UNIVERSITÉ DE NANTES UFR SCIENCES ET TECHNIQUES

ÉCOLE DOCTORALE VENAM

Année 2011

Identification et caractérisation des frayères

hivernales en Manche Orientale et la partie

sud de la mer du Nord

Identification des œufs de poissons, cartographie et modélisation des habitats de ponte

THÈSE DE DOCTORAT

Discipline : Biologie des populations et écologie Spécialité : Écologie marine

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Soutenue le 20 décembre 2010, devant le jury ci-dessous :

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Résumé

En raison de la fragilité actuelle de certains stocks de poissons, les zones de ponte sont considérées comme des « habitats essentiels », et leur étude est devenue importante. Une meilleure connaissance des frayères des principaux poissons commerciaux de la mer du Nord semble nécessaire pour leur surveillance.

La collecte des œufs de poissons est réalisée au moyen du CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler). La composition en espèces et l'abondance des œufs collectés sont comparées à celles du VET (Vertical Egg Trawl) permettant ainsi de prouver l'efficacité du CUFES en Manche et mer du Nord en hiver. L'identification des œufs de poissons se fait principalement sous loupe binoculaire sur des critères morphologiques. Cependant, l'identification visuelle n'est pas toujours fiable. En effet, certaines espèces comme la morue (Gadus morhua), le merlan (Merlangius merlangus) ou encore le flet (Platichthys flesus) et la limande (Limanda limanda) ont la même gamme de taille et des morphologies très proches, ainsi des méthodes alternatives ont été développées. Premièrement, la technique PCR-RFLP sur le gène mitochondrial du cytochrome b a permis de différencier les œufs de morue, de merlan et d'églefin et des trois espèces de motelle. De plus, cette même technique a aussi été utilisée sur le gène de l'ARN 16S pour distinguer les œufs de limande, de flet et de tacauds. De plus, le développement d'un nouveau système d'analyse d'images, le ZooScan, capable d'obtenir des images haute résolution du zooplancton, a été utilisé afin d'identifier les œufs de poissons de façon automatisée via des algorithmes d'apprentissage supervisé. Le ZooScan peut ainsi identifier les œufs de morue, de merlan, de plie (Pleuronectes platessa) et de balai (Hipoglossoides platessoides) mais rencontre des difficultés pour distinguer les œufs de limande et de flet. En effet, le ZooScan ne distingue pas les globules huileux des motelles et de la sole (Solea solea).

Des cartes annuelles des frayères hivernales ont été réalisées et comparées entre elles afin de déterminer des zones de ponte récurrentes, occasionnelles et non favorables. Les œufs sont généralement largement distribués sur la zone d'étude, à l'exception de la zone Nord-Ouest de la mer du Nord, près des côtes écossaises. Des zones de pontes importantes semblent être localisées près des côtes belges, hollandaises et danoises. Enfin, l'habitat de ponte des poissons a été modélisé en utilisant les méthodes GLM (Modèle Linéaire Généralisé) et RQ (Régression Quantile) en fonction des paramètres environnementaux disponibles tels la température, la salinité, la concentration en chlorophylle a, la profondeur, la tension de cisaillement et le type sédimentaire afin de caractériser les habitas de ponte et d'en prédire la distribution. Les résultats de cette étude multidisciplinaire ont permis d'améliorer les connaissances sur les frayères hivernales en Manche Orientale et sud mer du Nord et ont été discutés dans une perspective de protection et de conservation de ces zones.

Mots clés : œufs de poissons, CUFES, VET, PCR-RFLP, cyt *b*, 16S, ZooScan, analyse d'images, analyses géostatistiques, interpolation, modélisation d'habitat, GLM, RQ.

Abstract

Due to the current fragility of some fish stocks, marine spawning grounds are considered as "essential habitats", and their study has become important. A better knowledge and monitoring of principal commercial fish spawning grounds have become necessary in the North Sea.

Over the 2006-2009 winters, Fish eggs' sampling was performed by CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler) and covered all the southern half of the North Sea and part of the Eastern English Channel. The taxonomic composition and abundance of eggs were compared to that of VET (Vertical Egg Trawl) samples and reflected the efficiency of CUFES to sample pelagic fish eggs in this region and over the winter season.

Fish egg taxonomic identification based on morphological criteria cannot always be carried out effectively due to both important similarities between some species and time constraint. In particular, cod (*Gadus morhua*) and whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*), or flounder (*Platichthys flesus*) and dab (*Limanda limanda*) have the same range of egg diameter and similar morphologies. Alternative identification methods using molecular techniques were developed to improve the accuracy of egg taxonomic identification. First, PCR-RFLP method on a cytochrome *b* gene was specifically adapted to identify formalin-fixed eggs of cod, whiting, haddock, (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*) and three rockling species. In addition, PCR-RFLP on ARN 16S gene was also used to identify fish eggs of dab, flounder and three *Trisopterus* species. In order to accelerate egg identification, the use of a new laboratory imaging system, the ZooScan, able to produce high resolution images of zooplankton samples, was adapted to fish eggs and allowed their automated identification using supervised learning algorithms. ZooScan could identify cod, whiting, plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*) and Americain plaice (*Hipoglossoides platessoides*) eggs but had difficulties distinguishing between those of founder or dab. Moreover, the ZooScan failed to reliably detect the oil globule characteristics of rockling species and common sole (*Solea solea*).

The location of winter spawning grounds of fish in the Southern North Sea and the Eastern Channel was illustrated using yearly maps and analysed over the available period to define recurrent, occasional and unfavourable spawning areas. Generally, fish eggs were found over most of the study area but the western part of the North Sea, near the Scottish coast. Important spawning areas were clearly localised along the Belgian, Dutch and Danish coasts within the southern and German bights.

Habitat modelling of these fish spawning areas was carried out using both GLM (Generalised Linear Model) and QR (Quantile Regression) and associating egg abundance to physical conditions such as temperature, salinity, bedstress, chlorophyll *a* concentration and bottom sediment types to characterise spawning habitat conditions and predict their extent and location. The results of this approach improved the understanding of spawning grounds' distribution and were discussed in the context of the protection and conservation of critical spawning grounds.

Keywords: fish eggs, CUFES, VET, image analysis, ZooScan, PCR-RFLP, geostatistical analyses, interpolated map, habitat modelling, GLM, RQ.

Cette étude a débuté il y a quatre ans et demi lors de mon stage de Master 2 recherche au sein du laboratoire Ressources Halieutiques de l'Ifremer-Boulogne sur Mer. Le sujet de mes travaux était l'identification des œufs de poissons en mer du Nord. Dans la continuité de ce stage, j'ai réalisé divers contrats toujours sur le même thème, notamment au sein du LIMUL (Laboratoire d'Ichtyoécologie marine de l'Université du Littoral, Boulogne sur Mer). Cependant, et avant même de commencer la présentation de mon travail, il me tient à cœur de remercier certaines personnes.

Mes premiers remerciements vont tout d'abord aux personnes qui m'ont encadré durant ces trois années de doctorat, et tout particulièrement à ma responsable scientifique Dr Sandrine Vaz qui a été l'instigatrice de ce sujet de thèse. Elle a su me guider tout au long de ce travail. Je me souviens de ces petites phrases fétiches : « Faire et refaire c'est toujours travailler » ou encore « Tu n'as jamais était aussi près de la fin ».

Je remercie également le Dr Véronique Berrez-Bagnis d'avoir accepté d'encadrer ce travail de thèse sans me connaître initialement. Merci de m'avoir si bien accueillie dans son bureau lors de mon séjour de six mois au sein de l'Ifremer de Nantes. Merci par ailleurs à M. Jean-Luc Vallet, responsable du Département Sciences et Technique (STAM) devenu depuis le laboratoire STBM (Science et Technologie de la Biomasse Marine), sous la responsabilité de M. Jean-Pascal Bergé, intégré au département BRM (Biotechnologies et Ressources Marines) dirigé par M. Patrick Durand. Merci à M. Lucay Han-Ching, directeur du centre Ifremer de Nantes. Ce séjour m'a notamment permis de me familiariser avec les analyses moléculaires (différentes méthodes d'extraction d'ADN, amplification par PCR, électrophorèse et restriction par RFLP) et je remercie aussi pour cela M. Marc Jérôme qui m'a encadré dans mes débuts au laboratoire. Ce séjour à l'Ifremer de Nantes, me restera longtemps en mémoire. Il m'a appris qu'il faut faire des sauvegardes régulièrement : « Tout le monde le sait mais personne ne le fait !!! » Sandrine, merci de m'avoir encadré au quotidien durant ces trois années (et auparavant). Merci pour ta disponibilité tout au long de cette thèse et surtout par ces derniers mois qui furent les plus difficiles. Merci de m'avoir transmis une partie de tes connaissances sur les analyses géostatistiques, la cartographie et la modélisation d'habitat.

Merci à toi Elvire de m'avoir encadré dans la partie analyse d'images avec le ZooScan. Merci pour ton aide et tes remarques qui ont contribué à la réussite de cette thèse. J'espère que ce travail sera le point de départ de futures analyses en ichtyoplancton au sein du pôle zooplancton de l'Ifremer de Boulogne sur Mer.

