

## SHARK RESEARCH PROGRAMME IN LIBYA

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Cartilaginous fishes have traditionally been consumed in Libya, mainly sharks, guitarfishes and some stingrays. However, very little is known about the Libyan cartilaginous fishes, and no particular study has been so far dedicated to these fishes. Also there is no quantitative fisheries data on the landings and catches of these fishes although they constitute important resources within Libyan fisheries. Because of these lacks, the Marine Biology Research Centre of Tripoli (MBRC) and the Environment General Authority of Libya (EGA) were willing to jointly undertake a research programme on the cartilaginous fishes of Libya. In this context, the Regional Centre for Specially Protected Areas in Tunis (RAC-SPA) supported an expertise mission in June 2005, in order to consider the conditions of the feasibility of such a study and to determine the content of an adapted research programme to be jointly carried out by MBRC and EGA. As a result of this expertise, a research programme on cartilaginous fishes of Libya has been proposed. It includes three parts: a systematic inventory of the chondrichthyan fishes of Libya, the biological study of some selected species and the record of fishery data. The programme should provide the basic information and data necessary to manage the shark and ray fisheries and to possibly monitor the conservation of some of their populations or species. The conditions to launch such a research programme in Libya are quite propitious because of the relatively high biodiversity of these fishes in Libyan waters and the apparently "good health" of their populations; also, the human and logistic capacities of both MBRC and RGA would contribute to the achievement of this programme, which should start in Spring 2005 for a period of two years. This programme could be considered as a pilot study in the frame of the implementation of the « Action Plan for the conservation of the cartilaginous fishes in the Mediterranean Sea » as defined by RAC-SPA in 2002.