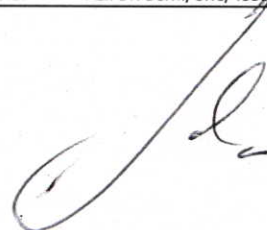


Survey Report
FRV Walther Herwig III, WH 428
08 July to 03 August 2019

IBTS and GSBTS

Chief scientist: Dr. Matthias Bernreuther



Summary

Survey WH 428 covered fisheries research representing the German contribution to the International Bottom Trawl Survey (IBTS) in quarter 3, as well as one component of the two-ship operation in the German Small-scale Bottom Trawl Survey (GSBTS). Both surveys use the same principle fishing methods but at different spatial scales, applying a GOV otter board trawl. A large subset of the fishing hauls is accompanied by hydrographic measurements and investigations of benthic epifauna, infauna and sediments. Bycatch of marine litter in the GOV is reported.

The GSBTS is a national program to monitor small-scale variability as well as long term changes in demersal fish assemblages in relation to physical and biological habitat characteristics. In order to fully cover the international IBTS programme, the GSBTS component of the survey (boxes B and D') had to be reduced due to time constraints.

The survey started on 08 July 2019 in Bremerhaven, starting with the IBTS on 09 July. Due to technical problems, 'Walther Herwig III' returned to Bremerhaven on 20 July. After resolving these problems, the survey continued on 23 July and the remaining program was successfully completed on 02 August. The 'Walther Herwig III' returned to Bremerhaven on 03 August 2019.

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***Cruise acronym:**

31.01.2018, 19.07.-15.08.2018, Jnr. 18/1927

Number of stations sampled during WH 428

	Hauls GOV	CTD casts (total)	Hauls 2-m beam trawl	Van Veen sediment grab**
IBTS	31*	31	30	85
Box A	21	17	10	21
Box C	19	16	9	20
Box L	19	18	8	18
Box M	24	16	9	18
total	110	93	66	162

*) Includes 28 hauls in the wider German Bight, and 1 each in "Boxes" A, C, L, and M; see map.

**) Sediment samples from all stations in this column, infauna for selected areas.

Box B and Box D/D' were not sampled in 2019, due to time constraints.

Methods

1. Bottom Trawl Survey (Thünen Institute of Sea Fisheries, TI-SF)

The qualitative and quantitative composition of the fish fauna caught in demersal hauls was analysed from a total of 110 GOV hauls for the IBTS and the GSBTS, respectively (survey track, see Fig. 1). Larger invertebrates of commercial interest were quantified as specified in the IBTS manual. In addition, other benthic macro-invertebrates from the by-catch of the GOV otter board trawl were analysed for IBTS stations, and for selected additional GSBTS stations. During all hauls, the GOV was equipped with Scanmar sensors to monitor net geometry as required for the IBTS and GSBTS surveys. Data from the IBTS hauls taken in the wider German Bight are to be combined with international data covering the entire North Sea for the assessment of commercially important fish stocks and for analyses on the non-commercial fish species. IBTS data have been uploaded to the ICES DATRAS system.

As agreed in the ICES IBTS Working Group, the German contribution to the 2019 Q3-IBTS was expanded by three rectangles in the southern North Sea (35F2 to 35F4; same extension since 2016). This addition supports an initiative of all survey partners to optimize the overall distribution of hauls over the area of the North Sea.

2. Hydrography (TI-SF)

A total of 93 hydrographic casts were performed with a Seabird CTD to record vertical profiles of temperature, salinity and oxygen concentration at the fishing stations. For a subset of stations, water samples for calibration of the oxygen probe were processed aboard through Winkler titration, and another subset of samples was taken to the laboratory in Bremerhaven for calibration of the salinity probe. Water samples from 33 casts were taken for the FishGenome-Project.

3. Epibenthos (Senckenberg Research Institute)

Epibenthos was sampled within ICES rectangles of the wider German Bight (27 rectangles of the regular German IBTS + 35F2-F4), as well as in the Boxes A, C, L and M, applying a 2m-beam trawl. Samples were sieved over 5-mm and 2-mm mesh. The 5-mm fraction was analysed aboard, the 2-mm fraction was preserved in 4-% formaldehyde for analysis in the laboratory ashore. Length-frequency measurements of the starfish *Asterias rubens* were taken in Box A.

4. Sediments, benthic infauna (Senckenberg Research Institute)

Investigations of epibenthos were accompanied by sampling of sediments using a 0.1-m² Van Veen grab. Additional grabs were taken to sample benthic infauna in the Boxes as well as in the ICES rectangles.

5. EU project FishGenome-Project (TI-FI, TI-SF)

During the WH428 survey samples were collected for the EU project FishGenome. Besides Spanish institutes, the Thünen Institutes of Sea Fisheries and Fisheries Ecology are involved in this project.

A total of 33 water and 33 sediment samples were taken from IBTS and GSBTS stations. Out of these samples so called environmental DNA (eDNA) will be extracted. With high-throughput sequencing and quantitative PCR methods the different fish species and – if possible – their relative abundance in the respective sampling areas will be determined by researchers of the Thünen Institute.

In addition, up to four tissue types of 275 cod and 109 hake were sampled. Extracted DNA from these tissues will be supplied to other partners of the FishGenome project and tested with further molecular genetic methods (Close-Kin Mark-Recapture and Epigenetic Age Determination).

By comparison with the net catches carried out in parallel, it will be tested whether it is possible, with the aid of the molecular genetic methods mentioned above, to supplement data collected by conventional fish surveys in terms of informative power. This analysis includes the evaluation of ship time as well as time and expertise or manpower needed for obtaining and processing the samples aboard.

During WH 428, the sampling of water and sediments could be conducted without additional ship time, because DNA samples could be obtained from routine samples. Fish sampling was conducted partly on regular IBTS or GSBTS stations (without additional ship time) and partly on five dedicated stations for genetic analyses. The latter amounted to a total of ca. 5 hours additional ship time. Processing of water samples aboard required one additional scientist, and support from a second person for the days of the dedicated trial stations for genetics.

Additional scientist and technician time required for the processing of fish samples was significant and turned out to involve two persons. Processing times per fish were between 5 and 10 minutes, depending on the number of different tissues sampled.

6. Marine litter (TI-SF)

Marine litter bycatch from the GOV hauls was reported according to the ICES standards on all fishing stations. Data have been prepared for uploading to the ICES database.

Survey schedule

The FRV 'Walther Herwig III' departed as planned on 08 July 2019 from Bremerhaven, Germany. On 09 July, the scientific program started with sampling for the IBTS, which continued until 16 July when the vessel sailed to the island of Helgoland for a planned exchange of two ship's crew members. The