



ASSOCIATION FLORA AND FAUNA

Reducing the Negative Impact of Ghost Fishing and the Predator Mollusk Rapana Venosa on the Black-Sea Eco-system

Under Eco Awards 2010 Program, the Association Flora and Fauna implemented a project along the Black Sea coast (Ajara, Guria, Samegrelo), which aimed at supporting the reduction of the negative impact of the predator mollusk *Rapana Venosa* and the ghost fishing (the term used for lost or abandoned fishing gear that harms the environment and especially threatens such species as the sturgeons and dolphins) on the Black-Sea eco-system.

The large predatory sea snail has become an invasive species in many different localities around the world. *Rapana venosa* is an active predator of epifaunal bivalves, and its proliferation is a serious limitation for cultivated and natural populations of oysters and mussels. *Rapana venosa* has caused significant changes in the ecology of bottom-dwelling organisms, causing the near extinction of the Gudauta oyster. Taking into account the fact that bivalve oysters play an important role in purifying water, there has been a dramatic decrease in the self-purification capacity of the water.



*Photo by: Association Flora and Fauna
Rapana Venosa*

Another problem – Ghost Fishing is also acute for Georgia. When fishing nets are lost or are discarded into the sea, they move about with the tides and continue to trap fish on their own. Such nets destroy sea life and reduce fish populations. They have posed a threat to rare and endangered species such as sturgeon and dolphins.

Project Objectives

- Increase the knowledge of fishermen and other stakeholders about problems related to the negative impact of *Rapana venosa* and ghost fishing.
- Introduce environmentally safe methods of *Rapana* fishing that will also contribute to improved socio-economic situation of fishermen.

Implemented Activities and Results

- About 20 fishermen were selected from Sarpi-Kvariati, Green Cape, Tsikhisdziri and Batumi. They were provided trainings on diving and catching of *Rapana Venosa*.
- Selected brigades were equipped with aqualungs and other equipment, which were purchased under the project (eight sets of aqualungs, high pressure compressor and an inflatable boat).



Photo by: Association Flora and Fauna

- The organization elaborated and prepared ecologically safe and at the same time easy-to-make traps for catching Rapana, based on the Japanese and Korean analogues. Through seminars and trainings, the fisheries, involved in the project, received all the necessary information regarding methods of preparing such traps, their use and maintenance. They also learnt bio-ecological characteristics of Rapana Venosa that will help them to identify the best period for catching, the optimal depth of their habitation.. The organization also provided open seminars and discussions on the negative impact of Ghost Fishing.

- About eight tons of Rapana was gathered and was distributed by the fishermen and divers involved. Part of the amount received was used to cover their salaries and also the expenses of the equipment maintenance.
- The information campaign of the project included eight TV and two radio programs, seven press publication, a newspaper insert and three internet publications. The grantee also prepared special booklets, posters and stickers. The brochures entitled How to Catch Rapana and How to Use Rapana were distributed on the location of the fisheries. The information stands were installed at popular fishing venues, warning about the dangers of loose nets. All the materials and information prepared were uploaded on the organization's web-page www.florafaua.org.
- The association recorded qualitative and quantitative characteristics of Rapana in the Georgian part of the Black Sea (Ajara, Guria, Samegrelo), laying bases for establishing a quota on mollusk catching (for 2012 the quota is 1000 tons). Based on the agreement reached with the Ministry of Environment Protection of Adjara, Flora and Fauna will conduct overall monitoring of catching Rapana. That means additional incomes to the budget since companies are expected to obtain these quotas from the ministry.
- In the framework of additional award, acknowledging successful completion of Eco-Awards Program 2009-2011, printed out and distributed additional 100 copies of the combined brochure How to Catch and Use Rapana, conducted four meetings/presentations for various target audience. In addition to this, with an agreement of city administration, four information stands will be installed in the Batumi's Boulevard.

Project Duration

May 25, 2010- April 15, 2011

Donors and Partners

The given project was implemented within the framework of the Eco-Awards 2010 Program. Eco-Awards Program is initiated and financed by BP, on behalf of its oil and gas co-venturers (BTC Co. SCP Co.) and administered by Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF).

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