

## BOOK REVIEW

Bas, C. – 2002. *El Mar Mediterráneo: recursos vivos y explotación*. Ariel Ciencia, Barcelona. 518 pp.

Carles Bas i Peired, a marine biologist born in Barcelona in 1922, is a researcher who needs no introduction. His extensive scientific work tells us of a life dedicated to the knowledge of the sea and its resources, particular in the Mediterranean. His extraordinary vitality has led him to present this magnificent work at an advanced age. With the perspective and distance granted by the years of research and knowledge gained from experience and from his professional retirement, he has been able to dedicate the necessary time to mature this work and to offer it in a complete manner, integrated with other disciplines. Indeed, one of the main values that this book offers lies in the integration that Dr. Bas makes between environment and fisheries.

The different environments of the Mediterranean Sea are dealt with in the first four chapters of the book. In them, the view that the Mediterranean cannot be considered as a homogeneous sea but that it offers a rich and diverse internal variability is made clear. Even though this aspect may seem trivial, it is certainly not from the point of view of the management of the live marine resources when they are to be managed by supranational organisms. Very often, these international bodies or commissions tend to simplify the Mediterranean and wish to create general management rules that are valid homogeneously for all countries. These decisions are based on the belief that the lower production of natural resources and biomass in the Mediterranean in comparison with the Atlantic Ocean may be associated with a simplification of the problem. Nothing is further from the truth, since, as can be clearly read throughout the book, a low production should not be confused with simplification. The differences observed throughout the Mediterranean and along its coasts are comparable, both in length of coast and in subsystems, to those found on the European Atlantic coast. Carles Bas has been one of the key researchers to point out, through his works and training of his students, that the exploitable marine resources and the environment need to be closely linked and that the Mediterranean cannot be

understood from a perspective that separates the two concepts.

Chapters 5 and 6 are fully dedicated to the study and estimation of natural resources. However, the author goes further than making a simple description of the different taxonomic groups; he makes a profound analysis of the historical evolution of captures. Thanks to a considerable effort of gathering data and statistics and to his careful filtering of their reliability, the author presents in Chapter 6 a global perspective of all the Mediterranean seas, included the Black Sea. This is one of the main contributions of this volume, given the current difficulty of finding data series that allow global comparison to determine whether the existence of certain resources can be understood as an environmental characteristic of a specific area.

In Chapters 7, 8 and 9 the actual fishing systems are described and an exhaustive inventory of the main arts and their evolution is made. A good knowledge of the use and distribution of the arts is necessary in order to understand the Mediterranean fisheries in the different countries. The author has made a special effort to introduce the reader to the reality of fisheries in North Africa and to the concept of regulation measures as a tool for achieving the sustainability of resources.

In the last three chapters, subjects not commonly found in books on fishery resources are introduced. These aspects are only usually dealt with in very technical, specific publications that are often separated from the strictly fishery context. In this work, economics, protected areas and pollution occupy a similar space to the topics of the preceding chapters.

I personally consider that this book is a very complete work which offers a global and comparative vision of the living resources and other related disciplines, such as the environment, economics, aquaculture and pollution. It is also worth noting the exhaustive bibliographic compendium that this book contains, which makes it an essential scientific reference for anyone wishing to be introduced to all aspects of living resources and their exploitation in the Mediterranean.

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