## The Seasonal Distribution of Macroplankton as shown by Catches in the 2-metre Stramin Ring-trawl in Off-shore Waters off Plymouth.

F. S. Russell,

Naturalist at the Plymouth Laboratory.

In past years during the study of the vertical distribution of macroplankton much information has been obtained on the abundance of the different animals in the catches at different times of the year. Results have already been published to show the seasonal distribution of pelagic young fish (4), and also on the abundance and composition of the Sagitta population (5, p. 565). In this latter study the change over from the predominance of Sagitta elegans to that of S. setosa during the years 1930 to 1932 is striking. During the examination of catches it has been noticed that each year has been characterised at some time by the abundance of a species which may occur only in small numbers, if at all, in other years. This has been especially noticeable in the composition of the medusa population. It is necessary to follow these changes through a number of years to see if the presence of certain plankton organisms cannot be used as an index of conditions that may lead to other fluctuations such as those of the fisheries.

During 1930 and part of 1931 weekly catches of the 2-metre stramin ring-trawl were counted in order to obtain precise information on the seasonal abundance of the different animals throughout a whole year. The collections were made by oblique hauls of half an hour duration at the station 2 miles east of the Eddystone (4). Counts were made as on previous occasions by picking out directly distinctive and unusual animals and counting every animal in a roth sample of the remainder (2, p. 776).

The full results are given in the attached table which gives instructive information on the seasonal variation in abundance of the different animals, and their relative importance in numbers one to another. It seems unnecessary to analyse the tables further since any worker can abstract from it the data he may desire. One or two points must, however, be borne in mind.

1. The animals are all of a size that is normally retained in good condition by the stramin net. For instance, the medusæ are generally well-grown individuals; the earliest stages, while perhaps not small enough to pass through the meshes, are generally too badly damaged to allow of

definite identification. A useful indication of the size of disregarded medusæ is given by the absence of *Rathkea octopunctata* in Table I, which is common in tow-nettings in the earlier months of the year. This applies also to all other animal groups; the earliest stages of decapod larvæ do not appear in numbers in the catches as many will pass through the meshes.

In considering the seasonal distribution of any animal it must therefore be remembered that its first appearance in the catches does not imply the actual beginning of its abundance in the plankton. A period of two or three weeks should be allowed for the growth of the earliest stages to a size sufficient to appear in the catches.

- 2. The table does not contain any data on the abundance of young fishes which has been dealt with in another report (4).
- 3. In examining the data the vertical distribution of the various animals must be considered. The figures for *Tomopteris helgolandica* show, for instance, a great increase in July and August. This must only be regarded as an increase in abundance in the plankton; at other times the Tomopteris may actually be present in the area, but in the unsampled layers very near the bottom (see 3, from which data can be obtained for most of the animals).
- 4. The names given in the table are those used in the Plymouth Marine Fauna (1931). Phialidium sp. will be mostly Phialidium hemisphæricum: Phialella cymbaloides will also occur though not so commonly, as also a few Mitrocomella brownei. It was not possible in the time to analyse all the Decapod larvæ into species: the species that comprise each group can be found in the Plymouth Marine Fauna, where also in many cases is given the time of year at which the larval stages are most prevalent. Pandalid larvæ must be taken to include all species contained under Pandalidæ, Hippolytidæ, and Processidæ. Mysid sp. in summer consist chiefly of young specimens.
- 5. Examination of catches over a number of years has shown that there are species which can normally be expected to appear regularly each year. It is felt that these results are a fairly reliable picture of the average ringtrawl plankton catches to be found throughout any year. The following species, however, appeared in exceptional numbers and cannot be regarded as characteristic, but only for the year in question at the times they appeared:—

Aglantha rosea, Liriope exigua, and Stephanomia bijuga: Clione limacina and adult Meganyctiphanes norvegica also appeared in unusual numbers at the beginning of the year, although the larvæ of the latter are usually present then.

The results are to form a basis with which future years can be compared. Marked differences have been noticed in other years and it is hoped to publish these results in a separate report when sufficient data have been gathered. It should then be possible to decide on certain species whose appearance in the plankton should be watched for in future years. It is especially desirable to see whether any correlation can be found between the appearance of one characteristic species and that of another. The desirability of such observations was already stressed many years ago when Allen (1) prepared a list of species for special observation. Now that regular collections of these larger plankton animals are obtainable throughout the year an opportunity is afforded to attempt this study over a period of a number of years.

