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F.R.V. "MARA"

CRUISE REPORT

March 23-April 23

The scientific staff joined "Mara" at Buckie on 23rd March. The ship was unable to sail that day as workmen were still engaged in removing the trawl gallows and bollards preparatory to the ship seine netting. Work started on the 24th on the rough ground to the north of Buckie and continued without a break till the last two weeks, when three days were lost because of gales.

In all, 66 hauls were made: Bobbin rope, 24; Thomson rope, 22; ordinary rope, 20. Catches were poor and consisted mainly of flats. Unfortunately the cod fishery which would have given bulk to the catch for this work had just finished and the haddock and whiting which commercial skippers were expecting had not yet come on to the grounds. Commercial vessels near "Mara" but fishing on the cleaner ground were picking up fair catches with ten coils of rope per side. "Mara", on the other hand, could only use three coils per side, which gave very little ground coverage before the net closed. There were no reports of better fishing elsewhere.

A cursory look at the results show no significant difference in catch between the three rigs. Most damage was suffered by the ordinary rig but it will require a more detailed examination before deciding which of the other two rigs suffered least. The bobbin rig proved heavy to handle and in its present form would not be a practical proposition for a commercial vessel. This can be corrected and a different bobbin rope would be used should the experiment be continued. The wings of all three rigs suffered most of the damage. By cutting down on wing length or by using a Vinge seine with its shorter wing much of this damage could be eliminated.

Attempts were made to continue selection experiments with courlene cod-ends, with and without Ulstron outer cover. Unfortunately the light cod-end was continually fouling the headline and had to be taken off. This was probably due to the net sinking faster with the extra groundrope weights. It is hoped to continue this part of the experiment later when the crew have become accustomed to the new rigs and when suitable quantities of fish are available.

A final assessment of the results will be given later.

A. CORRIGALL

15th July 1965