

Echinoderm harvesting in Todos-os-Santos Bay, Bahia State, Brazil: the aquarium trade

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Abstract

The ornamental marine trade has increased on a worldwide scale. Although Brazil is amongst the major exporters, data about this activity are underestimated. Therefore, the profile and consequences of such activity to the wild populations are not fully understood. In spite of being basically supported by fish collection, charismatic invertebrates also figure in this trade and virtually nothing is known about the echinoderms harvested in Brazil. Since baseline data are scarce, this study aims to provide an initial assessment on the marine aquarium echinoderm trade in Bahia State, northeastern Brazil, evaluating the landing of these animals during a ten-year period. Echinoderm landing was monitored and the trade profile was investigated from January 1996 to December 2005. The trade involved five economic segments and supplied not only the local market but other Brazilian states and countries such as Argentina. Fifteen species were commercialized and, amongst them, threatened echinoderms included in the National Red List. Fishermen usually captured them by hand but destructive methods were also used. For these reasons, studies on the dynamics of harvested populations and the development of public policies are urgently needed in order to allow the sustainability of this trade.

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