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Cruise Report

FRV "Goldseeker"

4-26 October 1977

Objectives

1. To study the states of scallop and queen stocks in exploited areas of the west coast, including those around Skye and Mull.
2. To search for unattached juvenile and attached seed scallops in the same areas.
3. If time allows to undertake comparative dredging.

Narrative

"Goldseeker's" departure from Buckie was delayed until 5 October.

She proceeded through the Caledonian Canal, and after spending the first week-end at Corpach arrived at Kyle of Lochalsh on the 10th.

Scallop dredging and weed collecting began off the north-east coast of Skye on the 11th and continued round Skye until Mason replaced Howard at Kyle on the 19th. Sampling then took place off Pabay, Eigg and Muck, north of Ardnamurchan, in the Sound of Mull and off Kerrera. Dr Mason left the ship at Oban on the evening of 25 October and the cruise ended at Corpach on the 26th.

Despite persistent strong-to-gale S-SW winds it was possible most of the time to find a lee to work and only two full days were lost.

Results

A total of eighty 15-minute hauls were made, all except three using the standard 16 tooth sampling dredge. Scallops were taken in most hauls, being particularly abundant south of Eigg where up to 52 were taken in a haul. Good catches were also obtained in Fishnish Bay (up to 32 per haul) and NW Skye (up to 20). The age compositions of catches are shown in Table I.

Table I Percentage age composition of scallops caught in good areas

Area	No. of growth rings											No. in best catch
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	>9	
NW & W Skye	1.5	0.7	5.8	11.7	21.9	10.2	8.0	5.8	7.3	8.0	26.0	20
S Skye	-	-	6.7	14.6	16.9	14.6	3.4	5.6	9.0	6.7	22.5	13
Eigg & Muck	-	-	2.0	4.0	22.0	15.3	12.7	15.3	13.3	4.0	11.3	52
Sound of Mull	-	0.8	4.7	8.6	10.2	18.8	10.9	3.9	3.1	2.3	36.7	32

The high proportion of young scallops off Eigg and in the Sound of Mull, together with the good catches there, augur well for the future of the fishery there.

Queens were scarce except in the Sound of Mull, where several good catches of commercial-sized specimens were made in and near Fishnish Bay.

Newly settled spat of both scallops and queens were found attached to Laminaria saccharina, particularly round Skye. In all 77 scallop spat 2-11mm long and 243 queen spat 2-10mm long were found. The state of scallop gonads examined, which were all spent or early recovering, suggested that the scallop spat originated from an August or September spawning.

James Mason
F G Howard
24 November 1977

Seen in draft: W B Reid