

## The Journal of the Society for Conservation Biology

### "Missione Hippocampus"

#### **Volunteers in Marine Conservation Monitoring: a Study of the Distribution of Seahorses Carried Out in Collaboration with Recreational Scuba Divers**

Seahorses (Hippocampus) live in tropical and temperate waters. Habitat degradation and fishery overexploitation have led to drastic population declines on a global scale. Population monitoring is therefore essential to determine current status and manage conservation. In this first study in Italian waters on the geographic and ecological distribution of the two Mediterranean species, Hippocampus hippocampus and Hippocampus ramulosus, recreational scuba divers were recruited and trained to report sightings. A specially formulated questionnaire was produced and distributed to scuba diving schools and centers. In the 3-year study, 2536 divers spent 6077 diving hours gathering data and completed 8827 questionnaires. (...)

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