## REFERENCES.

- Allen, E. J. The Distribution of Marine Plankton. Journ. Mar. Biol. Assoc., N.S., Vol. IV, No. 4, pp. 408-409, 1897.
- Russell, F. S. The Vertical Distribution of Marine Macroplankton.
   An Observation on Diurnal Changes. *Ibid.*, Vol. XIII, No. 4, p. 769, 1925.
- 3. The Vertical Distribution of Marine Macroplankton. V. The Distribution of Animals caught in the Ring-trawl in the Daytime in the Plymouth Area. *Ibid.*, Vol. XIV, No. 3, pp. 557-608, 1927.
- 4. The Seasonal Abundance and Distribution of the Pelagic Young of Teleostean Fishes caught in the Ring-trawl in Offshore Waters in the Plymouth Area. *Ibid.*, Vol. XVI, No. 3, pp. 707-722, 1930.
- 5. On the Biology of Sagitta. IV. Observations on the Natural History of Sagitta elegans Verrill and Sagitta setosa J. Müller in the Plymouth Area. *Ibid.*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, pp. 559-574.

TABLE I.

Numbers of Animals in Half-hour Oblique Hauls with the 2-metre Stramin Ring-trawl taken 2 miles East of the Eddystone.

1000	•			Dipurena (Slabberia) halterata.	Steenstrupia nutans.	Bougainvillia sp.	Amphinems dinems.°	Leuckartiara octona.	Laodicea undulata.	Cosmetira pilosella.	Obelia sp.	Phishlidum sp.	Saphenia gracilis.	Aequorea forskalia	Aglantha rosea.	Liriope exigns.	Muggiaea atlantica.	Stephanomia bijuga. Chrystora isosceles.	Cyanea lamareki.	Aurelia aurita.	Pleurobrachia pileus.	Beroe oucumis.	Peachia arvæ.	Arachnactis larvæ.
1934 Feb.	υ. 4th														60						40	_		
	12th	•	•	_	_	_			_		_	_		_	52 2	_		880* -	_	_	80	_		_
**	19th	•	•	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_		_	_	7	Ξ	_		_	Ξ	3		_	_
,,	26th	•	•	_		_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	8	_	_	1 -	_	_	3	_	_	-
Mar.	5th		•	_	_	_	_	-	_	_	_	_	_	_	5	_	_		_	_	ő	2	_	_
,,	12th	·		_	_	_	_	_	_	_	• -	_	-	_	2	_	-	800* -	_	1+	1 <b>ŏ</b>	2	_	_
,,	19th	,		-		_	_	_		_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	210* -	-	- 1	8	_	_	_
,,	27th			_	_	_	_	-	-	_	_	_	_		-	_	_		_	_	6	_	_	_
April	2nd			_	_	_	_	_	_	· _	_	_	_		_		_				_	_	_	_
,,	llth			-	-	_	_	_	_	_	_	40	_	_	7	-	_	632* -	1		7			-
,,	16th			-	_	-		_	_	-	_	20	_	_	20	_	_	190* -	-	-	1	_	_	
71	24th			-	_	_	_	1	_	_	-	140	-	_	7		-	450* -	6		-	_	-	10
,1	29th			10	_	-		3	10	330	_	140	40	-	10	_	-	<b>370*</b> 1	1	-	10		-	_
May	7th			1		_	_	8	24	10	_	386	_	_		-	_	- <b>-</b>	2		193	_	3	4
,,	15th			-	_	320	_	40	-	140	1,680	760	100	-	40	_	-	2,460* -	1	-	520	-	_	41
_,,	22nd			-	-	150	_	93	5	5	40	100	10		90	2	_	760* ~	1	_	520	_	1	-
June	10th			-	-	60	10	430	_	_	80	50	11		850	-	-			-	100	-	_	5
,,	19th			-	1	- <del>-</del>	10	179	10		260	140	1	_	1,000	1	_	<del>.</del>	3	-	68	-	20	1 2
*5	26th	•	•	-	60	261	-	280	20	250	1,025	1,340	1	-	5,736	7	_	1,640* -	1	-	180	_	2	2