Merci à Grégory Maes et Clive Fox, d'avoir accepté de faire partie de mon comité de thèse et de m'avoir suivie tout au long de ce projet. Je les remercie pour leurs conseils avisés et leurs critiques constructives qui m'ont fait réfléchir et m'ont permis d'avancer. Merci Clive de m'avoir intégrée au Planning Group PGEGGS, et de m'avoir accueillie lors de mon séjour au laboratoire SAMS (Scottish Association for Marine Science) dont je tiens à remercier le directeur, le Pr. Laurence David Mee.

Je tiens ensuite à remercier les personnes qui ont accepté de lire et de critiquer ce travail de thèse. Merci au Pr. Joël Fleurence d'avoir accepté d'être le président du jury de thèse. Merci au Pr. Filip Volckaert et au Dr Geneviève Lacroix d'avoir accepté d'être rapporteurs de ce travail de thèse. J'espère qu'ils auront eu plaisir à lire ce manuscrit.

Merci à toi André, de m'avoir accueillie au sein de ton équipe, tout d'abord en ta qualité de chef du laboratoire Ressources Halieutiques de Boulogne sur Mer puis en tant que chef du département halieutique. Merci à Jean Paul Delpech, qui a été chef du laboratoire Ressources Halieutiques pendant une année et qui m'a accueilli quelques temps dans son bureau lors du jeu « des chaises musicales » qui a eu lieu au sein du laboratoire. Je tiens également à remercier Marc Morel et Dominique Godefroy, tous deux directeurs du centre Manche-Mer du Nord de Boulogne sur Mer pour m'avoir accueillie et permis de réaliser ma thèse au sein de leurs locaux. Enfin, je remercie également, pour leur accueil avant mon départ pour Nantes, les collègues du bassin d'essai. Je remercie les financeurs de la thèse, d'une part la région Nord-Pas de Calais et d'autre part l'Ifremer, sans qui ce travail de thèse n'aurait jamais pu avoir lieu. Je n'oublie pas non plus le programme Encora, Young Professionals Exchange Program (YPEP) qui m'a aidé financièrement pour mon séjour en Ecosse, sans oublier la mairie de Saint Martin lès Boulogne.

Merci également à toutes les personnes de l'Ifremer de Boulogne sur Mer qu'il m'a été donné de rencontrer et avec qui j'ai eu le plaisir de travailler. Merci à Franck pour tous tes conseils informatiques. Merci à Yves, chef de mission de la campagne IBTS, sans qui je n'aurais jamais eu « autant » d'échantillons, mais aussi pour les nounours du jeudi. Merci aux commandants et à tous les équipages des navires Thalassa et Gwen drez. Merci à Sylvie, la « femme de ménage » qui tous les matins et soirs me disait un petit mot d'encouragement pour la journée, qui fût parfois longue.

Je n'oublie pas non plus les nombreux stagiaires qui se sont succédés à Nantes pour les analyses en biologie moléculaire : Steeve Comeau (pour la faisabilité de l'étude), Grégory Allain (qui a travaillé sur le groupe des motelles sp.), Mathilde Couly et Clémence Vachon (qui ont travaillé sur le groupe merlan, morue, églefin) et Calivany Sachidhanandam (qui a travaillé sur le groupe limande, flet, tacaud sp.), mais aussi Antonin Schmitz qui a travaillé sur la faisabilité de l'identification des œufs de poissons par le ZooScan, ou encore Anaïs Boussemaere qui a trié et identifié une partie des échantillons de l'IBTS 2009 et qui m'a ainsi rendu un grand service.

Merci à toutes les personnes qui m'ont aidé et soutenu de prés ou de loin dans ce travail, mes amis, pour la sympathie et le soutien dont ils ont fait preuve à mon égard durant ces années et surtout sur la fin.

Enfin, je voudrais remercier mes parents, qui m'ont toujours poussée dans mes études. Qu'ils trouvent dans ce manuscrit le témoignage de ma reconnaissance. Merci de m'avoir soutenue, parfois de m'avoir 'supportée' dans les moments difficiles, mais surtout d'avoir toujours cru en moi durant toutes ces années. Merci également de m'avoir inculqué les valeurs du courage, du travail, de la persévérance. Maman dit toujours : « Quand on veut, on peut ». Ce sont ces valeurs qui m'ont permis de mener à bien ce projet de thèse. Ainsi cette thèse représente une revanche envers ceux qui ne croyaient pas en mes capacités. Merci à toute ma famille qui m'a soutenue lors de mes séjours à Nantes ou en Ecosse, par leurs visites, coups de téléphone ou petits messages sur Internet...

Enfin je voudrais remercier une personne très importante pour moi. Matthieu, tu as su me soutenir dans les moments difficiles que nous avons pu traverser : Stress, fatigue, indisponibilité, éloignement. Tu as accepté tous mes déplacements (Nantes, Ecosse sans oublier les campagnes en mer). Ce n'est qu'un simple mot mais MERCI ! Et maintenant, l'avenir est à nous... Tables des matières

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Cette introduction générale, présente l'enjeu de cette étude. Par un état de l'art de l'étude des frayères, nous comprendrons la nécessité d'étudier les zones de ponte en Manche Orientale et la partie sud de la mer du Nord. Pourquoi l'étude des œufs de poisson est-elle importante ? Où sont situées les frayères hivernales en Manche Orientale et dans la partie sud de la mer du Nord ? Quelles espèces pondent dans la zone d'étude ? Quels sont les paramètres environnementaux qui interviennent dans le choix des frayères ? En quoi cette étude peut-elle aider dans l'analyse de la dynamique des populations ? L'aide à la gestion et la protection spatialisées des frayères sont les enjeux auxquels je vais essayer de répondre dans ce travail de thèse. Une meilleure connaissance des frayères hivernales permettra une gestion durable des stocks des principales espèces commerciales exploitées en Manche Orientale et dans la partie sud de la mer du Nord.

Pourquoi cette étude ?

Le détroit du Pas-de-Calais, à la jonction entre la Manche et la mer du Nord est un couloir étroit supportant un trafic maritime important. Cette zone d'étude constitue une des zones les plus riches du monde du point de vue écologique et de la pêche commerciale, autant en nombre de poissons qu'en richesse spécifique. Les pêcheries allant de la Manche Orientale à la mer du Nord concernent de nombreux pays riverains : France, Grande-Bretagne, Belgique, Allemagne, Pays-Bas, *etc.* Ces pêcheries ont été largement surexploitées (Greenstreet *et al.*, 1999 ; Daan, 2005 ; Kjærsgaard, 2009) ayant fait chuter les populations. En effet, les stocks de nombreuses espèces commerciales de poissons comme le hareng (*Clupea harengus*), le maquereau (*Scomber scombrus*) et la plie (*Pleuronectes platessa*) (ICES, 2005 a) ont été exploitées au-delà des limites acceptables, et certains stocks sont épuisés depuis les années 1960 (ICES, 2004). Sans oublier, la morue de mer du Nord qui connaît un effondrement de ses stocks depuis les années 70 (Pomaerede *et al.*, 2010) et qui, en 2007, a été classée comme espèce à risque par l'ICES (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea, ICES, 2007 a). De plus, la surpêche, a des effets importants sur la

structure des populations de poissons, des communautés benthiques et sur les interactions trophiques (Bergman *et al.*, 1996 ; Jennings et Kaiser, 1998).

De part cette surexploitation, on observe une diminution des individus âgés (principaux géniteurs) qui conduit à une exploitation essentiellement composée d'individus de premières classes d'âge, ce qui rend la pêche de plus en plus dépendante des fluctuations du recrutement de jeunes individus dans le stock et a donc un impact sur la stabilité démographique des populations de poissons. Le succès du recrutement est devenu un paramètre fondamental pour la gestion des pêches. Les frayères sont alors considérées comme des habitats sensibles, tant en termes de fonctionnement des écosystèmes et des activités de pêche.

Ainsi, la connaissance de l'état des stocks et des mécanismes qui régissent la distribution des poissons, est importante d'un point de vue fondamental et appliqué afin de permettre une meilleure utilisation, gestion et durabilité des pêcheries lorsque les espèces étudiées sont des ressources exploitées voire surexploitées (Loots, 2009).

Dans une optique de suivi de l'état des stocks, des campagnes scientifiques ont été, depuis de nombreuses années, mises en place dans le cadre du programme européen IBTS (International Bottom Trawl Survey) visant à évaluer au niveau communautaire les ressources halieutiques dans cette zone. Elles sont réalisées de manière coordonnée entre les différents acteurs au niveau des méthodes d'échantillonnage et de récolte de données (chalutages, filets, hydrologie). Dans le cadre de ce programme, l'Ifremer, organise chaque année depuis 1976 une campagne scientifique en janvier-février en Manche Orientale et dans le sud de la mer du Nord. Ce suivi annuel révèle des fluctuations notables, allant souvent de pair avec les fluctuations en terme d'impact des pêches (Greenstreet et al., 1999 ; Fraser et al., 2008) sur les dynamiques de populations et le recrutement conditionné par la politique commune des pêches évoluant d'année en année. Ainsi, un comité d'experts scientifiques lié à la cinquième conférence internationale sur la protection de la mer du Nord (ICES, 2003) a recommandé un suivi régulier des frayères d'espèces commerciales de poissons comme une approche écosystémique de la gestion de la pêche en mer du Nord. L'une des recommandations du groupe de travail Working Group Recruitment Processes (ICES Oceanography Committee, 2004) portait sur l'échantillonnage des oeufs de plie et de morue en mer du Nord par les navires participant à la campagne IBTS afin d'évaluer le stock reproducteur.

