Marine ~~Nature~~ Paper Parks: Exposing the Destruction in France's Iconic Marine Protected Areas

Methodology

Oceana conducted an analysis to identify apparent bottom trawling inside the six French Marine Nature Parks (MNPs) located in European waters. Using data from the Global Fishing Watch* (GFW) mapping platform, Oceana analysed apparent fishing** activity from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024. Vessels' activity was tracked using information from their automatic identification systems (AIS), maritime safety devices that transmit vessel data such as identity, speed, and location.

Apparent fishing activity from GFW was cross-checked with the European Fleet Register to identify the fishing gears used by vessels at the time of apparent fishing events. Vessels' Community Fishing Fleet Register (CFR) numbers, Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI), and/or the International Radio Call Sign (IRCS) were used to eliminate all non-bottom trawling vessels from the analysis. For a vessel to be considered a bottom trawler, all of the following criteria had to be met:

- Global Fishing Watch identified the vessel as a trawler.
- The main fishing gear listed for the vessel in the European Fleet Register was a bottom trawl.[1]
- None of the secondary fishing gears listed for the vessel in the European Fleet Register were mid-water (or "pelagic") trawls at the time of apparent fishing events.[2]

The visible activity presented in this analysis is likely to be a conservative estimate of the actual footprint of bottom trawling taking place inside the selected MNPs. Only vessels with AIS were included, and AIS coverage is limited; many fishing vessels below 15 metres length are not required to use it, and some vessels that do have AIS may turn it off. In addition, to minimise the likelihood of false positive results, vessels were excluded from the analysis if their apparent fishing activity inside the MNPs represented less than five hours during 2024.

*Global Fishing Watch, a provider of open data for use in this report, is an international nonprofit organisation dedicated to advancing ocean governance through increased transparency of human activity at sea. The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors, which are not connected with or sponsored, endorsed or granted official status by Global Fishing Watch. By creating and publicly sharing map visualisations, data and analysis tools, Global Fishing Watch aims to enable scientific research and transform the way our ocean is managed. Global Fishing Watch's public data was used in the production of this publication.

**Any and all references to "fishing" should be understood in the context of Global Fishing Watch's fishing detection algorithm, which is a best effort to determine "apparent fishing effort" based on vessel speed and direction data from the automatic identification system (AIS) collected via satellites and terrestrial receivers. As AIS data varies in completeness, accuracy, and quality, and the fishing detection algorithm is a statistical estimate of apparent fishing activity, therefore it is possible that some fishing effort is not identified and, conversely, that some fishing effort identified is not fishing. For these reasons, Global Fishing Watch qualifies all designations of vessel fishing effort, including synonyms of the term "fishing effort," such as "fishing" or "fishing activity," as "apparent" rather than certain. Any/all Global Fishing Watch information about "apparent fishing effort" should be considered an estimate and must be relied upon solely at your own risk. Global Fishing Watch is taking steps to make sure fishing effort designations are as accurate as possible.

[1] Fishing gears considered as bottom trawls for the purpose of this analysis: Beam trawls, Bottom pair trawls, Bottom trawls (nei), Otter trawls (nei), Single boat bottom otter trawls, Twin bottom otter trawls, Mechanised dredges including suction dredges, Towed dredges.

[2] Vessels were excluded if mid-water (or "pelagic") trawls were among their fishing gears registered in the European Fleet Register, because Global Fishing Watch does not distinguish between mid-water and bottom trawling.