

1998 CHARTER CRUISE PROGRAMME

REPORT: ANGELLE MARIE 2/98

(PROVISIONAL: not to be quoted without prior reference to the author)

STAFF: B F M Harley
K Turner

DURATION: 6-13 September 1998

LOCATION: The Solent, Southampton Water, Chichester and Langstone Harbours

AIMS:

1. To carry out the annual September trawl survey for pre-recruit bass in the Solent area.
2. To determine the relative abundance and distribution of juvenile bass and other species in the Solent and associated harbours.
3. To carry out biological sampling at ports along the south coast.

NARRATIVE:

Staff travelled to Portsmouth on the afternoon of 6 September and then to Warsash on the Hamble River to meet the charter vessel and load the survey gear. The survey commenced on 7 September at 0630, working stations in the Western Solent and off Ryde, Isle of Wight. The Southampton Water tows were completed on the morning of 8 September and an attempt was made to fish the Eastern Solent tows, but due to poor weather conditions no more tows were completed that day. On 9 September the charter vessel moved to Sparkes Marina, Hayling Island from which 6 stations in Chichester Harbour were completed before problems with the vessels clutch disrupted the survey. After repairs on 10 September, the survey resumed on 11 September picking up the 2 remaining tows in Chichester Harbour and in fine weather all the Eastern outer tows were completed. The survey was completed the following day (12th September) when all the stations in Langstone Harbour were worked. The charter vessel landed at Hayling ferry where the fishing gear was unloaded. The staff then travelled eastwards along the coast to Selsey, Littlehampton and Hastings in order to carry out biological sampling on bass. Due to the very poor weather, staff were only able to obtain a sample at Selsey. Staff returned to Lowestoft on the morning of 13 September.

RESULTS:

A total of 36 valid tows were made during the Solent survey. Although some clogging with weed occurred in many of the tows, it was most notable in the Western Solent, where fish catches were down by more than half, compared to those seen in May 1998. However, the tows inside the harbours saw a five-fold increase in catches compared with May 1998.

A total of 1628 bass were caught in the survey, 1299 in the harbours and 329 outside. The bass appeared to be evenly distributed between the Eastern and Western ends of the survey area.

The majority of bass caught were 1 year olds (1997 year class, Figure 1 & 2). These dominated catches in the harbours and had a modal length of 15 cm. The bass caught in the outside tows showed a very different composition of lengths and ages with a few 1 year olds (modal length 16 cm) and 2 year olds (22-23 cm), but were mainly 3 year olds 26-32cm and 4 year-olds (31-35cm). Twenty- six (1.6%) of the bass caught were above the minimum landing size (36cm).

Catch rates of bass were 6.53/minute towing in the harbours and 1.45/minute outside (3.82/minute overall). Although the overall value is higher than in May 1998 (2.11/minute overall), it is still lower than the September 1997 survey (5.13/minute overall). Juvenile bass were widely distributed throughout the area, with just 3 stations recording a zero catch. Highest densities were encountered in Southampton Water and Chichester Harbour.

A wide variety of other species were caught, notably black sea bream (88 fish), plaice, particularly in Southampton Water (393 fish), sole (212 fish), bib (417 fish) and less common species such as red mullet, gilthead sea-bream and starry smooth hounds.

B F M Harley
20 October 1998

INITIALLED: 

DISTRIBUTION:

Basic list +
B Harley
K Turner
G Pickett
Mr D Baldacchino, Skipper FV Angelle Marie
Mr D Jenkins, FOII Portsmouth
Mr S Holman, CFO Sussex SFC
Mr M Whiteley, CFO Southern SFC

Figure 1. September 1988 Age/Length Distribution - Inside Harbours.

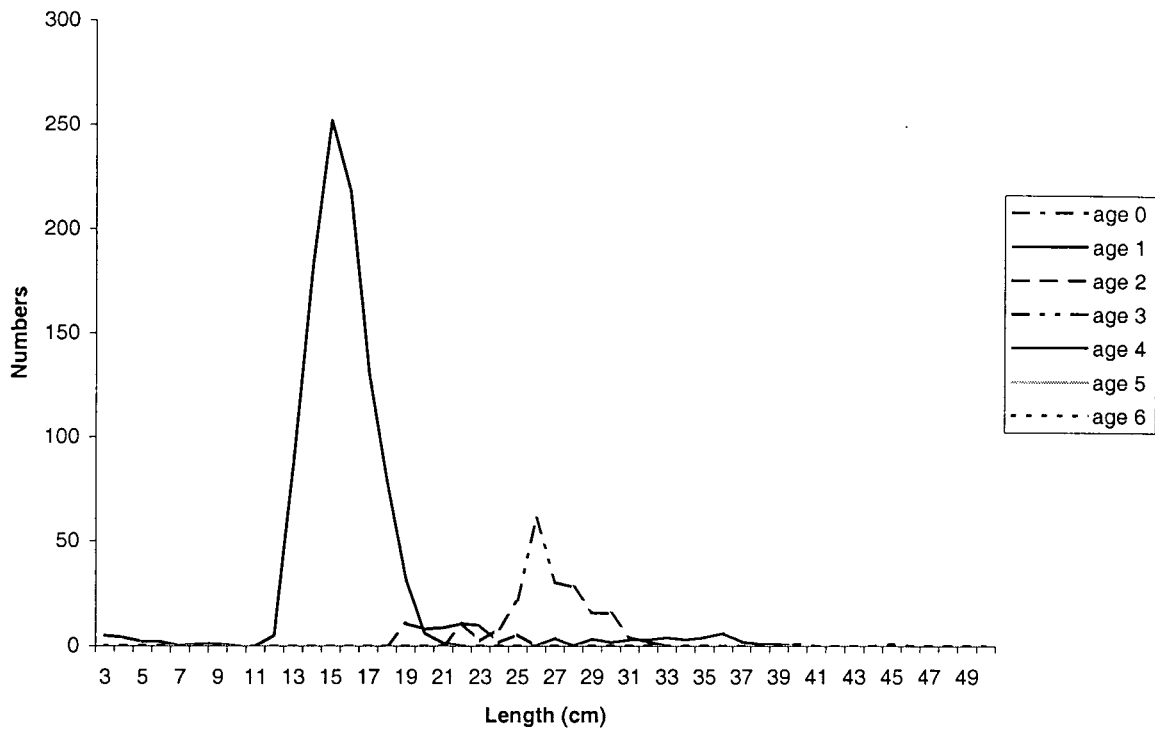


Figure 2. September 1988 Age/Length Distribution - Outside Harbours.