Le cycle de vie d'un poisson

Le cycle biologique de la plupart des poissons marins comprend quatre grandes périodes qui définissent l'état ontogénique de l'individu : embryon (oeuf), larve, juvénile et adulte. Une grande différence est constatée entre chaque phase, autant du point de vue de l'habitat que du comportement (planctonique pour les œufs et larves, nectonique pour les juvéniles et les adultes). Les besoins de l'espèce varient au cours de son développement et le passage de l'un à l'autre de ces états ontogéniques se traduit généralement par un changement plus ou moins marqué de comportement et de localisation dans une aire géographique plus ou moins large. Ce qui amène généralement à la recherche d'un biotope ou habitat spécifique, l'ensemble de ces habitats constituant la niche ontogénique de l'espèce. Si toutes les étapes sont évidemment indispensables à la réalisation complète du cycle biologique, certaines phases peuvent être critiques et déterminer le renouvellement de la population adulte (Lafargue, 2004). La phase oeuf est un élément essentiel du cycle de vie des poissons marins.



Figure 1: Cycle simplifié de la vie d'un poisson, divisé en 3 phases : œuf, larve et adulte. Les phases juvénile et sénescente ne sont pas représentées sur cette figure.

Nous allons principalement nous intéresser, dans cette étude, à la période embryogénique, où divers changements se déroulent : la prolifération des cellules, la différenciation en tissus et l'organisation des organes. La phase œuf représente une phase cruciale, représentant le point de départ de la vie d'un poisson (Fuiman et Wermer, 2002).

Les œufs de poissons

Les œufs et larves de poissons font partie de l'ichtyoplancton et sont donc souvent considérés comme des particules inertes, alors qu'ils sont des composants interactifs de l'écosystème. En effet, le plancton est constitué par l'ensemble des organismes qui flottent dans la mer, au grè des vagues et des courants.

Hempel (1979) a réalisé une rétrospective de l'étude des œufs de poissons dans laquelle il indique que G.O. Sars (1837-1927), fût le premier à mettre en évidence l'existence d'œufs de poissons pélagiques et démontra donc l'importance des courants de surface dans le transport des œufs. Il a également été le premier à émettre l'hypothèse que l'étude des œufs permettrait de comprendre les fluctuations de la pêche. Les principales études des premiers stades de vie datent des trente dernières années.

Si la plupart des poissons pondent des œufs pélagiques, (9000 espèces sur 12000; Mellinger, 1994) dans la colonne d'eau et qui s'accumulent près de la surface du fait de leur légère flottabilité (Sundby, 1991), d'autres cependant pondent des œufs benthiques, ce qui requiert les spécificités de substrat. Le tilapia du Nil (*Oreochromis niloticus niloticus*) pratique l'incubation buccale ou encore certains autres poissons, notamment les requins et les raies, donnent naissance à des petits entièrement formés ou produisent de très gros œufs dans lesquels les jeunes à l'éclosion sont entièrement formés. Dans notre étude, nous nous intéresserons principalement aux œufs pélagiques, qui flottent près de la surface.

Mellinger (1994) démontra que la flottabilité n'est pas due à la présence de globule huileux, (puisqu'ils ne sont pas présents dans les œufs de toutes les espèces à œufs pélagiques) mais serait due à l'hydratation pré-ovulatoire de l'ovocyte au moment de la reprise de la méiose. La flottabilité repose donc sur la composition du vitellus qui assure l'équilibre osmotique et la nutrition de l'embryon. Elle s'explique aussi par la faible concentration ionique par rapport à l'eau de mer. De plus, le fait que les oeufs soient situés près de la surface favorise l'accès à l'oxygène ce qui augmente les chances de survie. En effet, le besoin en oxygène augmente avec le développement de l'œuf (Hempel, 1979), ainsi une baisse en oxygène entraîne un retard dans le développement de l'embryon.

La période de ponte est généralement décrite pour beaucoup d'espèces de poissons (Munk et Nielsen, 2005). Cependant, ces derniers peuvent pondre plus tôt ou plus tard en fonction des changements environnementaux. Les poissons pondent plus tôt dans le sud des îles britanniques que dans le Nord. Ceci est principalement dû à une température de l'eau plus chaude au sud, les œufs rencontrent alors des conditions permettant une survie plus importante plus tôt dans la saison (Bakun, 1996).

Les oeufs de poissons subissent une très grosse mortalité naturelle, seule, une petite fraction des œufs pondus survit aux premiers mois de vie. Ainsi, le succès du recrutement dépend du taux de survie combiné des œufs et des larves (Coombs *et al.*, 1990 ; Van der Veer *et al.*, 1990 ; Hilborn, 1992 ; Ellis et Nash, 1997), qui est influencé par les conditions environnementales rencontrées lors des deux phases successives (Borja *et al.*, 1998 ; Borja *et al.*, 2008). Les oeufs sont à la merci des courants et peuvent dériver dans des lieux non favorables à leur développement (Bunn *et al.*, 2000). En effet, les œufs sont soumis à l'hydrodynamisme qui doit permettre de rapprocher les stades précoces des larves des nourriceries, souvent côtières, où les juvéniles peuvent se développer afin d'entrer dans la population adulte exploitée via le processus de recrutement.

La mortalité des œufs peut également être due à la prédation des œufs par d'autres espèces, comme le hareng (Last, 1989) et le sprat qui se nourrissent d'œufs de plie (Ellis et Nash, 1997) ou encore au cannibalisme. Cependant, la transparence des œufs leurs confèrent une forme de protection contre la prédation (Mellinger, 1994). Ainsi, ils sont moins détectables par les prédateurs mais ils sont plus sensibles aux rayonnements ultra violet (Hempel, 1979; Béland *et al.*, 1999). De plus, les œufs de poissons sont sensibles à la pollution (hydrocarbures et métaux lords, Hempel, 1979). Dans de nombreuses études sur la mortalité des oeufs de poissons, l'hypothèse du « match-mismatch » est souvent évoquée. La survie des œufs dépend de la probabilité de rencontrer une fenêtre dans le temps et l'espace où les conditions de productions primaire et secondaire permettront aux larves écloses de se nourrir et donc de grandir et de se développer (Bakun, 1996; Fuiman et Werner, 2002). Les œufs non fécondés ou morts, coulent (Mellinger, 1994) et seront décomposés ou mangés (Agassiz, 2009).

Pour contrecarrer le taux de mortalité élevé, il faut donc un fort taux de fécondité. En effet, on compterait en moyenne 1000 œufs de limande, 576 œufs de plie, 433 œufs de sprat, 377 œufs de morue, 153 œufs de maquereau par m² de surface, en mer du Nord (Arambourg *et al.*, 1958). La fécondité est fonction de la taille ou de l'âge à maturité des poissons (Hempel, 1979). En effet, les gros poissons pondent des œufs plus nombreux, plus gros et peut-être plus viables que les petits poissons.

La période d'incubation représente la période entre la fertilisation et l'éclosion. Alors que la période d'éclosion est le temps entre l'éclosion du premier œuf et du dernier (Hempel, 1979). Le temps d'incubation est spécifique de l'espèce, lié au diamètre de l'œuf et généralement fixe à une température donnée. De plus, les gros œufs nécessitent un temps d'incubation plus long que les petits œufs. Par exemple à 14°C, l'incubation d'un œuf de 4 mm nécessite 30 jours alors que l'incubation d'un œuf de plie (2 mm) ne dure que 10 jours et 3-4 jours pour un œuf de 1 mm (Fuiman et Werner, 2002). Mellinger (1994) affirme que la plie (*Pleuronectes platessa*) éclot au bout de 16 jours, donnant une larve de 4.1 mm avec une bouche non fonctionnelle alors que le diable de mer (*Manta birostris*) éclot au bout de 3-4 semaines, mesure 7.5 mm et possède une bouche fonctionnelle. En condition d'élevage, la température est assez constante (5°C), ainsi le flet (0.8-1.13 mm) éclot au bout de 14-15 jours, la morue (1.16-1.89 mm) et le flétan de l'atlantique (1.38-3.5 mm) au bout de 17-19 jours, et la plie (1.66-2.17 mm) au bout de 23-26 jours (Mellinger, 1994 et Munk et Nielsen, 2005). La concentration en oxygène et la profondeur peuvent également affecter le développement des œufs. Ainsi une salinité faible, une faible concentration en oxygène et une intensité lumineuse forte peuvent diminuer le temps d'incubation donnant des embryons peu développés. Ainsi, le développement futur de la larve dépendra aussi des conditions d'incubation.

L'éclosion est déclenchée par une enzyme, appelée la chorionase, lorsque la quantité d'oxygène nécessaire à l'embryon devient trop élevée par rapport à la quantité pouvant diffuser à travers le chorion. Ainsi l'éclosion peut être retardée en milieu hyperoxique. L'intensité de la lumière, la salinité, la température et le pH sont des facteurs pouvant influencer l'activité de l'enzyme chorionase. En effet, la dégradation du chorion est plus rapide dans des eaux à température élevée alors que l'éclosion peut être retardée lors d'une baisse de salinité. L'éclosion a lieu principalement de jour (forte intensité lumineuse), elle est réduite dans des conditions sombres, même si certaines espèces ont des œufs qui éclosent la nuit. Ainsi, une éclosion tardive est certainement une réponse adaptative à des conditions environnementales inadaptées (Hempel, 1979).

