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A short preliminary report on the Research Survey A5-2015

Pelagic fish off W- S- and SE-Iceland and the western Norwegian Sea 29 April - 22 May 2015

Part of the joint Northeast Atlantic Pelagic Ecosystem Surveys in 2015 (see ICES WGIPS report, January 2016)

Vessel: R/V Arni Fridriksson, TFNA (Iceland)
Captain: Guðmundur Bjarnason
Cruise leaders: Sveinn Sveinbjörnsson (first part) and Guðmundur J. Óskarsson (latter part)

In order to assess blue whiting concentrations west and south of Iceland, the survey began on 29 April at the shelf edge west of Iceland and from there continued south at and on either side of the shelf break to the Reykjanes Ridge (Figure 1). South of the Reykjanes promontory (SW-Iceland) the general course was eastwards, running along and just off and in over the outer shelf. From SE-Iceland and onwards, starting at 62°30N, the survey area was covered with E/W transects spaced at fixed interval of 36 nmi. From the end of first E/W transect, the vessel sailed to Fuglefjord in the Faroese for taking on fuel. After nearly two days intermission because of bad weather etc, the vessel was back on the second transect, where the survey continued westwards. During the following days, it was continued northwards along the E/W transects. The western boundary of the transects ranged from 13°W to 8°W. Thus, the survey went well into the cold waters of the East Icelandic Current. The northernmost transect taken was at 70°40 N, in Jan Mayen EEZ. The final hydrographic station was taken on 21 May. After that the vessel headed towards Reykjavik and was in the harbour on 22 May. The total distance covered during these 24 days was around 4633 nautical miles, where around 4021 nautical miles were undertaken on the survey area

The main results of this survey were that one year old, as well as two years old, blue whiting were recorded in considerable amount along the continental shelf west, south and southeast off Iceland. Weak scattered registrations of mixed blue whiting were also observed in the Jan Mayen EEZ and the International waters. The distribution of Norwegian spring-spawning herring was similar as in last year, even if the density and therefore the abundance was less. The highest density was on the eastern part of the transects within Icelandic EEZ but the western boundary of the distribution were around 13°W. The preliminary estimate of the total amount of herring measured acoustically in the whole survey area was 845 thousands tons. Around 750 thousands tons were within Icelandic waters, 17 thousands tons in international waters, 54 thousands tons in Jan Mayen waters, and 23 thousands tons in Faroese waters. The fish-, hydrographical- and ecological data from this survey will be combined with data from other nations that participate in this International survey for more thoroughly analyses and the results will be presented within ICES.

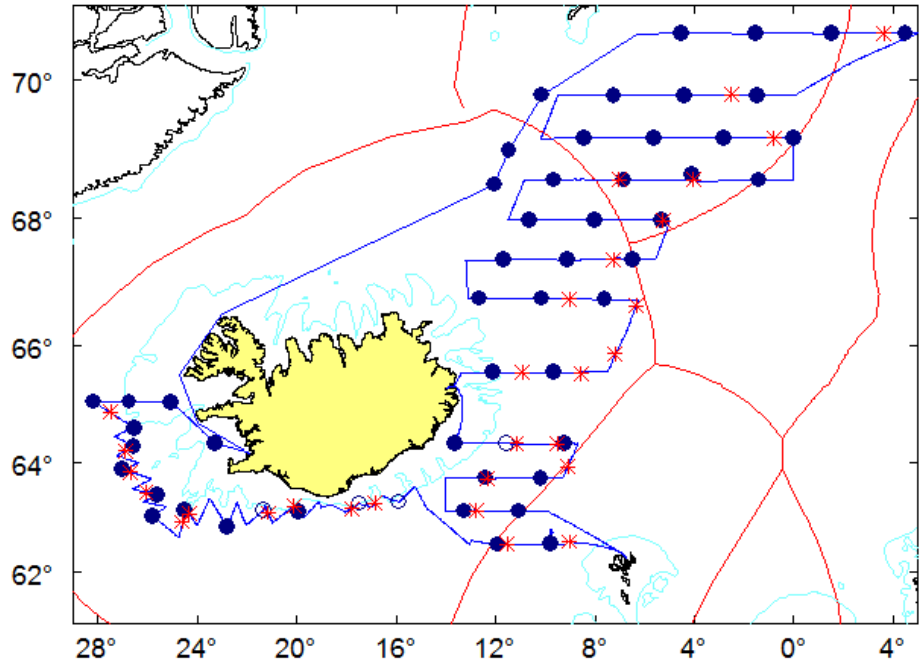

Figure 1. The survey track and locations of hydrographical (CTD) and plankton nets (WP2) (open blue circles), hydrographical only (filled blue circles), and trawl stations (red stars) taken in the May survey 2015 by RV Árni Friðriksson.