July 4th  "9th "14th "23rd "29th Aug. 7th "14th "21st "28th Sept. 3rd "16th "16th "16th "14th "16th "14th "14th "16th "12th "14th "16th "13th		20	120	161	1,110 330 990 - 1 - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -	129 270 180 60 150 44 92 21 53 77 18 3	300 500 3,240 9,800 4,160 2,310	180 600 180 1,530 870 	800 43,800 24,540 1,080 810 330 160 - - 80 100 30 - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -	920 3,780 2,970 5,790 3,750 1,620 3,240 2,540 180 4,300 100 640 60 340 510 20 20 10 100 20	90 90 150 - 40 28 20 80	1	1,932 6,150 11,040 28,440 23,040 40,020 8,360 3,540 1,080 50 20 	1 	- - - 20 20 20 - 30 20 - - 20 - 50 10 10 - 20	30	1	2 3	1	80 	20 120 30 21 39 26 137 33 8 33 4 4 	4 15 94 127 35 	
,, 22nd  1931. Jan. Ist ,, 5th ,, 15th ,, 22nd ,, 28th Feb. 6th ,, 12th ,, 20th ,, 23rd ;Mar.17th ,, 26th April 1st ,, 16th	 Possí	- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -		- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -	- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -	- - - 1 20 2 10 2	- - - - - - - - 30	- - - - - - - 20 660		- 2 70 30 - 30 10 80 1,820 4,520 220 12,120 y countd	- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -			310 230 970 104 10 - - 2 - - - - * Nec	10  130 170 1,166 130 10 30 - 30 - 180 20 - tophores			- - - - - 20 16 3 23	- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -	- - - - - - - - 20 40	- - - - - - - - - - -		

## TABLE I-continued.

			Tomopteris helgolandica.	Terebellid larvæ.	Pocilochætus serpens larvæ.	Sagitta elegans.	Sagitta setoss.	Calanus finmarchicus.	Euchæta hebes.	Metridia lucens.	Candacia armata.	Anomalocera patersoni.	Labidocera wollastoni.	Caligus sp.	Mysid sp.	Nyctiphanes couchii adult.	Euphausiid larvæ.	Meganyctiphanes norvegica.	Apherusa sp.	Hyperia galba.	Themisto gracilipes.	Idotea sp.	Cumacea.
1930						11.000		1.000			20				100	4,218		150			112	_	
Feb.	4th 12th	•	140	2	_	11,360	130	1,200 540 1,280 580	_	-	20	-	_	-	-	4,210	380	190	_	_	112	_	_
"	12th	•	770 251	_		16,270 10,411	389	1 990	_		60	_	_	ì	_	20	300	_	_	_	1	_	_
**	26th	٠	3	_	_	452	110	1,200 580	_	_		_	_	-	_	20	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
Mar.	5th	•	165	_	_	1,517	93	450	_	_	_		_	_	_	4	_	_	_		1	_	-
31	12th		33	_	_	455	5	260	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_	_
,,	19th	:	_	_		8	_		_	_			_	1	_	_	_	_	-			_	_
**	27th		3	_	_	1,860	_	<b>420</b>		-	_	_	_	2		2		_	_	_	_	-	
Ápril	2nd		_	_	_	24	1	10	_	_	_	38	_	1	_	_			_	_	1	_	-
,,,	llth		3	↔	-	240	-	440	_	60	_	-	-	1	_	2	_	_		-		-	-
**	16th		_	_	_	21	_	16,890 7,630	~	70	60	30	-	1		1	310	1	-	_	_	-	
33	24th		_	_	10	860	_	7,630	_	_	510	-	-	1	_	-	1,140	_	_	-	130	-	_
	29th		_	_	· –	39	- 1	960	-	60	80	-	-	-	_	1	540	_	-	-	2	-	-
Йау	7th		7	386	-	77	2	318,450 24,720	-	193	772	_	-	-	_	2	2,702	-	-	-	-	3	-
11	15th	٠	10	60	_	243	7	24,720	-	80	260	_	-	-	-	-	580	-	_	-		-	-
_,,	22nd		10	-	- <del>-</del>	101	-	11,210	_	-	50	20	_	I		-	450	_	-	-	_	-	_
June			63	_	110	1,324	-	1,968	-	-	200	4	_	l	1	4	40	-	-	_	-	-	-
"	19th		25			637	6	6,592	-		220	22	-	2	_	_	20	_		5		_	-
_11	26th	•	95	_	-	760	-	3,560	_	40	320	13	-	2	2	-	40	-	20	_	20	-	-
July	4th	•	10	_	-	2,218	_	2,023	-	-	200	62	-	2	2	-	-	-	20	-	į	-	_
,,	9th		664		-	4,377	8	6,132	-	-	2,160	60	_	2	360	-		_	60	-	1	_	-
1)	14th	•	741	-	-	3,942	4	8,370	_		930	Ţ			152	_	30	_	HEA.	-	-	-	-
1)	23rd	•	759	-	30	2,142	10	2,910	-	30	1,860	10	-	2	60	8	30	_	750	-		-	-
**	29th		376	-	-	1,423	12	1,007	-	30	270	-	-	4	6	-	-	-	240	-	1	-	-