L'échantillonnage des œufs de poisson

Traditionnellement, l'échantillonnage des œufs de poissons est fait via un filet à plancton. Ainsi, un des principaux problèmes d'une telle étude sur la distribution des zones de ponte est la faible résolution de l'échantillonnage, dans le temps mais aussi dans l'espace. Bien qu'il soit largement reconnu que l'échantillonnage à petite échelle pourrait être utile pour accroître la précision des cartes de zone de ponte, le travail nécessaire à l'analyse des échantillons d'œufs de poissons n'a pas permis une très haute résolution dans la plupart des programmes d'études. Depuis 2006, la campagne IBTS intègre au programme initial, l'étude

des œufs de poissons. L'échantillonnage se fait par le biais d'un système de pompage en continu des œufs de poissons : le CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler ; Checkley, 1997). L'efficacité du CUFES est étudiée dans le chapitre 1 pour un échantillonnage en hiver, en Manche Orientale et dans le sud de la mer du Nord.

L'identification des œufs de poissons

L'identification de l'ichtyoplancton est une tache très coûteuse en temps (Akiba et Kakui, 2000 ; Grosjean et al., 2004) et requiert l'expérience d'experts qui sont de moins en moins nombreux (Simpson et al., 1993). L'identification des œufs se fait principalement de facon visuelle sous loupe binoculaire par des critères morphologiques. Les œufs peuvent avoir différentes tailles comprises entre 0.7 et 7 mm et différentes formes, généralement sphériques mais aussi ovoïdes comme les anchois ou encore en forme de poire comme les gobies. L'œuf possède une double membrane avec de petits pores appeléé chorion. Cette membrane est lisse ou parfois stratifiée comme chez les dragonnets (Callionymus sp.) où une structure en nid d'abeille est bien visible, surtout au microscope électronique à balayage (MEB) (Lelièvre, 2007). D'autres critères sont aussi utilisés, tels que, la présence d'un globule huileux, comme chez les motelles sp. ou plusieurs, comme chez la sole commune (Solea solea). L'aspect du vitellus, à savoir homogène ou segmenté (comme chez le sprat, Spratus sprattus) est aussi un critère de distinction. La pigmentation de l'embryon : pigments étoilés, ponctiformes, en paquet, etc. permet de différencier les espèces pour les œufs de stade avancé. Différents stades de développement sont identifiés : stade 1, sans embryon ; qui correspond aux stages IA et IB selon les critères établis par Thompson et Riley (1981). Le stade 2 présente un début de développement d'embryon et correspond aux stades II et III, enfin le stade 3 présentant un embryon bien développé correspond aux stades IV et V (Thompson et Riley, 1981).

Tous ces critères d'identification proviennent de Russell, 1976 et Munk et Nielsen, 2005 et sont repris dans une clé d'identification spécifique aux œufs de Manche Orientale et sud mer du Nord (Martin *et al.*, 2007). En annexe A, vous trouverez une description (diamètre de l'œuf, période de ponte et photos) des principaux œufs identifiés dans cette étude.

L'identification visuelle des œufs de poissons basée sur les critères morphologiques n'est pas si facile (Bayha *et al.*, 2008). En effet, des doutes subsistent pour les espèces dont les diamètres des œufs sont dans la même gamme de taille : des chevauchements de taille entre œufs de différentes espèces, susceptibles de frayer à cette époque de l'année, sont fréquents. C'est pourquoi, les données de capture des adultes peuvent également avoir été exploitées afin de pouvoir conforter une identification. Ainsi, si une espèce n'est pas présente dans une capture proche du prélèvement d'œufs (dans l'espace et le temps), la présence d'œufs de cette espèce est considérée comme peu probable (Martin *et al.*, 2007).

Afin de lever le voile sur de telles incertitudes, des méthodes alternatives sont utilisées. Des techniques d'analyses moléculaires ont été envisagées afin de valider ou parfois de réfuter les identifications obtenues préalablement. De nombreux auteurs se sont interrogés sur les outils moléculaires susceptibles d'identifier clairement et rapidement les œufs de poissons. Des méthodes de PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction ou réaction de polymérisation en chaîne) couplé au séquencage (Akimoto et al., 2002 ; Kawakami et al., 2010), des PCR en temps réel, TaqMan PCR/PCR multiples (Taylor et al., 2002 ; Fox et al., 2005 a ; Aranishi, 2006) sont utilisées. Ingrid Bakke et al. (1999) a décrit une méthode basée sur une séquence unique intergénique, présente de façon spécifique chez plusieurs espèces de gadidae. Par ailleurs, la plie et le cabillaud sont également identifiés par des marqueurs microsatellites (Hutchinson et al, 2001; Hoarau et al, 2002; Hoarau et al, 2004). Une autre approche : le barcoding (code barre de l'ADN) permet d'identifier les espèces, grâce à des marqueurs unique et universel (Herbert et al., 2003;. Pegg et coll, 2006;. Ekrem et al., 2007;. Sevilla et al., 2007; Frézal et Leblois, 2009). Cependant, dans un souci d'utilisation en routine, la technique de la PCR-RFLP (Restriction Fragment Length Polymorphism ou polymorphisme de longueur des fragments de restriction) présente des atouts notables (Comesana et al., 2003 ; Aranishi et al., 2005 a et b ; Akasaki et al., 2006 ; Karaiskou et al., 2007) et a déjà été utilisée avec succès sur des œufs formolés. L'identification des œufs de poissons par analyses moléculaires est présentée dans le chapitre 4.

Toutefois, les progrès récents dans le traitement numérique d'images de plancton et dans la reconnaissance des formes ont permis de mettre au point un système de reconnaissance automatique ou semi-automatisé (Benfield *et al* 2007). Développé récemment, le système intégré ZooScan permet de donner un spectre de taille, une idée de l'abondance du zooplancton pour diverses études écologiques (Grosjean *et al*. 2004 ; Schultes et Lopes 2009 ; Gorsky *et al* 2010). Cet outil permettant une reconnaissance automatisée (dénombrement et mesure) des œufs de poissons est présenté dans le chapitre 5.

Toutes ces techniques d'identification sont complémentaires et permettent donc une identification précise des œufs de poissons collectés permettant de cartographier la distribution spatiale des œufs.

L'habitat de ponte des poissons

L'habitat essentiel d'un poisson est défini comme une zone géographique ou physique indispensable à la réalisation du cycle biologique d'une espèce. De plus, les populations de poissons ne sont pas réparties de manière aléatoire mais présentent des distributions organisées dans l'espace et dans le temps (Loots, 2009).

L'étendue spatiale de l'habitat de ponte du poisson peut être influencée par les préférences d'habitat et l'état démographique de la population adulte. Bellier *et al.* (2007) émet l'hypothèse que la configuration de la distribution spatiale des œufs de poissons va affecter le recrutement (Agostini et Bakun, 2002) qui en retour va jouer sur la démographie de la population. En effet, une grande partie de la recherche sur les premiers stades de vie des poissons a montré que la taille de la population par classe d'age est déterminée par la survie des premiers stades de vie (œufs et larves) (Hilborn, 1992 ; Fuiman et Werner, 2002). Ainsi, la localisation des frayères et la connaissance des facteurs qui régissent leur distribution est donc un point essentiel pour comprendre la dynamique spatiale et temporelle des populations de poissons. Les informations obtenues de l'étude des œufs et larves contribuent à l'évaluation et la gestion des populations de poissons (Fuiman et Werner, 2002). Il s'agit donc d'une étape cruciale dans l'évaluation et la gestion des stocks (Pomarede *et al.*, 2010).

Dans le cas particulier des espèces exploitées, une gestion durable de la ressource nécessite de connaître la nature et la qualité de l'ensemble des habitats essentiels. L'extension spatiale et la localisation des frayères varient d'une année sur l'autre (Coull, 1998 ; Planque *et al.*, 2004). Différentes espèces sont concentrées sur différents sites, ce qui indique l'existence de « patterns » spécifiques dans la distribution des frayères.

La ponte se passe dans une aire restreinte, choisie pour ses attributs qui contribuent au succès de la reproduction, correspondant souvent avec des zones de front hydrographique (Munk *et al.*, 2009), des transitions entre masses d'eau, généralement des upwellings, des marées, des écoulements d'eau douce comme les fleuves (Bakun, 1996 ; Munk et Nielsen, 2005). Planque *et al.* (2007) distinguent ainsi l'habitat potentiel, où les conditions sont favorables à la ponte, l'habitat réalisé, correspondant à la partie de l'habitat potentiel où la ponte se déroule effectivement et l' « habitat de succès », correspondant à la partie de l'habitat réalisé où la survie est importante et donc qui contribuera le plus au recrutement et au renouvellement du stock.

Le lieu et la période de ponte peuvent être affectés par des facteurs tels que l'épuisement des stocks, la perturbation des habitats et les changements climatiques (Begg et Marteinsdóttir, 2002; Rijnsdorp *et al.*, 2009), la pollution chimique de l'eau (Fuiman et Werner, 2002). Cependant la survie des œufs et des larves dépend des conditions environnementales et contribue donc à la reconstitution des populations adultes (Bakun, 1996). La cartographie des frayères doit être la plus précise et fiable possible puisqu'elle constitue un outil de gestion supplémentaire pour une évaluation des ressources et les prises de décisions qui en découlent (Fox *et al.*, 2005 a).

