

R1/12

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FRV *Scotia*

Cruise 1303S

**REPORT**

30 August – 12 September

**Personnel**

K J Peach     In charge  
D Beare  
S Holmes  
T Blasdale  
R Watret  
O Goudie

**Objectives**

To undertake a demersal survey on the Rockall Plateau

**Out-turn days per project:** 14 days, MF01Ta

**Narrative**

*Scotia* sailed from Aberdeen at 1130 hours on Saturday 30 August and proceeded to make passage to the Rockall plateau. *Scotia* arrived on station at 0600 hours on 1 September, and commenced fishing at 0700. The weather was fairly settled throughout the survey, gale force winds suspended fishing on two occasions totalling 8 hours. The survey was completed by 1100 hours on 10 September; *Scotia* made passage for Aberdeen, docking at 2330 hours on 11 September.

**Results**

In recent years the regular annual survey to the Rockall Plateau has been restricted to a biennial survey (in odd years) alternating with a deepwater survey in the even dated years, with the exception of 2002 when a limited Rockall survey and a deepwater survey were combined.

Following gear trials at Rockall in 1999 the standard survey gear was altered and during this survey 60 hauls on 30 minute duration were made on the plateau using the GOV trawl fitted with groundgear C and an internal liner of 20 mm. The normal Rockall survey consists of 42 hauls, which were completed successfully. The opportunity was taken to repeat 18 stations, six within the international conservation area and 12 selected at random from the remaining survey area. Net damage was minimal throughout with small repairs made to both port and starboard wing tips as required.

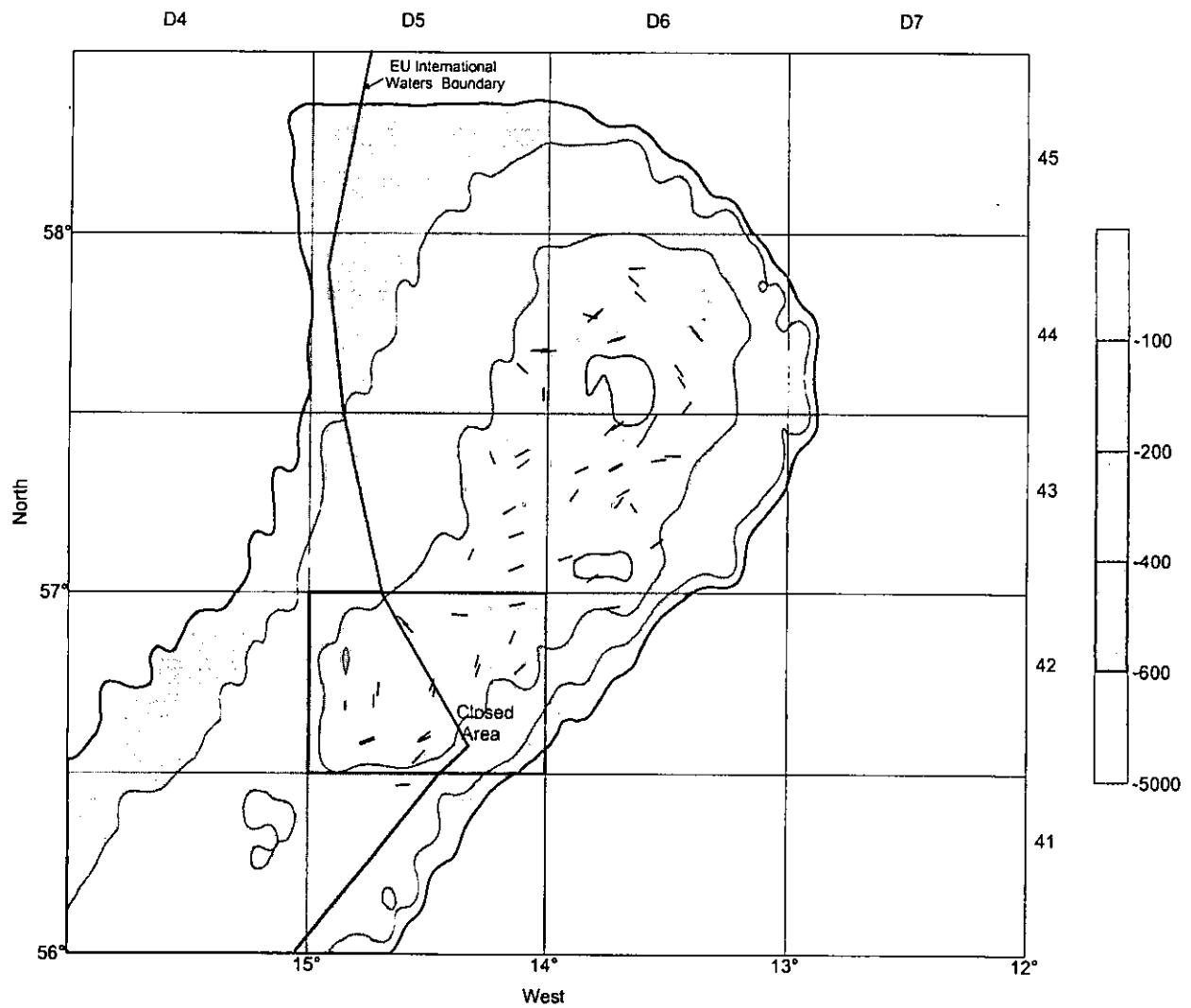
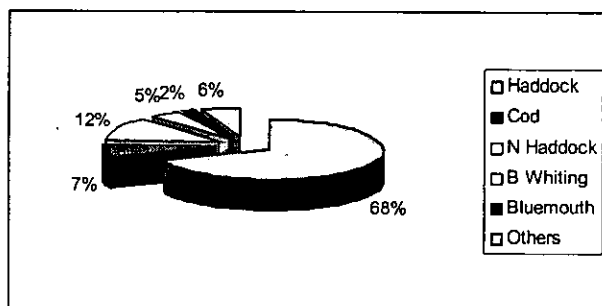


