

Mobilizing historical marine data within EMODnet Biology

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Historical marine data are often scattered in old publications, reports and expedition logbooks, either in the form of hard copies or in simple and unorganized spreadsheets in electronic storage media. Such sources provide an invaluable resource of biological and environmental information that could be used for reconstructing and modelling past environmental conditions or predicting future trends and shifts in distribution range, biological invasions and regional species extinctions. This is extremely important for regional European Seas and adjacent marine regions, which are vulnerable to an ever-increasing number of human activities and pressures.

Recognizing the importance for mobilizing historical marine data, EMODnet Biology has developed a long-term data archaeology and rescue strategy, under a dedicated work package (WP3). The overall objective of this initiative is to fill spatial and temporal gaps in aquatic species occurrences and make the rescued historical data available freely through the EMODnet portal and global biogeographic and biodiversity information systems (e.g. OBIS and its regional nodes, WoRMS and its sub-registers, LifeWatch Species Information Backbone). The standard WoRMS taxonomic mapping makes these data usable for long term time series. Special focus is given to understudied, "data poor" regions which are particularly susceptible to environmental alterations and biological invasions such as the South-Eastern Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea.

A non-exhaustive pool of approximately 240 historical marine archaeological (1890s to 1950s) and rescue datasets (1960s to 2000s) was assembled by HCMR and is continuously being updated and annotated with metadata. A similar process was carried out by VLIZ, resulting in 95 datasets being identified for rescue; the datasets range from 1930s to mid-1990s, with the bulk of covering the 1970s decade and describing data collected mainly in the Belgian North Sea area. In addition, paper archives, primary protocols and grey literature from the Romanian Black Sea waters were scanned and rescued by NIMRD, containing data on phytoplankton, zooplankton and macrozoobenthos dating back to the 1950s, which remained unavailable to the wider research community.

A set of purpose-built criteria was adopted for the prioritization and selection of datasets to be digitized and mobilized, including thematic and taxonomic cover, temporal and geographic scope, language and readiness in their availability (e.g. online digital files versus hard copies in libraries). So far 90 historical datasets, published during the period 1868-1999, which included 110,230 occurrence records have been rescued and mobilised (Figure 1). The experience gained has revealed several challenges at all stages of the data "life-cycle", from dataset identification and metadata extraction to the digitization, standardization and quality control of historical datasets, such as: lack of

standardization, georeferencing accuracy, taxonomic inconsistencies and updates, misspellings of taxa and locations and poorly documented or missing sampling protocols (Figure 2). Nevertheless, facing these challenges is of paramount importance since loss of such data equals to loss of unique resources required to understand global changes and ultimately to the loss of our natural wealth.

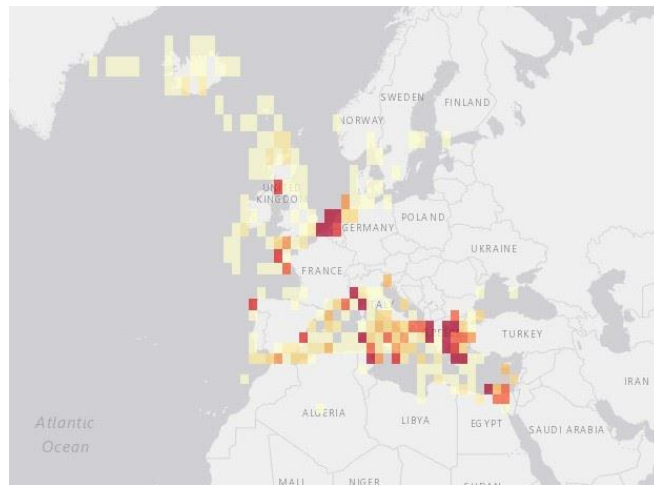


Figure 1: Distribution of historical occurrence data mobilised in OBIS (in total 110,230 occurrences from 90 datasets). Colour shades represent the number of occurrence records (higher values in red)

