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In Confidence: not to be quoted without reference to the laboratory

CRUISE REPORT

FRS CLUPEA

10 - 22 JULY 1972

Objectives

1. To carry out purse seining trials.
2. To tag herring in the area to the west of Shetland.

After loading the purse-seine "Clupea" left Buckie at midday on 10 July and proceeded to the Shetland area, conducting a sonar search en route. The ship reached Fetlar on the morning of the 11th but had to put into Mid Yell almost immediately because a seaman reported sick. On medical advice it proved necessary to return to Lerwick so that he could be admitted to hospital. For the remainder of that week purse-seine trials were carried out and an extensive sonar search was made over much of the Shetland area.

In the second week work was considerably hampered by persistent dense fog. In that week operations were confined to the west of Shetland and west of Orkney, initially in the Foula area and latterly, on advice from the Icelandic research vessel "Arni Fridriksson" of dense sonar traces in the area, to the west of Noup Head. "Clupea" made the return passage to Aberdeen on the night of 20 July docking there at 1600 hours on 21 July.

Results

During most of the period herring traces were very scarce all over the Shetland area and this result was confirmed by commercial purse-seiners working there. There were dense traces during the second week between Sule Skerry and Noup Head but sprats would seem to have been contributing a fairly major proportion of these. On the return passage from Lerwick good herring traces were much more prevalent, from Bressay to south of Fair Isle, and the commercial fleet were also reporting better signs of herring further north to the east of Shetland.

Despite unfavourable weather conditions the purse-seine was shot and hauled, quickly and efficiently, on seven occasions. Catches were small largely because only small shoals could be found to shoot on within the depth range of "Clupea's" shallow net. Catches in the Foula area contained a high proportion of mackerel, and in the Noup Head area sprats were a major constituent of two hauls.

A total of 570 herring were tagged with internal or external tags and 43 mackerel with internal tags. The herring were tagged in almost equal numbers at Foula and west of the Noup, while all the mackerel were tagged at Foula.

Ten tows were made with a plankton indicator for IMER, Edinburgh before the only instrument supplied became unserviceable.

ALAN SAVILLE
21 July 1972