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MRV Alba

Survey 0623a

## **REPORT**

6-15 May 2023

**Joining:** 4-5 May 2023

**Ports:** Lochinver - Fraserburgh

**Loading:** NA

**Unloading:** 15 May - Fraserburgh

### **Equipment:**

- 1 x Seacam HD video camera
- 1 x Digital Stills camera – Kongsberg OE14-408
- 1 x Table drop frame
- 6 x LED lights and cables
- 2 x Line lasers + cables
- 2 x Armoured cable
- Axel stand for cables

### **Background:**

Survey 0623a serves work carried out by NatureScot investigating the distribution and condition of benthic biotopes around Scotland. The resultant data are required to underpin the management of the of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), to meet commitments prescribed by the Scottish MPA Monitoring Strategy, and to identify Priority Marine Features (PMFs) outside the Scottish MPA network.

0623a was a continuation of survey 0523a and has the same objectives and priorities. As most of the objectives were completed during 0523A, 0623A focussed on video surveys of potential PMF areas, specifically maerl and Northern sea fan sites. The unloading port was changed, from the west coast to Fraserburgh, after the development of the original survey plans. Therefore, NatureScot provided new sampling locations further north than originally planned on the west coast, and around Orkney and Fraserburgh.

### **Narrative:**

BL remained on the vessel between 0523a and 0623a, MW joined on 4 May 2023 and SW returned on 5 May. Given the survey was reinstated at short notice, NatureScot could no longer provide scientific staff for 0623A.

Survey work commenced on 6 May 2023 with survey locations around the north of Skye (Figure 1). On 7 May, *Alba* travelled to the sampling sites in the Minch, however, the strength of tide, wind and rocky nature of seabed resulted in this being terminated after one tow (Figure 1). Therefore,

sampling progressed through locations in Sound of Raasay, while heading towards Gairloch (Figure 1).

From 8 to 10 May 2023, video tows were completed within Wester Ross, breaking in Ullapool on 9 May for refuelling (Figure 2). *Alba* then began travelling north, with video tows being carried out in Eddrachillis on 11 May 2023 and Loch Eriboll on 12 May 2023 (Figure 3), finishing in Scrabster that evening. *Alba* steamed to Fraserburgh on 13 May 2023. Video tows around Fraserburgh were undertaken on morning of 14 May 2023 (Figure 4). Work ceased at 10:30 hours on 14 May 2023 and *Alba* returned to Fraserburgh.

Throughout the sampling locations, a number of planned stations had to be missed or moved due to the presence of creels.

