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MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD
FISHERIES LABORATORY, LOWESTOFT, SUFFOLK, ENGLAND

1987 CHARTER CRUISE PROGRAMME

REPORT : DAWN HUNTER

(Provisional: Not to be quoted without prior reference to the author)

STAFF:

T J Hulme
A M Watson
B C Mumford, 17 July only
P Hudson, 17 July only

DURATION:

Left Lowestoft 1245h 17 July
Arrived North Shields 2130h 28 July

AIM:

To investigate the distribution and abundance of young herring of the 1986 year class along the English east coast between Flamborough Head and North Foreland.

NARRATIVE:

DAWN HUNTER arrived at Lowestoft on the evening of 16 July and was loaded up and made ready for sea by 1245h 17 July when she sailed from the port to carry out trial hauls with the mid-water trawl before commencing the survey proper at 1605h. The fine weather ended on that day and the whole survey was dogged by strong northerly winds, rough seas and marginal working conditions. During the period 18-24 July, all stations between Winterton and Margate, with one exception, were successfully completed. The vessel then moved up to Boston on 25 July but adverse weather conditions prevented the Cromer and Blakeney stations being fished. On 26-27 July, only three stations in the Wash were fished because of the weather, and the vessel docked at Grimsby at 1711h 27 July when the fishing gear, cable winch, fish samples, scientific staff and equipment were off-loaded. DAWN HUNTER sailed from Grimsby at 0430h 28 July to steam back to North Shields.

RESULTS:

Because of the adverse weather conditions, the survey was again restricted to the area R Humber to North Foreland, and it fell into two distinct areas, namely the Wash, and the East Anglian Coast and Thames Estuary. Overall the catches of 0-group herring (1986 year class) were well down when comparing like stations with last year, amounting to only 19% of the very strong 1985 year class. In the Wash only two out of the three stations fished produced herring and they were few in number. In the area Winterton to Margate, catches were better but were only approximately half what they were last year in the same area. Nevertheless, the abundance index for the Down's stock component of the 1986 year class suggests that it is of the same magnitude as strong 1978 year class which was sampled in 1979.

Sprat by-catches overall were slightly down on last year when comparing the same stations. In the Wash the sprats were confined to the southern end where, judging by the almost continuous fish traces, they appeared to be very abundant indeed. Along the East Anglian coast catches were up on last year, and about the same in the Thames Estuary.

I would like to record my thanks to Capt John Cole, owner of DAWN HUNTER, and to Skipper Alf Walker and his crew for their contributions to the smooth running and success of the survey.

T J Hulme
30 July 1987

INITIALLED : D J G

DISTRIBUTION :

Basic list+

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FLR 4876