

In Confidence: Not to be quoted without
reference to the Laboratory.

CRUISE REPORT

F.R.V. "Mara"

5th - 30th August, 1968.

Objective

An exploratory survey of the sand eel stocks of the Moray Firth.

Sand eels

Of 49 trawl hauls, only 14 contained sand eels, and of these, only 4 contained at least one basket of sand eels per hour. Two hauls contained about 4 baskets per hour and were comprised mainly of A. marinus/lancea, with some A. lanceolatus and a few G. semisquamatus. Both these latter hauls were made on the east side of Smith's Bank at a depth of 37 m.

Photography

The headline camera used in the first week of the cruise produced photographs of sand eels during the two largest hauls mentioned. Sand eels were perceived in 3 of the 16 hauls in which the camera was used. Although sand eels were contained in 9 of these hauls, there were only 5 with more than 100 specimens.

By-catches

Most of the hauls contained mainly whiting and haddock with mean lengths of 18-24 and 16-22 cm, respectively. Plaice, common dab, lemon sole and Callionymus lyra were also very common. The only significant catch of Clupeids occurred off Nairn at a depth of 11 m., where herring (8-10 cm) and sprats (8-12 cm) occurred in about equal numbers in a haul of 10 baskets.

N. LANGHAM
12th September, 1968