

A little can be enough. Native fish from the Western Mediterranean Sea can act as a control agent for the invasive alga *Caulerpa cylindracea*

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1 In the Mediterranean Sea, different organisms can feed on invasive algae species, yet,
2 how these species provide biotic resistance against algal invasions remains unclear. In
3 this study, we analyzed fish stomach contents to determine which fish species feed on
4 *Caulerpa cylindracea* and we performed an exclusion experiment to experimentally test
5 how this grazing activity may limit invasive algae abundance and spread. Our results
6 show that several fish species, many of them not considered strictly herbivores, feed on
7 the invasive alga; however, the Ivlev's Index suggests that its consumption was
8 accidental except for *Sarpa salpa*. Additionally, the exclusion experiment demonstrated
9 that fish species can limit *C. cylindracea* coverage at 10m but not at 30m deep; which is
10 likely linked to the higher abundance and activity of these fish species at depths above
11 25m. These results are in agreement with the current distribution of *C. cylindracea*,
12 which is much more abundant at depths from 25 to 50m. In this study we show that fish
13 herbivory is a form of biotic resistance against *C. cylindracea* at shallow depths, not
14 being able to completely remove it, but controlling its abundance.