



**«Actions to protect, conserve and promote biodiversity. Field studies of endemic, endangered and nationally important species of Greece». Funded by the Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency (NECCA)**

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#### **TITLE**

**Estimating the impacts of small-scale fisheries on the endangered coral *Cladocora caespitosa***

(Project ID: 14725)

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The scleractinian coral *Cladocora caespitosa* is endemic to the Mediterranean and is classified as endangered due to declining population sizes. Previous studies have indicated that extensive beds of *Cladocora* colonies occur in various sites of the Northern Aegean sea such as in Thermaikos gulf and the Chalkidiki peninsula. Even though their exact distribution and population status is still undetermined. The impacts of fishing on *C. caespitosa* are listed as one of several threats facing it, but have never been directly assessed. Fishing activities are known to cause damage to biogenic structures, either through direct mechanical damage (e.g., fragmentation or complete detachment of sessile organisms), or indirectly, through increased sedimentation and abandoned fishing gears. Considering this, the present study aims to examine the effects small scale fisheries, especially those of static bottom nets (gillnets and trammel nets), on *C. caespitosa* beds in the Thermaikos Gulf and the Chalkidiki peninsula, two of the most important fishing grounds in the north Aegean Sea, by calculating: i) the catchability of the species in relation to other taxa, ii) the presence of damaged *C. caespitosa* colonies, and iii) their correlation to fishing and discarding practices within the local small-scale fishery. This study aims to present the first assessment of the impacts of small-scale fisheries on *C. caespitosa* populations, in order to protect its populations and to bridge the important literature gap on the potential effects of artisanal and small-scale fisheries on endangered species.

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