Abstract

The Goliath grouper, Epinephelus itajara, a large-bodied (~ 2.5 m TL, > 400 kg) and critically endangered fish (Epinephelidae), is highly vulnerable to overfishing. Although protected from fishing in many countries, its exploitation in Mexico is unregulated; a situation that puts its populations at risk. Fishery records of E. itajara are scarce, which prevents determination of its fishery status. This work aimed to elucidate the E. itajara fishery in the northern Yucatan Peninsula by 1) analyzing available catch records and 2) interviewing veteran fishermen (local ecological knowledge) from two traditional landing sites: Dzilam de Bravo and Puerto Progreso. Historic fishery records from two fishing cooperatives were analyzed in order to elucidate the current situation and offer viable alternatives for conservation and management. Catches have decreased severely. Local knowledge obtained from fishermen represented a very important source of information for reconstructing the fisheries history of this species. Conservation measures that incorporate regional and international regulations on critically endangered fish species are suggested.

Keywords

Reef fish, Goliath grouper, fishery, conservation, Yucatan.