Dans un contexte de gestion durable des ressources, la modélisation des habitats et les Systèmes d'Information Géographique (SIG) sont des outils importants et novateurs pour une meilleure compréhension des relationsentre les espèces et leur environnement. Il existe un grand nombre de techniques de modélisation statistiques permettant de prédire la distribution des espèces à partir des conditions environnementales. Deux de ces méthodes seront présentées dans le chapitre 6.

Cependant, il faut rappeler qu'il s'agit d'une étude des zones de ponte hivernales. L'échantillonnage est effectué en janvier-février, ainsi l'étude ne couvre pas toute la période de ponte des espèces observées puisque certaines espèces peuvent pondre jusqu'au printemps. Cela implique donc une occpuation partielle des zones de ponte. En effet, toutes les frayères ne sont pas utilisées et détectées lors de notre étude. Les résultats obtenus ici nous donnent donc une connaissance partielle des habitats de pontes pour certaines espèces. Les périodes de ponte de chacune des espèces sont données en annexe A.

L'évaluation du stock reproducteur

La reproduction est une phase cruciale du cycle de vie des poissons, car elle permet d'assurer le renouvellement des individus des espèces en compensant les pertes dues à la mortalité naturelle ou à la mortalité par pêche.

L'évaluation de la biomasse du stock reproducteur (SSB) d'une espèce exploitée est une étape importante dans la gestion de la pêche. Cette évaluation peut se faire par différentes méthodes, basées sur diverses sources de données, comme l'étude de la fécondité (DFRM, Daily Fecundity Reduction Method, Lo *et al.* 1992), lorsque celle-ci est déterminée, c'est à dire fixée avant le début de la ponte ou encore par l'analyse du nombre d'ovocytes vitellogènes dans les ovaires des femelles récoltées juste avant la période de frai (Bunn *et al.*, 2000). Bien que cette dernière méthode soit efficace pour le maquereau de l'Atlantique Nord-Est, il a été démontré que l'estimation de la biomasse féconde par cette méthode était plus élevée que la production d'œufs réelle chez la plie et la morue (Horwood, 1992 ; Anon, 1996) ou encore chez la sole de la Manche (Anon, 1998). La SSB peut aussi se faire par l'étude du développement des follicules (par histologie), méthode appelée la POF (Postovulatory Follicles' method, Hunter et Goldberg, 1980) ou le calcul de l'atrésie (Walker *et al.*, 1994). L'atrésie représente les ovocytes résorbés avant l'ovulation et est utilisée pour estimer la fécondité réelle, en étudiant l'état des poissons femelles adultes dans les captures (Hedger *et al.*, 2004). Pour certaines espèces les enregistrements acoustiques pendant la parade nuptiale peuvent également être utilisés pour estimer la taille de la population reproductrice (Hawkins *et al.*, 2002; Širović *et al.*, 2009).

Pour les espèces produisant des œufs pélagiques, les enquêtes sur le plancton fournissent une autre source de données utiles (Checkley *et al.*, 1997 ; ICES, 2005 b ; Van der Molen *et al.*, 2007 ; Fox *et al.*, 2008). L'évaluation de la biomasse du stock reproducteur à partir de la production d'œufs (Horwood, 1993 ; Armstrong *et al.*, 2001 ; Stratoudakis *et al.* 2006) est indépendante des prises commerciales et peut être réalisée selon deux méthodes. La première, comptabilise la production annuelle des oeufs (AEPM, Annual Egg Production Method, Saville 1964; Lockwood *et al.*, 1981) basée sur des études couvrant l'ensemble de la période de ponte dans une zone donnée. La seconde, la production journalière des oeufs (DEPM, Daily Egg Production Method ; Parker, 1980), est calculée à partir du rapport du nombre d'œufs par stade de développement sur la zone d'étude sur la durée moyenne de chaque stade (Bunn *et al.*, 2000).

Les frayères sont considérées comme des « habitats sensibles » aussi bien au niveau de leur écosystème que de leur exploitation. La préservation et le respect de ces zones de ponte constituent la condition *sine qua non* au bon état quantitatif de la population des espèces de poissons présentes en mer du Nord.

La protection des frayères

L'exemple de la morue de l'Atlantique qui est classée comme «vulnérable» par l'UICN (http://www.iucnredlist.org) (Fox *et al.*, 2008) et fait l'objet d'un plan de restauration illustre la nécessité de la gestion des stocks. L'objectif principal de la gestion de la pêche est d'assurer la durabilité à long terme des stocks, de prévenir la surpêche et de minimiser les perturbations de l'écosystème.

Pour répondre aux objectifs internationaux et européens sur la conservation du milieu marin, les pays doivent mettre en place dans leurs eaux territoriales un réseau cohérent d'aires marines protégées (AMP) en 2012. Ainsi, les connaissances acquises sur les frayères peuvent

contribuer directement à la gestion durable des ressources halieutiques mais aussi aux études d'impact des activités anthropiques telles que la pêche, l'extraction de granulats marins, l'installation d'éoliennes off-shore ou à la mise en place d'Aires Marines Protégées (AMP). Les gestionnaires peuvent alors décider d 'interdire l'utilisation d'une zone donnée, sur une période de l'année, afin de protéger les frayères et ce dans le but de maintenir une pêche productive. Mais aussi, la gestion des pêches peut utiliser les limites de taille de maille de chalut pour protéger les adultes et veiller à ce qu'ils aient la possibilité de se reproduire au moins une fois (Fuiman et Werner, 2002). Enfin, l'utilisation des AMP pourrait peut-être permettre l'augmentation de la taille de certaines populations. En effet, au sein de ces AMP, les individus peuvent vivre plus longtemps et atteindre une plus grande taille permettant de développer un potentiel accru en matière de reproduction (Gell et Roberts, 2003).

Le but de cette thèse est d'identifier et de caractériser les zones et habitats de pontes hivernales des poissons en Manche Orientale et sud de la mer du Nord afin de préciser l'importance de l'environnement sur l'utilisation de ces habitats. Cette étude présente les avancées réalisées notamment pour l'identification des œufs mais aussi la modélisation de l'habitat de ponte en passant par la localisation des frayères.

Les objectifs de cette étude sont multiples : premièrement, valider l'utilisation du CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler) en Manche Orientale et dans le sud de la mer du Nord pour un échantillonnage des œufs pélagiques. Puis, améliorer l'identification des œufs pélagiques, traditionnellement réalisée sous loupe binoculaire, par diverses méthodes : par des analyses moléculaires ou encore par des analyses d'images numériques. Afin de définir la localisation des zones de pontes des principales espèces commerciales en utilisant des analyses géostatistiques et la méthode d'interpolation par krigeage. Et enfin, déterminer l'habitat de ponte de ces espèces en utilisant les méthodes de régressions linéaires telles que les GLM (Modèles Linéaires Généralisés) et les RQ (Régressions quantiles) en fonction des variables environnementales disponibles, à savoir la sonde, la température, la salinité, la concentration en chlorophylle *a*, la tension de cisaillement et le type sédimentaire. Le but final de cette étude est de produire une liste de recommandations pour la gestion et la protection de ces zones de ponte.

Le manuscrit se présente comme une thèse rédigée d'après des articles qui ont été acceptés, soumis ou en préparation, pendant la période de doctorat dans des revues internationales avec comité de lecture. Les articles ne sont pas intégrés directement mais les différentes parties ont été replacées au sein de chaque chapitre de manière à rendre le document cohérent et éviter les répétitions quant aux données et méthodes utilisées. Cinq articles ont été rédigés au total : un est publié, un est accepté avec correction, un autre est soumis et les deux derniers sont en préparation.

- (1) Lelièvre S., Vaz, S and Fox, C. The effectiveness of the Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler (CUFES) compared with standard vertical plankton hauls for sampling the eggs of demersal species in the southern North Sea. *Submitted to Fisheries Oceanography*.
- (2) Lelièvre S., Verrez-Bagnis, V, Jérôme, M. and Vaz, S (2010) PCR-RFLP analyses of formalin-fixed fish eggs for the mapping of spawning areas in the Eastern Channel and Southern North Sea. *Journal of Plankton Research*, 32: 1527-1539.

(3) Lelièvre S. Jérôme, M., Maes, G., Vaz, S. Sachidhanandam, C. and Verrez-Bagnis, V. Molecular validation and comparative mapping of morphologically identified eggs of dab (*Limanda limanda*), flounder, (*Platichthys flesus*) and Trisopterus sp from the Eastern English Channel and southern North Sea. *Submitted to Marine Ecology Progress Series*.

- (4) Antajan, E., Lelièvre S. and Vaz, S. Comparison of traditional microscopy and digitalized images analysis to identify and delineate pelagic fish egg spatial distribution. Accepted in *Journal of Plankton Research*.
- (5) Lelièvre S., Vaz, S. and Loots, C. Recurrent spawning grounds and spawning habitat modelling of dab (*Limanda Limanda*), plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*), cod (*Gadus morhua*) and whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*), in the North Sea between 2006-2009. Submitted to ICES Journal of Marine Science.

Le chapitre 1 correspond à l'article (1) et présente brièvement la zone d'étude et la campagne IBTS (International Bottom Trawl Survey). Le but principal de ce chapitre est de faire une comparaison entre deux méthodes d'échantillonnage des œufs de poissons, à savoir le CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler) et un filet à plancton. L'efficacité du CUFES a été évaluée, pour un échantillonnage des œufs pélagiques, en hiver, en Manche Orientale et dans la partie sud de la mer du Nord.

