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MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD
FISHERIES LABORATORY, LOWESTOFT, SUFFOLK, ENGLAND

1982 RESEARCH VESSEL PROGRAMME

REPORT: RV G A REAY: CRUISE

STAFF:

S Lockwood (Part time)
D Symonds
S Flatman
S Stevens
O Cendrero (Spain) (Part time)
J Smith, TRS (Part time)
G Hill, TRS (Part time)

DURATION:

5 January-1 February

LOCALITY:

Western English Channel, Celtic Sea and Bay of Biscay

AIMS:

1. To carry out a fishing survey for mackerel, scad and pilchard.
2. To carry out processing trials with pelagic fish.

NARRATIVE:

G A REAY left Aberdeen 1100 hours 5 January and sailed to Yarmouth Roads where Fish Lab staff embarked 1530 h 6 January. From there the ship sailed to Bigbury Bay where she anchored overnight 7 January, in easterly gales before entering Plymouth Sound to embark the bosun 1100 h 8 January. As easterly gales were forecast to continue for 48 hours G A REAY sailed to Falmouth dock yard where repairs to the factory deck fish pump were made.

The ship sailed from Falmouth 0830 h 10 January and carried out a box search for mackerel south of Mounts Bay; none were found. On 11 January the search continued north of the Scilly Isles where one shoal was found and successfully sampled. All further efforts to locate the shoal and carry out mesh selection trials failed. (In conversation with two Lowestoft and two local trawlers working out of Penzance Skipper Clark learned that no shoals comprising just mackerel had been found since the fishery reopened 2 January).

From the Scilly Isles G A REAY sailed to the Little Sole Bank but conditions were too severe for trawling and as the immediate forecast for Sole was unfavourable the ship continued on to Cape Finisterre. Trawling off the north Spanish coast commenced 13 January and continued without interruption until G A REAY entered Santander for bunkers 18 January. The ship sailed again during the morning 20 January and a final two trawl hauls were made off the Spanish coast before moving north into central Biscay. Trawling continued as the ship worked north, fishing on La Chapelle, Shamrock, Little Sole and Great Sole Banks. At 1500 h 24 January fishing along the edge of the shelf ceased and G A REAY steamed to Plymouth Sound where Drs Lockwood and Cendrero disembarked and Messrs Smith and Hill embarked at 1400 h 25 January.

Fish traces located south east of Eddystone on the approach to Plymouth were successfully sampled by pelagic trawl during the late afternoon. Increasing north west winds on 26 January restricted work to inshore areas around Start Point. A fault in the freezer compressor unit resulted in the ship going into Falmouth Docks again for repairs and as the primary aim of the cruise was completed the Lowestoft based staff disembarked 28 January and returned home. Messrs Smith and Hill remained aboard to complete their work and return with the ship to Aberdeen.

RESULTS:

1. Mackerel shoals were difficult to find at the beginning of the cruise. Time did not permit the ship to return to the area north of the Scillies where commercial vessels were fishing toward the end of the cruise.

As in December the majority, 70%, were less than 30 cm minimum size.

Very few mackerel were caught along the edge of the continental shelf although the 1981 year class were distributed from Cape Finisterre to Great Sole Bank.

Scad were most abundant along the northern coast of Spain where fish of all sizes were found. In mid-Biscay immature scad predominated but between La Chapelle and Little Sole Banks the scad were all large, but scarce.

Pilchards were not abundant, but were widely distributed in Biscay and in east Eddystone Bay.

Blue whiting occurred in most hauls along the shelf edge but were most abundant in the dusk hauls when fishing with the demersal trawl.

Hake also occurred in most demersal hauls. A noticeable feature was the change in size with latitude. Off the north coast of Spain large numbers of very small (10-15 cm) hake were taken but very few large (> 40 cm) fish. In the Celtic Sea area most fish were large and no very small fish were caught.

2. Processing trials were carried out with scad and sprats by staff from TRS.

3. Samples of mixed gadoids and mixed flatfish were collected for Dr Johnson's fish identification courses. Specimens of some of the more unusual of the 72 species of fish caught were also returned.

INITIALED:

D J G

S J Lockwood

9 February 1982

SEEN IN DRAFT:

DISTRIBUTION:

Basic List +

S Lockwood

Cornwall SFC

D Symonds

Devon SFC

S Flatman

Dept Maritime Affairs FCO London

S Stevens

O Cendrero

J Smith

G Hill

