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The role of anglers’ perceptions and habits in biological invasions: perspectives from the Iberian Peninsula

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ABSTRACT

1. Anglers are a recognized vector for invasive fauna, with both intentional and accidental introductions reported worldwide.

2. The purpose of this study was to investigate the Iberian freshwater angler’s habits and perceptions related to biological invasions, using an international and bilingual survey in Spain and Portugal.

3. The results showed that anglers from both countries cover great distances to fish, and that they commonly visit several places and fish during consecutive days, representing a major risk for invasions. Yet, anglers’ activity patterns throughout the year are not constant: the summer months involve more intense activity and, hence, entail higher risk.

4. In both countries, the preferred fish species were invasive, and their introductions were reported more often than native species, with motivations being country-dependent.

5. The use of live bait was not frequent, but sometimes invasive species were used and the release of unused bait in the water was reported very frequently.

6. Most anglers recognize that introductions have environmental impacts and that anglers have an active role in intentional introductions. However, only a minority is aware of the angler’s role in accidental transportation of invasive species.

7. These findings on anglers’ behaviour patterns and perceptions may be used to model invasion risks and also improve monitoring and awareness programmes led by government agencies.

KEY WORDS: angling; dispersal; freshwater; invasive species; sport fishing; survey; introductions