

Population Dynamics of Juvenile Dusky Groupers, *Epinephelus Marginatus*: "Lowe, 1834" From Two Sites in Terceira Island, Azores, Portugal

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Abstract : The Archipelago of the Azores in the NE Atlantic is a hot spot of marine biodiversity, both pelagic and demersal. *Epinephelus marginatus* is a solitary species commonly observed in these waters, with distinct territorial/residential behaviors from their post-larva and juvenile stages to the adult phase. Being commercially high valued species, about 13% of all groupers (Family Epinephelidae) face an increasing pressure that has produced known impacts in both the abundance and distribution of this group of fishes. *Epinephelus marginatus* is currently assessed by the IUCN as a vulnerable species. Dusky groupers inhabit rocky bottoms from shallow waters down to 200 m. Juveniles are usually found in shallow shoreline waters. Population dynamics of juveniles can lead to a better understanding of the competition for resources and predation and further conservation measures that must be taken upon dusky groupers. This study is carried out in rocky reefs from two sheltered bays on the south and north coast of the island in two different spots with four sampling sites in total. Using Transects individuals are counted at the peak of high tide and all abiotic factors are recorded. Our goal is to complete a statistically significant number of observations in order to detail these populations and to better understand their dynamics and dimension.

Keywords : Azores, dusky groupers, *Epinephelus marginatus*, population dynamics

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