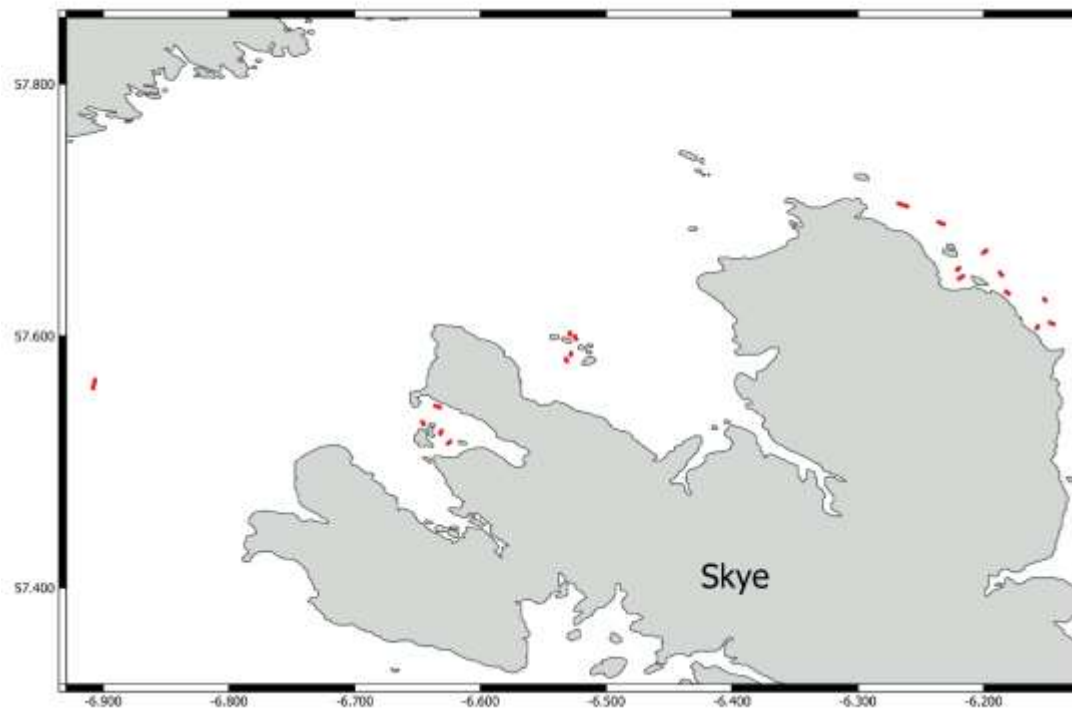
## **Results**

### **Survey coverage:**

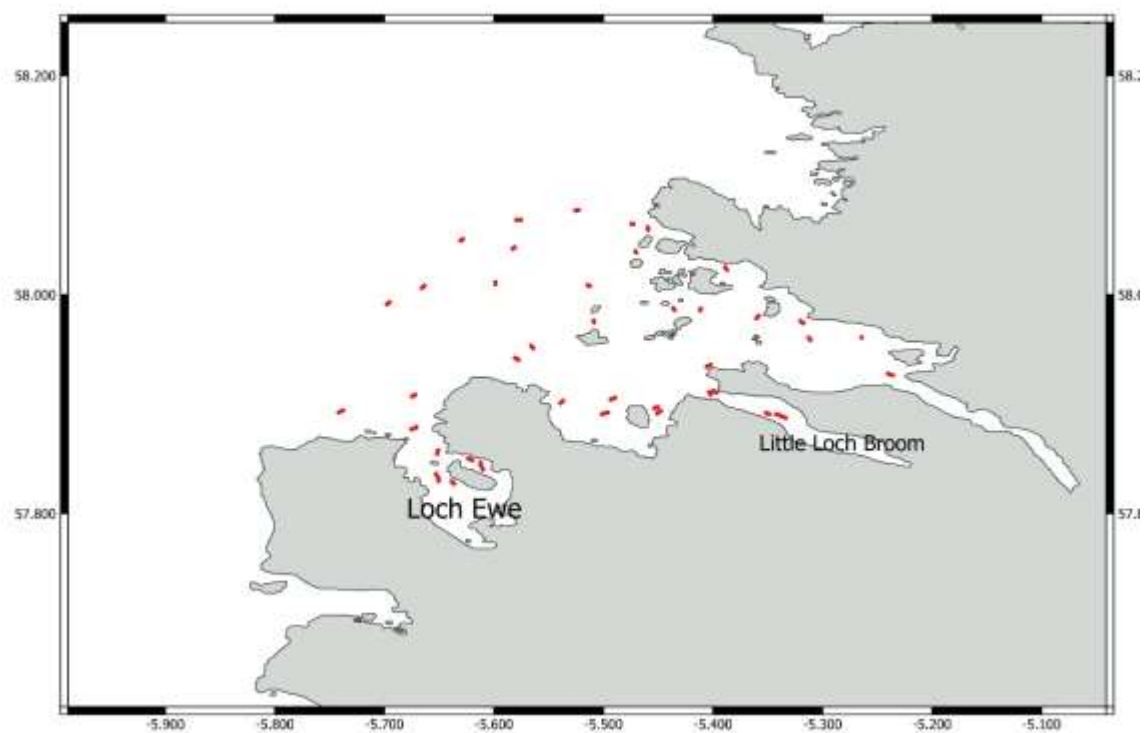
In total, 1756 still images were taken across 88 video tows during survey 0623A. The video tows included both high definition footage from a downward facing camera and standard definition footage from a forward facing camera. The photos and video files, along with GIS data, will be forwarded to NatureScot to be worked up at a later date. The results will contribute to evidence supporting MPA monitoring and the management of PMFs outside of the MPA network.