,, 14th ,, 21st ,, 28th Sept. 3rd ,, 11th ,, 16th ,, 24th Oct. 1st ,, 7th ,, 14th ,, 16th Nov. 6th ,, 13th ,, 26th ,, 26th ,, 26th	. 1,602 . 222 . 42 . 179 26 . 4 . 8 3 1 	1* 1† 1° 1***	            	7,800 5,210 2,038 1,018 1,222 4,398 558 270 102 74 303 229 441 159 32 61 730 360	36 5 - 47   760 46 87 45 369 683 258 300 120 73 84 1,080 162	2,730 1,041 803 402 363 612 233 35 70 263 — 118 — 99 7 14			450 220 80 140 560 40 20 30 150 10 40 20 40	1 3 1 53 - - 10 - - -	10	5 8 4 1 - 7 - 1 1 2 - 1 - 1 1 1	94 17 - 20 - - 1 1	102	140 20 - 20 - 7 - - - 10 - - - 121		30 200 240 140 360 100 	- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -	1 1 21 22 3 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 1 2 1 1 2 1 1 2 1 1 2 1 1 2 1 1 2 1 1 2 1 1 2 1 1 2 1 1 2 1 1 2 1 1 1 2 1 1 1 1	20‡
,, 17th		-	-	262 72	$\begin{array}{c} 372 \\ 78 \end{array}$	169 98	_	_	70 90	-	-	-	<del>-</del>	_	$\frac{30}{10}$	_	• -	_	1 -	_
,, 22nd		_	-	12	78	90	_	_	90	_	_	_	_	_	10	_	_			
1931. Jan. 1st	1			. 210	249	90	_	_	60	_	_	2	_	_	_	_	-	_		-
54h	. 1		_	109	59	20 80	10	_	120	_	_	ĩ	_	_	10		_	_		_
15+1	$\frac{1}{1}$	_	_	1,765	339	190		_	150	_	_	_	10	3		_	_	_		_
99-4	: -	_	_	172	270	56	_	_	20	_	_	1	_	_	8	-	-	_	- <b>-</b>	-
,, 26th	: -		_	117	101	19	10	_	20	_	_	_	_	_	7	_		-		-
Feb. 6th		_	_	51	2	_	_	_	20	_	_	_	-	_		-	-	-		-
,, 12th		_	_	83	17	40	_	_	10	_	_	1	-	_	-	-	-	_		~
,, 20th		_	_	816	239	446	_		220	_	_	1	-	-	_	_	_	-		-
$_{,,}$ 23rd		-		474	134	343	-	_	420	-	_	1			20					
Mar. 17th	. 7			7,502	221							_		36		R	est of sar	nple	not co	unted
,, 26th	. 25	321††		491	333	110			50	-	_	3	_	_	_	_	_	_		_
April 1st		60	-	935	1,048	320	_	_	220	-	-	_	-	_	-	-	40	-		_
", 16th	. 30	200	-	764	385	1,260	-	_	180	-	-	1	. –	_	_	-	40	_		_

<sup>\*</sup> Young Syllid. † Glycera. ‡ Gravel in catch, near bottom. || 1 S. serratodendata. ° 1 large polychate, fair amount of gravel. \*\* 1 Autolytus. †† I Autolytus.

