

IN CONFIDENCE: NOT TO BE QUOTED WITHOUT REFERENCE TO THE LABORATORY

CRUISE REPORT

FRS "CLUPEA"

21 November - 22 December 1973

OBJECTIVE: To tag herring in the Minch.

NARRATIVE:

The cruise was delayed until 27th by a hold-up in completion of modifications to the Clupea and by high winds. Passage to the Minch was further hampered by a breakdown of the radar and the Clupea put into Scrabster for repairs which were effected by Thursday evening. A sonar search was carried out on Friday night in the area between Trodday light and Rudh Re but no herring traces were located.

In the following week sailing was again delayed by gale force winds until Tuesday. A sonar search was then carried out in the Shiants and South Bank area and a trace was eventually located and shot on at 02.00 and on Wednesday morning off Eilean Glas light. During the operation the purse seine took the bottom and sustained considerable damage. The remainder of that week had to be spent in Kyle effecting repairs to the net.

As a result of damage to the net it was decided to work the third week in the deeper water off Uist and Barra where some of the commercial boats had been fishing and made good catches in the previous week. Two nights extensive sonar search revealed no marks at all in fishable depths and persistent gale force winds prevented any further searching that week.

On Monday night of the following week weather conditions were ideal and a good mark was located off Trodday light in an area where several other purse seiners were also shooting despite the shallow depth. The net was successfully shot at 21.00 hours and a catch of several crans of mixed but predominantly rather small herring were taken and tagged that night.

By the following evening weather conditions had again deteriorated badly and the passage back to Aberdeen took three days. Clupea docked in Aberdeen at 02.00 on Friday the 21st.

RESULTS:

During the relatively short periods when weather conditions were favourable for shooting the net herring traces were rather scarce in all areas and this scarcity was accentuated by limitations in the area where Clupea was able to fish because of insufficient depth and a hard bottom.

The successful shot was made in a depth of 50 fathoms over a sandy bottom and 1,967 herring were tagged, 1,007 with external combination tags and 960 with internal tags.

The modifications carried out to Clupea since the previous purse seine trip worked well and enabled the gear to be shot and hauled more quickly and efficiently than before.

M Walsh  
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