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Book of Abstracts

» **Sea bed mapping and subtidal communities identification in Azorean MPAs – Preliminary results providing tools for marine resources conservation**

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MPAs in Azores have been mostly established with poor knowledge of the sea bottom substrate and the associated biological communities. This lack of information creates managing difficulties. In order to help suppressing this problem, a full sweep was carried out at two marine protected areas in the island of São Miguel using a high definition towed side-scan sonar system. Additional dives were made aimed at characterizing the subtidal communities and to identify and quantify the main organisms e.g. algae, invertebrate and fish. The work identified areas with special conservation interest regarding boundary ecosystems between sand and bedrock substrates as well as areas with importance as nursery grounds for fish stocks.

Keywords Environmental Management · Habitat Mapping · MPAs