

Cruise 11/79
REPORT
FRV 'MARA'

23 10 79 - 16 11 79

Objective

To carry out a survey for young plaice in the major nursery areas on the Scottish east coast.

Narrative

Scientists joined MARA on Tuesday 23 October but gale force winds prevented the vessel from sailing. The severe weather continued for the rest of the week and because MARA had to be in port on Friday 26 for contractors' visits the scientists returned to Aberdeen on Thursday.

The following Monday MARA sailed from Buckie and made an overnight passage to North Berwick and during this week work proceeded quickly in the Firth of Forth, St Andrews Bay and Montrose Bay areas. MARA docked in Aberdeen for the weekend. On Monday 5 November MARA returned to the Montrose area and then worked northwards. Whilst working in Aberdour Bay on Thursday 7 the gear encountered an underwater obstruction and was lost. Despite 11 hours of grappling it was found impossible to recover the gear. MARA returned to Buckie on Friday 9 November.

Due to the loss of gear it was decided, for the last week of the cruise, to carry out a programme of plaice tagging in the Moray Firth. MARA was confined to port on Monday by NW gales but for the rest of the week MARA was able to work on the south side of the Moray Firth.

The cruise ended at Buckie on Friday 16 November.

Results

Catches consisted almost entirely of common dabs, plaice and whiting. The numbers of these species caught in each area surveyed are listed in the table below.

Area	No. of $\frac{1}{2}$ hour hauls	TOTAL NUMBERS		
		Plaice	C. Dab	Whiting
Craig Leith	5	60	110	169
Aberlady Bay	7	7	551	36
St Andrew's Bay	12	660	493	636
Montrose Bay	8	84	259	1075
Aberdeen Bay	11	21	721	1389
Aberdour Bay	<u>3</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>251</u>	<u>12</u>
TOTAL	46	862	2385	3317

During the last week of the cruise a small tagging programme was carried out 10 miles north of Buckie. A total of 769 plaice was measured and tagged.

A W Newton
23 November 1979

Seen in draft W T Mair - Officer in charge 'Mara'