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Field Exercise: Fish Damage Experiments at Gairloch SEA RIDER and LD
Report "SALAR"

17-21 November 1986.

Personnel

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Objectives

1. To capture surviving fish from holding cages in Gairloch for examination of the regenerated scales in an attempt to assess the proportion of total damage and describe their recovery following escape from the meshes of the net.
2. To remove all the holding cages from the seabed and return them to Aberdeen for servicing.

Narrative

Using a landrover the diving team arrived at Gairloch and prepared the gear for operation. Diving was carried out from the "Sea Rider". The local small boat "Salar" was used on Wednesday 19th for lifting the cages.

Results

The underwater cages in the more sheltered area of the two sites in the loch were examined on Monday afternoon. Both cages had been overturned and dragged out of position, possibly by crab creel boats working around the loch. No fish were recovered from these cages.

The two cages at the mouth of the loch in a more exposed position beside Longa Island were in good condition and had not been disturbed. The cage with fish held since June contained the same 5 haddock and 5 saithe which were in perfect condition. An attempt to recapture these fish without damage by spraying Rotenone failed. Using mussel on baited hooks was more successful but of the three haddock caught two managed to escape off the hooks before they could be immobilised. Three of the five saithe were caught the other two saithe and haddock would not take the bait and escaped when the cage was lifted.

The fish recaptured were deep frozen and returned to the Laboratory for stomach and scale examination.

It was noted that regeneration had taken place in both tail tissue and scale damaged areas. No fish were found in the second cage which was set in position in July. This cage had no growth on the meshes whereas the first cage was

covered in Ascidians (sea squirts) which harboured many small crustaceans including shrimp, isopods and small crabs. This may be the reason for fish surviving in the first cage in a good condition even although additional food had not be provided since 9 September.

Using the "Salar" on Wednesday 19 November the 4 cages were lifted and landed on the pier at Gairloch.

The cages were dismantled and the nets cleaned on Thursday 20 November. With the Harbour Master's permission they remained there until the Laboratory lorry uplifted them during the week starting the 8 December.

The staff returned to Aberdeen on Friday 21 November.

J Main

21 January 1987