

CRUISE REPORT

F.R.S. "CLUPEA"

17th November - 7th December, 1963.

- Objectives: (1) To carry out mesh-selection experiments using different coloured Ulstron and nylon drift nets of cross-woven mesh.
- (2) To tag herring using spaghetti tags.

Clupea sailed from Buckie on the night of 17th November and proceeded to the North Minch via the Caledonian Canal because adverse weather conditions prevented passage through the Pentland Firth. The ship's generator developed a fault in the canal and two days were spent carrying out repairs. The vessel eventually left the canal on the 21st of November but didn't reach Stornoway until the night of 22nd November owing to bad weather.

On 25th November Clupea sailed for the fishing area where the commercial herring fleet was in operation: echo-surveys were carried out and the drift nets were shot near the commercial fleet. On the first two nights 3 drift nets were torn by commercial boats crossing the net fleet and it was suspected that the nets were floating on the water: by shooting the net-fleet in daylight, it was confirmed that the nets were not sinking. Experiments were carried out to correct the buoyancy by adding weights to the Bush-rope stoppers and taking off corks from the headline of each net. Owing to the time taken in correcting the buoyancy of the nets, only two days remained in which to carry out the mesh-selection experiment.

With the continued bad weather, operations were confined to Loch Broom and although extensive echo-surveys were carried out in the loch no herring traces were located. Clupea's drift net fleet was shot in the area where the commercial fleet had considerable success the previous week, but the catches were not of sufficient quantity to estimate the individual mesh-selectivity of the nets: however, from the high percentage of damaged fish in the catches it was evident that the gauge of twine used to make the nets was too small.

No herring tagging was carried out.

Clupea left Loch Broom on the evening of 4th December and sailed for Buckie via the Caledonian Canal arriving in Buckie at 1500 hours on 7th December.

THOMAS BRUCE

11th December, 1963