shelf-slope zone. Benthic sepiolids of the Rossinae subfamily were only preyed by *Conger conger*, whereas the large pelagic squid *Thysanoteuthis rhombus* and the epipelagic octopods *Argonauta argo* and *Ocythoe tuberculata* only by swordfish. Remains of larger-sized *Todarodes sagittatus, Octopoteuthis sicula*, Histioteuthids and Onychoteuthids have been also identified from the stomach content of *X. gladius* as well as from big specimens of *C. conger*, *E. telescopus*, *P. americanus* and *P. bogaraveo*.