



***Hippocampus ingens'* conservation and fishermen ecological knowledge in Peru.
Ethnobiology's role in endangered marine species studies.**

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When information gaps about marine endangered species are critical and to fill them become a priority, to implement and develop a conservation program; traditional ecological knowledge of fishermen (TEKF) represent an extremely useful tool. Peru was one of the more important exporting countries of dry seahorses to the Traditional Medicine Asian market until 2004. Since August 2004, the catch and commercialization were banned by the Peruvian government, although the extraction and trade have continued illegally, until nowadays. For accomplishing with this assessment and to deal with information's lack, I worked directly with 15 fishermen communities in Northern offshore of Peru, all them related to seahorse fishing and trade. A total of 88 persons (fishermen principally) were interviewed over three years. Information related to spatial distribution, size population variability, reproductive biology, species association, fishing, commercialization and population shifts, were collected. The Fishermen knowledge about *H. ingens* has allowed me to: verify the accuracy of the information, compared with the ecological data collected; determining catching and trading points (commercial circuit); retracing chronologically, *H. ingens* situation's shift; and evaluating marine fishing practices, like Bycatch and their impact on *H. ingens* populations. The TEKF has constituted a priceless tool for the field study development and for rebuilding time changes series since the nineties. With the preliminary results of this assessment, the Peruvian government ratified the fishing and trade ban of *H. ingens*. In conclusion, the importance to involve fisheries communities in conservational studies was verified.

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