1. Stations taken during the “Thor” Expeditions to the Mediterranean.
a. Winter Expedition.

Station Nr.	Date	Hour	Position		Depth Meters	Nature of bottom	Weather	Wind		Sea		Temperature		Surface		Gear	Wire out Meters	Duration of haul in minutes	
			Lat. N.	Long.				Direction	Force 0-12	Direction	Force 0-12	Air	Surface	Cl %/10	S %/10				
Channel and Atlantic.																			
1	28 th 08	2 nd a.m.	49°17'	4°13'	94	W	Cloudy	SSW	5	SW	6	10°5'	12°4'	Y 200	25	80			
2	"	10 th a.m.	45°44'	4°55'	112	"	"	SSW	7	W	7	12°0'	13°5'	Y 200	65	30			
3	07 th 08	1 st p.m.	47°45'	5°28'	160	"	"	SSE	5	W	5	12°0'	13°4'	Y 200	65	30			
4	1 st 08	11 th a.m.	45°20'	7°42'	>4000	"	"	SE	2	W	4	17°5'	15°6'	C 130	1500	30			
"	"	1 st p.m.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	Y 200	65	30			
"	"	2 nd p.m.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	Hy	1000-0	"			
5	1 st 08	3 rd a.m.	43°10'	9°30'	150	"	Cloudy	SSW	2	W	4	16°2'	15°6'	Y 200	65	30			
6	1 st 08	9 th p.m.	38°44'	9°32'	188	"	"	SSE	3	W	5	16°0'	16°4'	Y 200	65	30			
7	1 st 08	10 th a.m.	37°00'	9°07'	85	"	"	Clear	SE	3	W	5	18°0'	18°0'	Y 200	65	15		
8	1 st 08	3 rd p.m.	36°38'	7°35'	>600	"	"	E	3	W	4	17°5'	17°8'	Y 200	65	30			
Mediterranean (Eastern Basin).																			
9	14 th 08	10 th a.m.	37°50'	16°18'	21	st.	Cloudy	SSW	2	SE	3	16°9'	16°9'	D 1	30	30			
"	"	10 th a.m.	"	"	7	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	D 1	15	30			
"	"	11 th a.m.	"	"	15	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	D 1	22	30			
"	"	11 th a.m.	"	"	5-30	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	D 1	11-47	30			
"	"	11 th a.m.	"	"	0-1/2	t.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	H	"	"			
"	"	8 th p.m.	"	"	25	st.	"	NW	2	"	"	"	"	D 1	188	5			
10	1 st 08	3 rd a.m.	37°21'	16°45'	>2100	"	Cloudy	SSW	2	ENE	2	"	"	P 30	Surf.	5			
"	"	6 th a.m.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	Y 200	300	60			
"	"	8 th a.m.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	C 130	300	30			
"	"	9 th a.m.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	14°5'	16°5'	"	Y 200	1200	60			
"	"	3 rd p.m.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	Y 200	300	60			
11	1 st 08	4 th a.m.	36°57'	18°16'	>3700	"	Cloudy	SW	4	SW	3	"	"	P 30	Surf.	5			
"	"	5 th a.m.	"	"	"	"	"	SW	4	SW	4	"	"	Y 200	300	60			
"	"	7 th a.m.	"	"	"	"	"	S	5	S	5	"	"	Y 200	65	60			
"	"	3 rd a.m.	"	"	"	"	"	S by E	5	S by E	5	"	"	Y 200	300	120			
"	"	2 nd p.m.	"	"	"	"	"	SW	4	SW	4	16°5'	16°6'	Y 200	1000	180			
12	1 st 08	11 th a.m.	39°34'	17°17'	1060	cl.	Squally	Baffling	"	SE	4	"	"	Hy	1800-0	"			
"	"	1 st p.m.	"	"	"	"	"	SE	3	"	"	"	"	P 30	Surf.	5			
"	"	2 nd p.m.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	Y 200	300	60			
"	"	2 nd p.m.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	Y 200	65	30			
"	"	2 nd p.m.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	P 30	Surf.	5			
"	"	2 nd p.m.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	Y 200	1000	45			
"	"	2 nd p.m.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	18°0'	14°2'	P 100	Surf.	5			
13	1 st 08	5 th p.m.	39°43'	17°30'	>1200	"	Cloudy	SSE	3	SE	4	"	"	Y 200	800	60			
"	"	7 th p.m.	"	"	"	"	"	E	3	"	"	"	"	P 30	Surf.	5			
"	"	8 th p.m.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	Y 200	1000	60			
"	"	10 th p.m.	"	"	"	"	"	Rain	S	4	SSE	4	"	Y 200	65	60			
14	1 st 08	5 th a.m.	41°24'	17°45'	1135	cl.	Cloudy	NE	6	NE	5	"	"	Y 200	15	60			
"	"	5 th a.m.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	Y 200	65	60			
"	"	5 th a.m.	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	P 30	Surf.	5			

Figure 2: Original presentation of sampling metadata of the historical "Thor" Expedition to the Mediterranean Sea and adjacent waters (from: Schmidt 1912 Høst & Son, Copenhagen, 49 pp.)

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