## TABLE I—continued.

1930.	Leander sp. larvæ.		Alphæid larvæ.	Crangonid larvæ.	Pontophilus spinosus larvæ,	Homarus vulgaris larvæ.	Phyllosoma larvæ.	Galatheid larvæ,	Galatheid post-larvæ.	Upogebia sp. larvæ.	Upogebia sp. post-larvæ.	Callianassa subterranea larvæ.	Axius styrhinchus larvæ.	Pagurid larvæ.	Pagurid glaucothoë larvæ.	Porcellana sp. zoea.	Porcellana sp. post-larvæ.	Ebalia sp. zoea.	Ebalia sp. megalopa.	Crab zoea.	Crab megalopa.	Squilla sp. larvæ.	Larval gastropoda.	Echinospira larvæ.	Limacina retroversa.	Clione limacina.	Cephalopod young.	Young starfish.	Oikopleura.	Tornaria larvæ.	Fish eggs.	Total.
Feb. 4th  " 12th  " 12th  " 12th  " 26th  " 12th  " 12th  " 17th  " 27th  April 2nd  " 16th  " 24th  " 24th  " 22th  " 25th  " 25th  " 25th  " 16th  " 24th  " 14th  " 14th  " 14th  " 23rd  " 23rd  " 23rd  " 23rd  " 23rd	2 31 355 3	10 		200 40 20 50 60 390 90 40 80 250 100 220 240 320 20 120 240 390 90			5 11 3 3 - 2 78 2	20 -40 100 90 10 140 -160 870 300 330 737 7540 ,540 ,020 ,020 ,130 ,737 ,730 ,390 540			30	10 		20 40 40 470 20 580 10 480 260 110 - 440 1540 860 860 140 1,560 360 1,710 750			120		11111		110 650 61* 386 550 400 120 140 180 900 1,230 2,280 1,500			10 20		3 17 10 5 2 1 	1 1 1 1 1 1 4				20 160 110 - 4,020 2,500 5,620 2,750 4,590 740 3,850 800 900 1,737 860 190 350 300 1,120 120 120 30 30	17,787 19,280 13,792 3,844 11,888 4,041 23,177 13,799 5,987 2,445 26,945 26,945 26,945 27,671 19,291 16,696 37,052 13,830 96,342 105,037 85,176 48,554

Aug. 7th	11 1 2 7 10 1 1 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7	330 600 160 100 320 40 30 	- 12 23 - 2 - 2 1 2 7 - 3 - -	120 80 80 60 160 - 10 - 30 - - 10 10 10		51 - 52	2,160 980 80 140 60 20 	3,210 1,180 140 1,160 80 40 30 50  20 50 190  	655-11-11-11-11-11-11-11-11-11-11-11-11-1	1,740 360 300 880 1,380 280 160 20 		1,230 1,080 80 360 380 160 60 10 50 20 10 30 - - 120 20	1 21 2 41	810 2,840 440 940 120 140 - 300 60 170 210 440 10 - -	100 - 120 60 - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -	180 20	30 40 	8,880 2,620 580 3,220 1,840 360 470 900 250 210 440 60 30 10 70 40 20	1,650 980 400 680 540 100 40 80 30 40 20 20 10 	30 5 - 10 2 1	† 1 40 		660 480	- 3 - 9 - 4 - 3 - 1 - 2 1 - 1 1 	60 42 11 45 90 51 167 2 3 62 - 10		210	120 60 	76,736 56,739 36,010 26,397 30,658 21,879 7,587 7,369 2,196 2,930 6,316 4,044 2,528 1,832 2,070 1,180 3,274 2,185 1,958
1931. Jan. 1st , 5th , 15th , 22nd , 25th Feb. 6th , 12th , 20th , 23rd , 26th April 1st , 16th	 1111111111	10 10 - - 30 - 80 140		10 20 20 60	- - - - 20 10 10	111111111	10 - 50 - 90 810 750 90 80 200	10			1111111111	90 70 80 30 50 20 90 260 710 40 600 1,460		360		1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1		90 210 80 140 80 370 240 6,840 7,170 4,840 14,480	20 10 10 - - - 30 90 10 20 140	1111111111	1111111111	1111111111				60 40 590 110 70 50 110		90 100 1,270 1,300 640 910 530 7,140 7,090 780 80 1,040	1,342 1,220 6,704 2,451 1,134 1,563 1,182 16,973 17,354 17,354 18,368 31,683

<sup>\*</sup> I small & pea crab.

<sup>†</sup> Pilchard.