Le chapitre 2 correspond à une partie de l'article (1) et de l'article (5) et présente les analyses géostatistiques réalisées sur les données d'œufs de poissons identifiés de façon visuelle, afin de cartographier, en utilisant la technique de l'interpolation par krigeage, les

zones de pontes de chacune des espèces, pour chaque année d'étude. Il présente aussi la distribution des œufs collectés par le CUFES et par le filet à plancton permettant ainsi de comparer la résolution des deux méthodes d'échantillonnage.

Le chapitre 3 correspond à une partie de l'article (5) et présente l'analyse des changements inter-annuels des frayères en combinant la moyenne des distributions sur les quatre années d'étude avec une cartographie de l'écart type des distributions entre ces années. Cette étude permet de localiser les habitats récurrents, occasionnels, rares et non favorables (Bellier *et al.*, 2007) et ainsi de préciser l'étendue des habitats réalisés (sensus Planque *et al.*, 2004) entre 2006 et 2009.

Le chapitre 4, correspond aux articles (2 et 3) et présente les différentes analyses moléculaires réalisées pour une identification fiable des œufs de poissons formolés séparés en 4 groupes où les risques de confusion lors de l'identification visuelle sont élevés. Ce chapitre présente la technique de fixation et de conservation des œufs, la méthode d'extraction d'ADN des œufs et surtout la technique PCR-RFLP sur un gène mitochondrial (cytochrome *b* ou ARN 16S, selon le groupe d'espèces) permettant d'amplifier et d'identifier spécifiquement les œufs.

Le chapitre 5 correspond à l'article (4) et présente l'identification des œufs de poissons par le système intégré d'analyse numérique d'images : le ZooScan. Il permet une reconnaissance automatisée (dénombrement et mesure) des œufs de poissons. Ce chapitre présente le principe du ZooScan, le fichier d'apprentissage et une comparaison des cartographies obtenues par les identifications visuelles et celles du ZooScan, collectées lors des campagnes IBTS 2008 et 2009.

Le chapitre 6 correspond à la seconde partie de l'article (5) et présente la modélisation des habitats de pontes pour chacune des espèces identifiées. La modélisation de l'habitat de ponte vise à mettre en relation la distribution observée des œufs de poissons avec des facteurs environnementaux disponibles : température, salinité, concentration en chlorophylle *a*, profondeur, tension de cisaillement ou encore le type sédimentaire afin de prédire l'habitat de ponte des poissons. Cette étude a permis de préciser la nature et l'étendue des habitats potentiels (sensus Planque *et al.*, 2004) entre 2006 et 2009.

Le chapitre 7 correspond à la synthèse des résultats obtenus dans cette étude, analysés de façon multi-spécifique, dans une perspective de gestion, conservation et protection des frayères hivernales en Manche Orientale et la partie sud de la mer du Nord, notamment via la mise en place d'aire marine protégée (AMP).
CHAPTER 1

Winter fish egg sampling: a comparison between Continuous Underway Fish Eggs Sampler (CUFES) and Vertical Egg Trawl (VET)

This chapter is based on a submitted article, which presents the efficiency of the use of the CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler) in the Eastern Channel and Southern North Sea to collect pelagic fish eggs during the winter.

Lelièvre S., Vaz, S. and Fox, C. The effectiveness of the Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler (CUFES) compared with standard vertical plankton hauls for sampling the eggs of demersal species in the southern North Sea. *Submitted to Fisheries Oceanography*.

In order to assess the applicability of the CUFES in the southern North Sea, the species composition (densities and occurrence) of eggs collected by CUFES in winter were compared to results obtained using ring-net sampling (VET's, Vertical Egg Trawl). At the scale of the sampling station, species compositions (in terms of proportion and abundance) from both approaches were fairly similar with the notable exception of flounder which was much more abundant in the sub-surface layer. CUFES collected relatively less eggs per unit volume of water filtered when compared with vertically integrated samples reflecting the fact that planktonic fish eggs tend to be positively buoyant. A diurnal rhythm and a temporal analyses were performed. Results from regression modelling showed that CUFES data cannot be used to estimate total egg density without taking account of additional factors such as depth, bedstress or wind-induced mixing which affect the vertical distribution of fish eggs. Furthermore CUFES may be added to standard trawl surveys with little disruption to the baseline ground-fish survey.

1.1. Introduction

The location and timing of fish spawning can be based on data from a variety of sources including the presence of mature fish in trawl surveys (Hedger *et al.*, 2004) and for some species acoustic detection of calls made during courtship (Širović *et al.*, 2009; Hawkins *et al.*, 2002). For species producing pelagic eggs, plankton surveys provide another useful approach (Checkley *et al.*, 1997; Fox *et al.*, 2008). Because eggs will be dispersed away from spawning sites, it is desirable to identify the eggs to species at their earliest developmental stages.

Spawning grounds are often spatially structured at quite fine-scales (<10 km) and it is difficult to capture this variability using standard trawl or plankton surveys where inter-station distances are typically of the order of tens of km. Detecting such fine-scale structuring is particularly relevant when examining links between spawning and oceanographic features such as fronts (Munk *et al.*, 2009) and up-welling zones (Bakun, 1996). In addition, it is often difficult to incorporate dedicated plankton sampling into standard trawl surveys due to constraints on ship time. To address these problems Checkley *et al.* (1997) introduced the Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler (CUFES) which consists of a sub-surface intake, pump and separator which can be operated continuously as the ship steams and collects samples of eggs at any spatial resolution the operator chooses. Moreover, CUFES can be coupled with continuous environmental monitoring equipment allowing simultaneous fine-scale mapping of egg distributions and environmental parameters such as water temperature and chlorophyll (Checkley *et al.*, 2000).

Moreover, major egg production occurs at night but sporadic spawning may occur during the day (Solmundsson *et al.*, 2003), a reason why Simpson (1971) recommended continuous sampling. CUFES has been successfully used to map the distribution of eggs of pelagic species such as sardine and anchovy (Petitgas *et al.*, 2006 a). As a tool for mapping spawning areas, CUFES is therefore proven but because the intake is at a fixed depth (5 meters depth) there are concerns about using CUFES data to estimate total egg abundance in the water column. Estimates of total egg abundance are required when the aim is be produce egg-based stock assessments (Lasker *et al.*, 1985; Priede and Watson, 1993 ; Armstrong *et al.*, 2001). Because the early developmental stages of healthy planktonic fish eggs are usually positively buoyant relative to ambient water density, they tend to accumulate in the upper water column (Sundby, 1983; Coombs *et al.*, 2004; Fritsch, 2005). The intake of the CUFES is therefore generally at the correct depth to sample water where the maximum egg concentration is found. However, because the depth distribution of eggs is also affected by the degree of vertical mixing for example due to wind stress (Sundby, 1983; Coombs *et al.*, 2001; Petitgas *et al.* 2006 a), the proportion of the total eggs collected by the CUFES will not be constant over time. Egg buoyancy also changes during development and since many species spawn in mid-water or at depth this can lead to marked changes in vertical distributions during egg development (Page *et al.*, 1989; Combs *et al*, 2001; Combs *et al*, 2004; Dopolo *et al*, 2005; Pépin *et al*, 2005). However, it may be possible to estimate the total number of eggs in the water column from CUFES data by taking into account the stage of egg development and environmental factors at the time of sampling such as wind-speed (Curtis *et al*, 2007) and water depth (Checkley *et al.*, 1997; Van Der Lingen *et al.*, 1998; Pépin *et al.*, 2005).

In recent years there have been increasing calls for the IBTS to collect additional information in order to maximise survey outputs under an ecosystem approach to management but because of the staff and time constraints of conducting the baseline survey, this has proven difficult. The addition of automated sampling devices such as ferry-boxes (Holley and Hydes, 2002) and semi-automated sampling methods, such as CUFES, could provide valuable additional information without compromising the core survey. In this chapter the application of CUFES in the Eastern English Channel and the southern part of the North Sea is described, during the French component of the International Bottom Trawl Surveys (IBTS) from January to February 2006 to 2008. This survey coincides with the start of spawning of many North Sea fish species (Taylor *et al.*, 2007).

In this study we compare results from CUFES with those from conventional depthintegrated plankton sampling in terms the relative proportions of eggs of different taxa in the samples and the utility of the data for producing maps of spawning areas. Finally we consider whether CUFES data can be used to estimate total egg abundance in the water column by incorporating additional environmental variables.

Since, Nichols (1989) showed that 90% of plaice spawn at night, with a peak of spawning before midnight, a diurnal rhythm analysis was performed in order to determine at what time of the day or night, the spawning of each species occurred, and whether it influenced the sampling method and the accuracy of the study. Moreover, the IBTS takes place between mid-January and late February and lasts a full month, but this period does not correspond to the peak of spawning for each species. A temporal variation analysis was performed to precise the variation of spawning within two spatially restricted areas over the survey duration.

