

✓ 589

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD
FISHERIES LABORATORY, PAKEFIELD ROAD, LOWESTOFT, SUFFOLK, UK

1994 RESEARCH VESSEL PROGRAMME

REPORT: CHARTER DOUBLE-BEAM TRAWLER (BRIXHAM)

STAFF: M R Vince
I D Holmes

DURATION: 26 September-3 October

LOCALITY: Western English Channel

AIMS:

1. To carry out a trawl survey for sole, by repeating the standard grid of station positions.
2. To collect length distributions and otolith samples of sole, monkfish, plaice and lemon sole.
3. To collect details of all crab (*Cancer pagurus*), lobster and scallop.

NARRATIVE:

Staff travelled to Brixham by road on 25 September. All gear and the MAFF 4m beam-trawls were put on to CARHELMAR the following day at Philips shipyard on the river Dart. The fishing survey commenced in the afternoon of 26 September and was completed on the morning of 3 October with staff returning to Lowestoft the same day.

RESULTS:

1. With exceptionally good weather predominating throughout the survey period, all fishing stations were visited, and a total of 59 half-hour tows completed. The sole catch rate for the survey was down on last year by 12% and would appear to confirm the reduction of around 50% in cpue found between the years of 1992 and 1993. There seems little evidence of any further strong year classes since that of 1989.
2. The plaice catch rate (nos. per hour) appears identical to that of 1993, with the majority of fish of medium size between 30-40 cms. As with sole, no strong recruiting year class is evident. Lemon sole and monkfish numbers remain low, though the survey grid does not cover the main distribution area for these species. Otolith samples comprised sole (312), plaice (261), Lemon sole (28), monkfish (25), in addition to miscellaneous species including cod, turbot, brill and red gurnard.
3. The number of edible crab (*Cancer pagurus*) caught this year (28) was similar to 1993 but spider crab (*Maia squinado*) numbers have increased especially in the inshore areas, a total of 101 were caught and measured. As in 1993, much of the survey area still appears to be colonised with the queen scallop (*Aequipecten opercularis*).

This year's survey saw an increase in workload on many stations which would not have been possible without help from the crew. Our thanks go to the owners and crew of the CARHELMAR for their continued support.

M R Vince
14 October 1994

INITIALED:



DISTRIBUTION:

Basic List +
M R Vince
I D Holmes
P A Large
Dr D Bennett
D W Palmer
Mr J Portus SWPO
Skipper Lovell