

# Correspondence

## Unlimited by-catch limits recovery

We argue that government decisions to increase the social and economic benefits of fisheries will be ineffective without improvements in data-reporting practices and in regulations for targeted by-catches (see J. Casey *et al.* *Nature* **530**, 160; 2016).

Take the swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*), a target species in the Atlantic longline fishery with a strictly regulated low annual total allowable catch. The unregulated 'by-catch' consists mainly of shortfin mako (*Isurus oxyrinchus*) and blue sharks (*Prionace glauca*), whose fins and meat are commercially valuable. Similarities between the gutted carcasses of swordfish and mako, without heads or fins, mean that there is potential for illegal overfishing of a regulated species that can then be logged as an unregulated species on landing.

Catches of shortfin mako typically comprise 3–13% of blue-shark catches in the same longline or gill-net fishery (J. D. Stevens in *Sharks of the Open Ocean* Ch. 7, 90; Blackwell, 2008). Yet the 2008 mako landings of a European fleet were, on average, six times those of blue shark (unpublished data; available from D.W.S. and N.Q.). This implies that the excess 'mako' could have been a regulated species such as swordfish.

The scale of the problem may already have affected stock rebuilding. More stringent surveillance of by-catch species by national regulatory authorities is essential for spotting such irregularities.  
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## Keep allowable fish catches sustainable

Setting total allowable catches (TACs) for European fish stocks above those advised by the

International Council for the Exploration of the Sea does not necessarily mean that stocks are being overfished (see *Nature* **528**, 435; 2015).

The status of assessed stocks is in fact improving in some European Union regions that are managed through TACs (north-east Atlantic, North Sea, Baltic Sea), although overfishing is still evident in the Mediterranean and Black seas (see [go.nature.com/ojrlue](http://go.nature.com/ojrlue)). These trends indicate that we know how to achieve sustainable fisheries.

Sustainable yields and the political will to achieve them will ultimately determine the socio-economic viability of the fishing industry. Although short-term socio-economic factors often drive EU fisheries policy (see J. Casey *et al.* *Nature* **530**, 160; 2016), there are alternatives. In the United States, for example, these factors may be used only to reduce quotas, not increase them (Magnuson–Stevens Act, 2007).

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## SDG indicators need crowdsourcing

The Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) meets at the end of this month to establish, among other things, the development of global reporting mechanisms (<http://unstats.un.org/sdgs>). We suggest that data that have been crowdsourced by civil-society ventures should be incorporated into the international process of monitoring the SDGs.

To address potential issues of data quality, initiatives such as the Open Seventeen Challenge are necessary to train organizers of crowdsourcing projects (see

<http://openseventeen.org>). This initiative draws on advice from leaders in advocacy, governance and crowdsourcing tools. It is run by Citizen Cyberlab, a partnership between the University of Geneva, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and Europe's particle-physics lab CERN.

For crowdsourcing to achieve its full potential, governments will need to support projects that promote public participation in measuring progress towards the SDGs. National statistics offices must develop best practices for integrating crowdsourced data.

As a first step, we encourage the IAEG-SDGs to emphasize crowdsourcing as a legitimate and valuable contribution to tracking the goals.

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## Protect Czech park from development

The Czech Republic's parliament will vote this month on a bill that sets new rules for national parks. In eastern Europe's push for economic development, biodiversity is again under threat (see also P. Chylarecki and N. Selva *Nature* **530**, 419; 2016; P. Michalak *Nature* **530**, 419; 2016).

Šumava National Park is a unique complex of peat bogs, wetlands and primeval forests in southern Bohemia. It is a refuge for many endangered species, including the remaining few viable populations in central Europe of capercaillies (*Tetrao urogallus*) and freshwater pearl mussels (*Margaritifera margaritifera*).

The bill, a reasonable compromise for conservation, is under attack from regional politicians. They object to the proposed transparency in setting and implementing conservation rules, and seek to restrict

protected core zones to 23% of the national-park area. They also want to open up large areas for logging, tourism and privatization.

Their arguments are similar to those used to justify logging in Białowieża Forest on the Poland–Belarus border (see *Nature* **530**, 393; 2016). However, if Šumava's rare species are to survive, core zones need to cover about 50% of the park (I. Dickie *et al.* *Eur. J. Environ. Sci.* **4**, 5–29; 2014).

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## Matchmaker aims to cut journal shopping

Scientific publishing is getting slower, in part because authors often choose to submit a paper to successive journals until one agrees to publish (*Nature* **530**, 148–151; 2016). As an unpaid academic member of the editorial board of Axios Review, a private, third-party review service, I wish to point out that a simple solution already exists for the time-wasting problem of 'journal shopping'.

Journals do not permit simultaneous submission to other journals, but organizations such as Axios Review — others include Peerage of Science and Rubriq — use peer review to assess the 'fit' of a paper to multiple journals and then pass it to the most suitable outlet ([go.nature.com/dhg6hn](http://go.nature.com/dhg6hn)).

This approach is based on the principle of parallelization — a solution to delays caused by serial events. Programmers use parallel processors to enable faster computation, for example, and parallel DNA sequencing has increased the output of genetic data. Early evidence suggests that parallelization also significantly shortens the review process: 85% of papers peer-reviewed through Axios Review, for instance, get accepted by the first journal.

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