

Letter to the Editor

Citizen Scientists Playing a Role in Saving Threatened Species - Science and Reality Coming Together

Michael Belanger

The Oceanographic Environmental Research Society, Barrie, Ontario, Canada L4N 2R2

I found it interesting and timely to read Dr Vecchione's article in the December (2013) issue of JMATE (volume 6, issue #2) entitled "Prospects and challenges in monitoring the seahorse population of South Carolina, USA" where Dr Vecchione discusses the need for the involvement of citizen scientists (recreational scuba divers) to assist with the documentation of seahorse populations (3). A few months later, after the JMATE article was published, an article was published in the Globe & Mail (May 22, 2014) that described how two citizen scientists (scuba divers) discovered a rare seahorse in Nova Scotian waters (2).

Over the past few years in Canada, there has been an alarming number of cutbacks in monitoring and research programs resulting in more than 2,000 scientists losing their positions (1). With fewer scientists working on various projects, these two publications (one publishing scientific data and the other reporting on 'soft' information) both reveal the need for collaboration between research and citizen scientists especially in the area of marine research which is severely underfunded and often difficult to perform.

I believe it is admirable and critical that JMATE continues to publish articles such as Dr Vecchione's where reality proves that publishing research data that is broad and multi-disciplinary (which is often overlooked) does facilitate the exchange of essential information.

References:

1. CBC News- Science and technology. Research cutbacks by government alarm scientists. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/research-cutbacks-by-government-alarm-scientists-1.2490081>. Accessed on May 30, 2014.
2. Globe & Mail. Two divers praised for rare sea horse sighting off Nova Scotia. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/two-divers-praised-for-rare-seahorse-sighting-off-nova-scotia/article18813125/>. Accessed May 30, 2014.
3. Vecchione A. Prospects and challenges in monitoring the seahorse population of South Carolina, USA. *Journal of Marine Animals and Their Ecology*. 6(2):6-11. 2013.