Figure 1. Trawl tracks

In total 20.2 tonnes of fish were caught and as expected haddock were the predominant species providing 69% of the catch. The next most abundant species were Norway Haddock 12.3% followed by Cod 7.1% and then by Blue Whiting at 4.5%. 32 different species were encountered; the only other significant species were Bluemouths, Grey Gurnards, Anglerfish and Lesser Argentines.

Figure 2. Catch Composition



Haul 437 (station 14) gave an unexpected catch of 1.4 tonnes of large cod, 101 fish with a mean weight of 14kgs. The fish ranged in length from 83-124cm and age from 3-9 years. The heaviest specimen was an 8 year old 26.2kg fish at 124cm.

Figure 3. Catch of large cod



The primary objective of the survey is to assess the state of the haddock stock on the Rockall Plateau: this is done by comparing the strength of the respective year classes in the current year with those of previous years (Table 1). Whilst the 2001 year class gives considerable hope for the near future it should be noted that the recruitment of this years 0-group fish is the third lowest since 1985. Given the current state of the haddock stock in this area it is difficult to be optimistic about the fishing potential in the medium or long term.

Table 1.

Year	Age 0	Age 1	Age 2	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 6	Age 7	Age 8+
1985	489	51284	214	31	4218	676	1	2	145
1986	3577	17309	62196	85	139	2568	225	0	52
1987	698	11672	2917	8530	105	267	249	71	1
1988	8640	8170	5799	810	2107	5	2	91	17
1989	23580	10799	3531	1889	268	765	2	7	25
1990	16388	10612	1231	388	307	39	140	2	5
1991	14458	16398	4431	683	315	228	37	64	3
1992	20336	44912	14631	3150	647	127	200	4	32
1993	15220	37959	15689	3716	1104	183	38	73	21
1994	23474	13287	11399	4314	969	203	30	12	4
1995	16923	16971	6648	5993	1935	483	200	16	0
1996	33578	19420	5903	1940	1317	325	69	6	1
1997	28897	10693	2384	538	292	281	71	9	1
1998									
1999	10178	9969	2410	708	279	172	90	64	32
2000									
2001	31813	7455	521	284	154	39	14	12	14
2002	11704	20925	2464	173	105	65	20	10	15
2003	2526	10114	10927	1656	138	97	100	26	6

K J Peach  
24 September 2003

Seen in draft: Captain P Ramsay