1.2 Material and method

1.2.1 Data collection

The study area: the Eastern Channel and southern North Sea

The North Sea (Figure 1.1) is an epicontinental sea with depth ranging between 15 and 200 m and characterised by a macrotidal regime. The North Sea extends south-westward to the Dover Strait, westward to the English continental plateau, north-westward to the Isles of Shetland and Orkney, and eastward to the European coast, which forms (in the north) a deep basin, the Norwegian Deep (maximum depth 700 m). The Dover Strait connects the North Sea to the English Channel, and this narrow corridor is one of the world's busiest straits for maritime shipping. The North Sea is a relatively small and shallow basin (depth is less than 100 m on average), with a surface area of about half a million km² and a volume of 54,000 km³. It is linked to the east to the brackish waters of the Baltic Sea through the Skagerrak and the Kattegat, southward through the English Channel and Dover Strait and northward to the highly saline waters of the North Atlantic Ocean (Martin *et al.*, 2007).





The North Sea is influenced by the Atlantic Ocean mainly from the north, but also from the south through incoming English Channel waters. During the winter, North Sea waters are cold and desalted in the east because of cold water inflow coming from the Baltic Sea and large river inflows from the French to Danish coasts. Warmer and saltier waters enter the North Sea from the North Atlantic Ocean through the English Channel to the southwest and from the North Atlantic current to the northwest. During the winter, waters are vertically mixed with homogeneous temperature and salinity across the water column whereas during summer, a tidal front is found in the central North Sea with mixed water in the southern part and stratified water in the northern part (Hill *et al.*, 1993).

IBTS Sea survey

All samples were collected during the French IBTS (International Bottom Trawl Survey) conducted during first quarter (between January and February) 2006 to 2008 using the RV "Thalassa". These surveys are undertaken under the aegis of ICES (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea) and are done in collaboration with six other European research institutes (from Germany, Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, UK and Sweden). The protocols for the standard trawl sampling are described in the IBTS Working Group documents (ICES, 2004) and are not considered further here. The IBTS is carried out each year to collect data necessary for the stock assessment of several important demersal fishes (ICES, 2007 b; ICES, 2008). Physical oceanographic data were collected at several supplementary hydrological stations using a SBE 19 SEACAT Profiler. IBTS surveys essentially aim at estimating fish abundance and distribution, and at computing recruitment indices (i.e. abundance of juveniles) for the fish species exploited in the North Sea. The findings constitute a fundamental basis to stock evaluation by international working groups, and contribute, in terms of scientific advice, to the EU's Common Fisheries Policy, notably the fish quotas. With a standard trawl (GOV), each participating country systematically samples a section of the North Sea, year after year. After each trawl, the catch is weighted; species are identified, counted and measured. In addition, larvae are sampled at night using specialised nets ('MIK' nets), in the aim to obtain a larval abundance index for herring and sprat.

CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler)

In parallel to its regular actions, the French IBTS research cruise used a continuous fish egg pumping device called CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Eggs Sampler, Model C-100, Ocean Instruments Inc) allowing the collection of information on the spatial distribution of winter spawning areas and on the spawning habitats of several important species. A detailed description has been provided by Checkley *et al.* (1997). Essentially, the system (Figure 1.2) consists of a submersible high volume pump drawing water from 5 meters below the sea surface. It is mounted at the end of a pipe installed inside the vessel, hardly edging from the hull and pumping perpendicularily to the current. To enhance the catching efficiency, a metallic scoop has been bolted on the side of the ship and is directed into the

current. This pump is coupled to a concentrator composed of a stirrer with a sieve to assist in screening and concentrating eggs and a collector. Water is continuously pumped at 5 m depth up the concentrator. Particles (including fish eggs) are concentrated by an oscillating net and the concentrate passes to the sample collector where particles are retained by a mesh (500 µm mesh size). For the collection of fish eggs, CUFES was run continuously during the survey. The exact water volume filtered for each sample depended on the sample duration and the pump flow rate (Promag). This flow rate, varying between 500 and 800 1 min⁻¹, was linearly related to the vessel speed. For a same sampling duration, the volume filtered was larger if the vessel speed was higher (ANNEX B). Fortunately, the flow rate was recorded every 30 s at the CUFES out-let and was averaged over all the sample duration. A sample was collected from the CUFES every 30 min (corresponding to about 20 m³ seawater and over a distance ranging from 0 to 7 km depending on vessel speed), 24 hours out of 24, during the full survey.



Figure 1.2: CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Eggs Sampler)

Figure 1.3: Plankton net

VET (Vertical Egg Trawl)

In 2006 and 2007, a simple plankton net (cylindro-conic, Figure 1.3) was used for vertical plankton hauls, (mouth opening diameter of 0.6 m, 2.6 m deep and 500 μ m mesh. Since 2008, a WP2 plankton net was used (mouth opening diameter of 0.55 m, depth 2.7 m, 500 μ m mesh). These nets were deployed from the surface to within 2 m of the sounded depth and retrieved at a speed of 1 ms⁻¹. The volume of water filtered in each haul was estimated based on readings from a KC-Denmark Digital Flow Meter with back-run stop installed in the

net mouth using the manufacturer's flowmeter reading to distance-run calibration. For comparison sake, CUFES samples were specially made at stopped location during the vertical hauls.

Fish eggs conservation, identification and counting

Samples were fixed in a buffered 0.9% formalin solution in seawater (Mastail and Battaglia, 1978) and returned to the laboratory for sorting. The conservation solution will be described in the chapter 4.

Fish eggs were identified through binocular microscope according to morphological criteria, mainly shape of eggs (spherical for the majority of fish eggs or ovoid), egg diameter (measured by a micrometer), the presence of an oil globule such as rockling species and pigmentation in function of the stage of development (Russell, 1976; Munk and Nielsen, 2005; Lelièvre, 2007). Three stages were identified: (1) stage 1, without embryo (early stages) corresponding to stages IA and IB after Thompson and Riley (1981), (2) stage 2 with the beginning of development of an embryo II, III and (3) stage 3 (advanced stages) with a well developed embryo, corresponding to stage IV and V after Thompson et Riley (1981). Eggs were numbered per stages. However, visual identification may be difficult for some species such as dab and flounder or cod and whiting (Taylor *et al.*, 2002).

For problematic eggs, information on the co-occurrence of later stages' eggs in the samples and/or the presence of the corresponding adult fish in the closest trawl catches was used to guide egg identification. Although some uncertainty may arise from such methodology, this resulted into all eggs being identified to species level with the exception of the rocklings' group.

Numbers of eggs of each identified taxa were converted into an egg density (Nstd) for a standard reference volume of 20 m^3 (approximating the water volume filtered in 30 min) using equation 1.1.

$$Nstd = \frac{N}{Vf} \times 20 \tag{1.1}$$

where N = number of eggs in taxa and stage; Vf = filtered volume (m³).

The obtained egg densities for CUFES or VET samples were then fully comparable. Moreover, this transformation, in the case of en-route CUFES samples, was shown to remove any detectable relationship between the egg density and the vessel speed (ANNEX B).

1.2.2 Comparison between CUFES and depth-integrated plankton hauls

All stations analysed are presented in figure 1.4 and cover the whole study area. The relative proportion and absolute densities (standardised for a standard volume of 20 m^3) of eggs by taxa and stages were compared between the CUFES and VET samples collected whilst the ship was stationary. Then, the occurrence and co-occurrences were compared for each species between both devices.



Figure 1.4: Station locations of sampling for each year

1.2.3 Predicting depth-integrated egg abundance from CUFES

Egg data were log-transformed $(\log_{10}(x+1))$ to approach normality and the relationship between egg density in CUFES and vertical plankton samples modelled using GLMs (Generalised Linear Model). GLM was performed using R 2.2.1 (R Development Core Team, 2005).

As is typical for ichthyoplankton data, there were a large number of zero values. Egg data were modelled using a two-step approach. Presence-absence data (where non null abundances were recoded as 1) were modelled separately from positive log-transformed abundances only, to deal with the issue of zero-inflated data distribution (Stefánsson, 1996, Barry and Welsh, 2002). Presence-absence data were modelled through a binomial model using a logit link whereas non null log-transformed abundances were modelled using a Gaussian model with an identity link (McCullagh and Nelder, 1989).

Available co-variables which might affect fish egg vertical distributions and thus the proportion of total eggs in the water column sampled by CUFES were depth, bedstress and wind speed. Depth and wind speed measurements were continuously recorded by the vessel sensors (Fig. 1.5). The predicted vertical distribution of eggs is known to be affected by how vertical diffusivity is modelled (Curtis et al. 2007). In most instances diffusivity is related to the square of wind speed so we integrated wind speed using a second order polynomial. Bedstress (N.m-²) is a measure of the shear friction of water on the seabed caused by the tidal current which is expected to have an impact on egg dispersion and transport. It was estimated using a two-dimensional hydrodynamic model (Aldridge and Davies, 1993) maintained by the Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory (UK) and was used to predict the depth-mean M2 tidal current (in metres per second). Bedstress was then calculated using a quadratic expression, with stress dependent on the predicted maximum ellipse current and an appropriate bed friction coefficient, in this case with an assumed value of 0.0025. Bedstress was provided as a regular grid of 1/8° of longitude by 1/12° of latitude (approximately 8 km spatial resolution, WGS 1984 datum). The grid of points was then interpolated using ArcMap's Spatial Analyst extension to create a continuous raster layer of 1 km² resolution. Bedstress and water depth were log-transformed (stressT and depthT) to improve the linearity of their relationship with egg density and the inverse of depth (1/depthT) was computed as generally there is an inverse relationship between depth and egg densities. These three parameters were tested in the GLM.



