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R1/7

13MR77

Cruise Report

FRV "Mara"

15 November - 2 December 1977

Objective

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

Narrative

The cruise was due to start from Buckie on Tuesday 15 November but gale force winds delayed sailing until the 16th when work commenced in the Dornoch Firth. Further bad weather forced Mara to return to Buckie on 17 November where the boat was detained by continuing gales. Taking advantage of a temporary lull in the weather Mara sailed on the 22nd for St Andrew's Bay and during the rest of the week work proceeded in various bays on the east coast. During the third week survey work was carried out in all suitable bays on the southern shore of the Moray Firth. The cruise terminated at Buckie on Friday 2 December when scientific gear was unloaded.

Results

Catches consisted mostly of common dabs and plaice but numerous hauls also contained appreciable numbers of 0 group whiting. The numbers of plaice and dabs caught in each area surveyed are listed in the table below.

Area	No of 1/2 hour hauls	Total numbers caught in each area	
		Plaice	Common dabs
Dornoch Firth	7	105	50
St Andrew's Bay	9	111	1586
Montrose Bay	5	153	44
Aberdeen Bay	9	52	513
Aberdour Bay	3	19	164
Cullen Bay	2	32	81
Nairn Bay	2	2	14
Burghead Bay	3	3	1
Spey Bay	4	1	16
Total	44	478	2472

Most of the plaice were 1+ and this tends to support last year's results which consisted mostly of 0+ fish. It is known, from previous cruises, that the 1974 and 1975 year classes are weak and the low level of plaice caught this year appear to indicate a poor brood for the 1977 year class.

100 0 group plaice and a quantity of shrimps were kept alive and transported to the Marine Laboratory.

A W Newton  
19 December 1977

Seen in Draft: W T Mair.