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CRUISE REPORT

FRV MARA

14 February - 15 March 1973

Objectives

1. To carry out a bottom trawling survey for Norway pout in the Clyde and Minches.
2. To carry out routine hydrography in the Clyde.
3. To tag whiting and saithe in the Clyde.
4. To collect water samples for herring larval experiments.

Narrative

"Mara" left Buckie at 1100 on Wednesday 14 February and proceeded through the Caledonian Canal en route for the West Coast. Severe icing conditions delayed passage, and the ship reached Corpach at 1400 on 16 February, and Crinan by 2030 the same night. The canal was impassable owing to ice, and consequently the ship steamed round the Mull of Kintyre overnight and berthed at Ayr at 1000 on 17 February.

On 19 February strong westerly winds made Ayr harbour unsafe, and the ship proceeded to Troon collecting an inshore water sample en route from Irvine bay.

During the following two days seven routine hydro-plankton stations were completed to the east of Arran, and a further sample of water for herring larval experiments was taken from an Irvine Bay offshore station.

On 22 February, the weather again prevented work, and "Mara" proceeded to Troon where R Payne and J Dunn left, and R Hutcheon and M Groves joined.

Bad weather persisted on 23 February and over the weekend. On Monday 26 February "Mara" steamed to Ballantrae Bank where a water sample for herring larval experiments was collected. The ship then made for Campbeltown, completing two trawl stations north-west of Ailsa Craig en route.

On 27 and 28 February "Mara" proceeded up Loch Fyne and then round the east side of Arran to Troon, completing a further five trawl stations on the way.

On the evening of 28 February, E Strange and R de Silva arrived in Troon with a pair of curved metal doors for trial on board "Mara". Throughout the next two days there were severe south-westerly gales and the trials were not attempted.

During the weekend W Mair joined "Mara" as skipper, and on the morning of 5 March, the ship sailed for the Crinan Canal, completing one station to the east of Arran en route. The night was spent at Cairn Bhan, and by the following evening the ship had reached Tobermory.

"Mara" left Tobermory at 0700 on 8 March and completed two stations, in the South Minch one off S Uist, and one off N Uist. Because of a bad forecast it was decided to make for Stornoway, and the ship docked there at 2330.

On 8 and 9 March fishing operations were hampered by bad weather, but three stations were completed off Kebbok Head, and the Shiants, and "Mara" returned to Stornoway for the weekend.

"Mara" left Stornoway at 0700 on 12 March but had to return on account of a radio fault. The ship put to sea again and completed a station off Triumpan Head and another off Rudh Re before anchoring for the night in Loch Ewe.

The following day two stations were completed off the Summer Isles, and "Mara" then crossed the Minch and made for Stornoway.

On the 14 March "Mara" completed one station off Loch Erisort and then returned to Stornoway where she docked at 1100 to allow for staff to return to Aberdeen.

Trawling survey

During the survey 20 trawl hauls of 1 hour duration and one of half an hour duration were made, all using a "Mara" sand-eel trawl and flat wooden boards.

Eight hauls were made in the Clyde area, two in the South Minch and eleven in the North Minch. Severe net damage occurred on one occasion in the Clyde, owing to mud being trapped by the small mesh net.

Small numbers of Norway pout Trisopterus esmarkii 9-25cms in length were caught at all Clyde stations, in depths of from 48-130 metres. The largest catch, of two baskets, was taken off the east side of Arran.

Poor Cod T. minutus 7-25cms in length also occurred in similar numbers to T. esmarkii in all Clyde hauls.

In the South Minch two stations were worked, at 156 and 165 metres depth respectively. The catch from the shallower station contained 1¼ baskets of T. esmarkii of range 9-20cms, with an insignificant catch of T. minutus. The deeper station yielded no T. esmarkii and insignificant numbers of T. minutus.

Small numbers of T. esmarkii were found in all North Minch hauls in depths of from 75-156 metres. The largest catch was of four baskets taken east of the Shiants, and all were within the size range 7-22cms. T. minutus of similar size range were always present, but not in significant numbers.

In addition to these industrial fish species, small catches of commercially important gadoids, flatfish, hake, halibut, sprats, queens and Nephrops were made. Herring were caught in small quantities in the

North Minch, the largest catch of 13 baskets being taken west of Tolsta Head in a mixed catch of 108 baskets consisting mainly of dogfish, Squalus acanthias.

Otoliths were collected from all species and samples of T. esmarkii above 12cms were collected and preserved for fecundity studies.

No whiting or saithe were tagged in the Clyde as those caught were judged not to be in suitable condition.

Three samples of 100 gallons of seawater each, were collected from three separate sample areas in the Clyde for herring larval rearing experiments.

J MORRISON
29/3/73