

FISH ASSEMBLAGE VARIATION AT BOAT SEINE FISHING GROUNDS

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Spatio-temporal variation in fish communities as well as in fisheries catches in coastal waters has been usually reported, indicating the importance of monitoring for the management of fisheries and other human activities at the coastal zone. In this study, the fish assemblages at 3 coastal areas of the eastern Ionian are investigated based on boat seine catches during the period October 2008-March 2009. Catch per unit of effort (CPUE, in number of individuals per haul) was obtained for 92 species from 66 hauls of boat seine, which were monitored during a study on the gear effects to fish stocks carried out within the framework of the Operational Program of Fisheries 2000-2006 of the Hellenic Ministry of Rural Development and Food. Multivariate analysis, based on Bray-Curtis similarity indices, was applied to the log transformed data matrix of the 58 most frequently caught species, in order to identify variations in the structure of the fish assemblage. Season was the main factor for the boat-seine catches distinction, with *Spicara smaris*, *Boops boops* and *Chromis chromis* dominating catches during autumn, and *Sardina pilchardus* during winter. Geographic variation was also detected within seasons. Spatial dissimilarity among hauls was higher during winter with varying rank of most abundant species, while that detected in autumn was due mainly to the number of species contributing in the 90% of the total abundance.