Submitted:  
R Langton and S. Wells  
15 May 2023

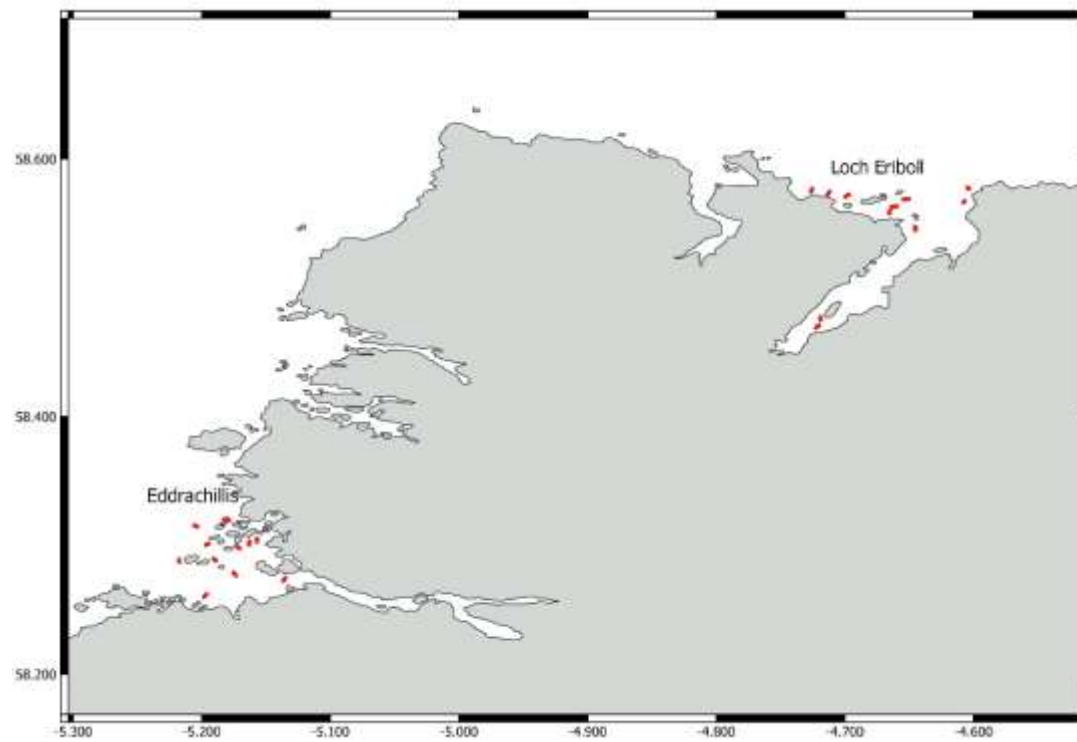
Approved:  
I Matejusova  
24/07/2023



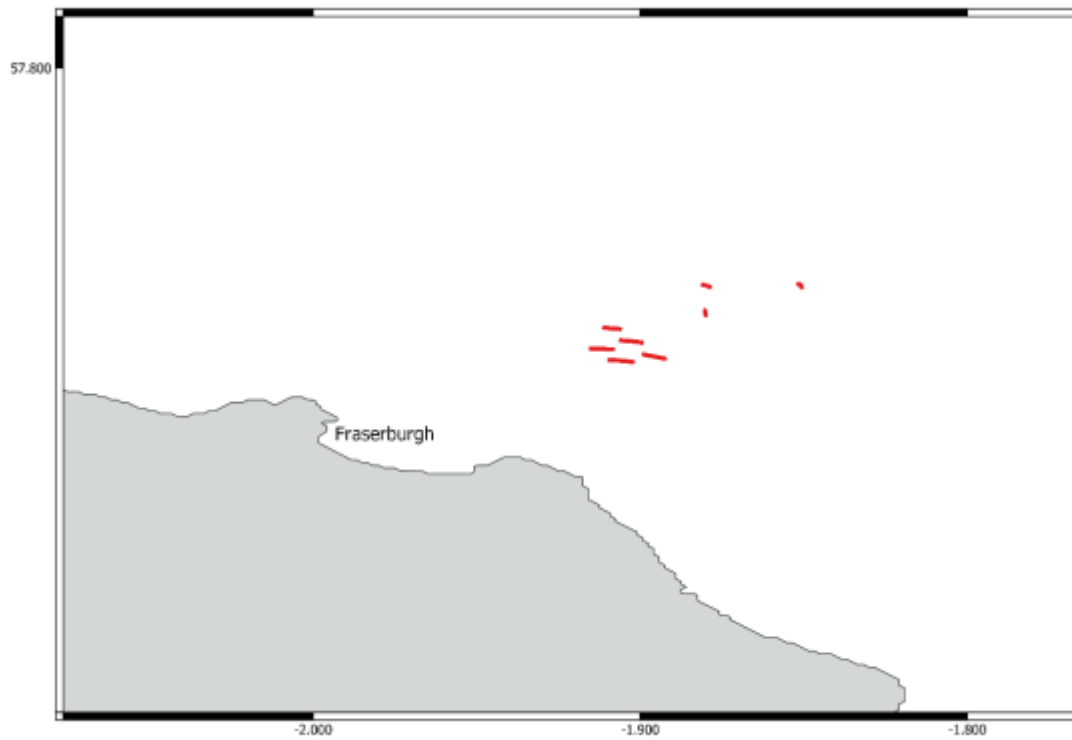
**Figure 1:** The locations of 18 video tows undertaken around Isle of Skye and one in the Minch.



**Figure 2:** The location of 43 video tows undertaken around Wester Ross (this includes five tows that were collected at the end of 0523A).



**Figure 3:** The locations of 12 video tows undertaken in Eddrachillis Bay and 11 video tows in Loch Eriboll.



**Figure 4:** The location of eight video tows undertaken around Fraserburgh.