



DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY  
Halifax NS B3H 4J1  
Canada  
Tel: (902) 494-3515  
Fax: (902) 494-3736  
Email: Biology@Dal.Ca

**Reference: Completeness of the global census of marine fish diversity**

The Editors: *Nature*

Dear Editors:

Please find attached the referenced manuscript, which we wish to be considered for publication as a *letter to Nature*.

This paper is the first evaluation of the completeness of taxonomic data available to construct diversity pattern in marine fishes worldwide. We found that although there are very few species that remain to be described at the global scale, the geographical distribution of those species already known is particularly precarious. Our analysis indicate that less than 3.5% of the area of the world's oceans have taxonomic inventories that are over 80% complete. Inventories were remarkably incomplete among tropical areas and in developing countries while those nearing completion were all along the coast of very few developed countries. These results have far reaching effects on the reliability of diversity patterns that have been previously described and that supposedly depict diversity at particular scales. Those patterns have also been used as the dependent variable to assess the causality of potential mechanisms and more dramatically as the source of information to prioritize resources for the conservation of biodiversity. Our analysis indicates that such advances have been certainly premature given existing data gaps.

The paper is 956 words long, has three figures, a table and fits within the space provided for letters.

Thanks for your attention and looking forward to hear from you,

Camilo Mora, Ransom Myers and Derek Tittensor