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1MR79

FRV 'Mara'

Cruise 1/79

Report

8 February - 30 March 1979

Objectives:

Part I To tag plaice and lemon sole in the North Minch.

Part II To tag spurdogs caught by long lines and trawl.

Narrative:

Part I

'Mara' sailed from Buckie on Thursday 8 February and made passage to Stornoway where she arrived on 9 February. Scientific staff joined the vessel on Saturday 10 February with the intention of starting work in Broad Bay. However, gales from the east and south-east prevented work in this area during the following week and therefore 'Mara' worked, whenever the weather permitted, just off Chicken Head. The gear used was a light trawl and the majority of fish caught and tagged were lemon sole. During the second week the wind shifted into the west and allowed operations to begin in Broad Bay. The seine net was used and quantities of plaice were caught and tagged. On Thursday 22 February 'Mara' developed a mechanical fault which prevented further scientific work. The scientific staff left 'Mara' on 26 February.

Part II

Gauld and MacDonald joined 'Mara' on Tuesday 6 March at Stornoway following the vessel's long weekend. Continual gales from 7-14th permitted work only in the Tiumpan Head-Chicken Rock area. Advantage was taken of a lull in the weather on 15th to cross to Kinlochbervie to collect long line gear and to sample at the local market. 'Mara' proceeded southwards on the 19th, working long lines off Loch Ewe before further gales and blizzards forced 'Mara' to enter Portree for shelter. On 21-23rd long lines and trawl were fished in the Raasay-Applecross area.

At Kyle on 24th, 2 members of 'Mara's' crew were relieved and Gauld and MacDonald left the vessel to proceed overland to Aberdeen. 'Mara' returned to Buckie on 28th via the Caledonian Canal.

Results:

Part I

Bad weather and mechanical problems reduced the amount of time available for tagging but even so 1452 flatfish were tagged. All the fish were in good condition when released after tagging. The breakdown of fish tagged was as follows:-

Lemon sole	557
Plaice	<u>895</u>
Total	1452

Results:

Part II

Due to weather conditions work was restricted to inshore fishing grounds. Both long lines and trawl were fished, the former being set 5 times and the latter shot on 18 occasions. Fishing by both gears was poor. One sample of juvenile spurdogs was taken off Tiupan Head but otherwise few were caught and tagging was directed primarily at flatfish. A total of 571 fish were tagged, namely:-

Lemon solé	523
Plaice	6
Cod	26
Spurdogs	10
Spotted dogs	<u>6</u>
Total	571

The long line gear used was of the snap-on-snood type. An efficient shooting/hauling system was devised which presented few operating problems. Salt herring and salt mackerel were used as bait but catches were insufficient to allow comparison to be made between these baits on this cruise.

A W Newton
J A Gauld
25 04 79

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