

Solidarity Fishing – Spear Fishing of Alien Fish Feeds People

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In a previous paper by [1], the complex and apparently uncontrollable problem of Lionfish invasion is thoroughly discussed. Selectiveness of spear fishing is highly effective and does allow catches targeting invasive species such as the – very good eating – lionfish. In fact, recent initiatives in the Azores islands have provided fish for poor people in appreciable quantities (Figure 1) by just gathering fishermen and donating catches either to public or private institutions.

A project called “Diving for a Cause” [2] promotes occasional meetings of spear fishers to donate their catches to people under social assistance or poverty. The Azorean regional project “Atlântico Solidário” [3] started in 2009 and is now organizing several actions of this kind through the whole of Portugal.



Figure 1: A solidarity spear fishing group from Terceira Island, Azores (NE Atlantic) where ca. 120 kg of fish were donated to two solidarity institutions by volunteer spear fishers (September 9, 2013). Photo by Marcolino Candeias

All over the Eastern Mediterranean Lessepsian invaders have almost wiped out from many places a number of native species at a very fast rhythm [4]. Most affected countries within this area are promoting active fishing of alien species and in fact, a lot of what is sold in fish markets are indeed invaders from the Red Sea [5]. This also adds valuable protein to many people who otherwise would have little or no access to it at all.

Fishing alien species such as these will also have a positive impact in reducing some populations and allow native species to recover while also extend fishing for local inhabitants. This approach is being tested with success regarding the spread of the alien Scorpion fish in the Caribbean.

This is a simple, cheap and innovative way of connecting science, controlling invasive species and, perhaps even more important, to provide high valued protein to people that would otherwise endure great difficulties in getting this kind of food.

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