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Public understanding of Adriatic Sea biodiversity

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Abstract

This paper assesses public understanding of Adriatic Sea biodiversity and protective actions through an online survey conducted on Aquarium Boka's website in October 2022, with 54 responses collected. The survey focused on: biodiversity terminology, wildlife-related value orientations, perceptions of biodiversity change, knowledge of Adriatic species, views on political actors, aquarium visit expectations and experiences, engagement in environmental organizations, interest in outdoor activities, and follow-up. Socio-demographics showed a higher proportion of females and university-educated respondents compared to personal pooling. There was a balance between local residents and tourists, with most respondents living in cities. Biodiversity knowledge was strong, with respondents showing a good understanding of biodiversity's importance, particularly for tourism. Wildlife-related value orientations revealed significant concern about global and regional biodiversity changes, but less about local changes. Higher age and education levels were associated with greater concern. Knowledge of Adriatic species was mostly accurate, with respondents aware that sea turtles, dolphins, and seahorses are endangered. Misunderstandings persisted about sea bass and mussels. Views on political responsibility indicated that conservationists and industry were seen as highly responsible, while perceptions of the EU's role were slightly lower. Aquarium visit expectations showed that most respondents had visited Aquarium Boka 1-2 times, motivated by seeing animals and family time. The lack of season ticket holders suggests potential for growth. Aquarium visit experiences were positive, with respondents valuing the aquarium's role in biodiversity protection. Group visits and staff interactions were common, with increased use of the Blue Pass EXChAngE app. Engagement in environmental organizations was low, but environmental awareness was high. Interest in outdoor activities varied, with diving and swimming being most popular.

Keywords: Adriatic Sea biodiversity, aquarium visitor knowledge, environmental awareness, species conservation, public perceptions

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