Figure 1.5: Hydrological parameters: depth in m (bottom left), bedstress in N.m⁻² (bottom right) and wind speed in knots in 2006 (down left), 2007 (down middle) and in 2008 (down right)

Model predictors were selected using the Akaike Information criterion (AIC, Sakamoto et *al.*, 1986). It is a measure of the likelihood between the fitted values of the model and the observed values, penalised by the number of explanatory variables in the model, using equation 1.2.

$$AIC = -2 \ln L(\theta) + 2k \qquad (1.2)$$

where, $L(\theta)$ Log likelihood = minimised model deviance, k = parameter numbers.

Therefore, model selection based on the AIC is performed as a compromise between the adjustment of the model and its parsimony and result in the determination of a final optimised model.

Having obtained fitted values for the probability, p, of a non-zero sample, and for the expected abundance, \hat{y} , conditional on it being positive, the predicted unconditional egg abundance is given by p \hat{y} . The combination of these two model predictions is referred to as the delta model.

Two statistical tests were also used to compare observed and predicted VET abundances for each species: a Spearman-rank correlation test and a Wilcoxon test. Both tests are non-parametric and were chosen because of the non-normal distribution of the data. The Spearman correlation test allows for detecting any significant correlation between observations and predictions. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test allows for comparing the mean of observed and predicted abundances (Wilcoxon, 1945) for the case of two related samples or repeated measurements on a single sample. It can be used as an alternative to the paired Student's t-test when the population cannot be assumed to be normally distributed (Wilcoxon, 1945), based on ranked differences between observed and predicted data.

The adjusted coefficient of determination of the model (adjusted R²) was computed to assess the predictive power of the delta model. It was used to measure the proportion of variance explained by the final model and provides a measure of how well future outcomes are likely to be predicted by the model. This coefficient of determination has the advantage of taking into account the respective numbers of degrees of freedom in the observations and explanatory parameters. Statistical analyses were undertaken using R 2.2.1 software (R Development Core Team, 2005). It was calculated according to the following formula (1.3):

$$R_a^2 = 1 - \left(1 - R^2\right) \times \left(\frac{total \quad d.f.}{residual \quad d.f.}\right)$$
(1.3)

where *total d.f.* is the total degrees of freedom, *residual d.f.* is the degrees of freedom of the selected model and R^2 is the coefficient of variation calculated as follow (1.4):

$$R^{2} = \frac{\sum (\hat{Y}_{i} - \overline{Y})^{2}}{\sum (Y_{i} - \overline{Y})^{2}}$$
(1.4)

where \hat{Y}_i is the ith predicted value, Y_i is the ith observed value and \overline{Y} is the mean of the observed values.

1.2.4 Diurnal rhythm: day-night variation

For this analysis, only log-transformed stage 1 egg densities collected during IBTS 2009 were used (n= 1 103). In agreement with the IBTS standard protocol, the first bottom trawl of the morning corresponded to the beginning of the daytime and the first MIK trawl (Methot Isaac Kid, which was used only at night) corresponded to the beginning of night time. These operations were therefore used to distinguish day and night egg sampling. Bar charts were plotted to compare egg densities collected by CUFES during day and night for each species. Then, an ANOVA was performed in order to compare the mean and variance of egg densities between sampling at night and during daytime and to detect any significant differences.

1.2.5 Temporal variation

During the IBTS sea survey, an area may be sampled many times. For example, during intensive acoustic prospecting, near Boulogne sur Mer. Moreover, during IBTS 2009, the vessel put in twice in Ijmuiden, between the 17th and the 22nd of January and between the 30th and the 31st of January. The vessel trajectory took it back near Ijmuiden between the 10th and 11th of February for trawling. Two spatially restricted areas were delimited to analyse the temporal variation near Boulogne sur Mer (longitude between 1.25°E and 1.7°E and latitude between 50.30°N and 51°N) and near Ijmuiden (longitude between 3.75°E and 4.30°E and latitude between 52.10°N and 53°N) (Fig. 1.6). Log-transformed stage 1 eggs densities collected during IBTS 2009 were plotted against time (in hours). An ANOVA was carried out to test if there was any significant difference in eggs densities for each species during the studied period.



Figure 1.6: Temporal variation of fish egg distribution analysis, near Boulogne and near Ijmuiden. Location of samples collected during IBTS 2009 (.) and samples selected for the analysis (X)

1.3 Results

1.3.1 Oceanography

Results from the supplementary hydrological stations conducted during the IBTS confirmed that most stations were vertically mixed with little water column stratification (Table 1.1). Vertical profiles were presented in annex C. At some locations there was evidence of a salinity gradient, particularly for locations close to areas of riverine input although the IBTS survey route does not go into the estuaries themselves. Most of the study area is shallow although some samples were collected in water deeper than 50 m in the northwestern corner. Observed wind speeds varied between 1 and 34 knots depending on location and years. Modelled bedstress is highest in the Dover Straits and off the East Anglian coast. Bedstress is generally higher close to the coasts and in the southern bight.

,								
Voor	Depth (m)	Те	emperature (°	C)	Salinity (ppm)			
(nbr of profiles)		Surface	Bottom	Difference	Surface	Bottom	Difference	
	Mean (sd)	mean (sd)	mean (sd)	mean (sd)	mean (sd)	mean (sd)	mean (sd)	
2006 (n = 66)	41 (19)	5.9 (1.1)	5.9 (1.1)	0.0 (0.3)	34.2 (1.0)	34.6 (0.7)	0.3 (0.4)	
2007 (n = 68)	36 (17)	7.0 (0.9)	7.1 (0.8)	0.1 (0.2)	34.4 (1.3)	34.6 (0.7)	0.2 (0.7)	
2008 (n = 140)	27 (14)	8.1 (1.3)	8.4 (1.6)	0.3 (0.8)	34.4 (1.0)	34.2 (2.2)	-0.1 (1.0)	

Table 1.1: Summary of observed temperature (°C) and salinity (ppm) profiles characteristics in 2006, 2007 and 2008

Difference is computed as bottom - surface values

1.3.2 Fish eggs

VET and CUFES samples were collected whilst the vessel was stationary at the locations shown in figure 1.4. In total 66 vertical plankton tows were undertaken in 2006, 68 in 2007 and 140 in 2008 (total 274). Eggs of dab (*Limanda limanda*), plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*), cod (*Gadus morhua*), flounder (*Platichthys flesus*), whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*), rocklings (Lotidae) and long-rough dab (*Hippoglossoides platessoides*) were commonly identified in the samples. Eggs of other species found occasionally included common sole (*Solea solea*), *Callionymus* sp., solenette (*Buglossidium luteum*) and brill (*Scophthalmus rhombus*).

1.3.3 Comparison of taxa composition of fish egg between VET and CUFES

With the exception of flounder, individual taxa had a higher probability of being found in VET samples compared with CUFES (Table 1.2). In most instances VET was more effective than CUFES. The probability of finding the rarer species (rockling sp., and Am. Plaice) were similar in both devices. CUFES was a suited as VET to capture low abundance species. These results were also found to be true when distinguishing egg stages. However, later developmental stages (stage 2 and over) were better represented in VET samples than in CUFES.

						Occurrence in
Species	Stage	Occurrence in	Occurrence in	Co-occurrence in	Occurrence in VET but	CUFES but not
_	_	VET	CUFES	both devices	not in CUFES	in VET
Cod		0.47	0.36	0.24	0.23	0.12
Dab		0.68	0.51	0.46	0.22	0.04
Plaice	All	0.50	0.42	0.33	0.17	0.09
Flounder	stages	0.17	0.35	0.14	0.04	0.21
Whiting		0.36	0.30	0.19	0.17	0.11
Am. Plaice		0.13	0.11	0.05	0.08	0.06
Rocklings		0.21	0.18	0.09	0.12	0.08
Cod		0.36	0.30	0.19	0.17	0.12
Dab		0.65	0.49	0.44	0.20	0.05
Plaice	Stage	0.35	0.30	0.20	0.15	0.10
Flounder	1	0.11	0.24	0.08	0.03	0.16
Whiting		0.32	0.25	0.16	0.16	0.09
Am. Plaice		0.16	0.12	0.04	0.10	0.06
Rocklings		0.09	0.09	0.07	0.06	0.05
Cod		0.28	0.19	0.10	0.18	0.09
Dab		0.47	0.31	0.24	0.23	0.08
Plaice	Stage	0.40	0.35	0.25	0.15	0.09
Flounder	2+	0.14	0.28	0.10	0.04	0.19
Whiting		0.27	0.17	0.11	0.16	0.06
Am. Plaice		0.07	0.03	0.02	0.05	0.01
Rocklings		0.11	0.10	0.05	0.06	0.05

Table 1.2: Analysis of occurrence of fish eggs species collected by CUFES and VET (total number of observations = 274).

1.3.4 Comparison of egg densities and species composition data between VET and CUFES

For most species but flounder, the number of eggs sampled per volume of water was slightly higher in VET samples than in CUFES samples (Table 1.3). In the case of flounder, egg densities were higher in CUFES. The most abundant species represented a larger proportion of the catch in VET than in CUFES samples. The proportions were similar in both devices for rocklings and American plaice eggs, but higher proportion of flounder eggs were found in CUFES. For most species, early stage eggs were as or more abundant than later stages in both devices with the exception of plaice for which later stage eggs were more abundant.

Table 1.3: Mean and standard deviation of fish eggs abundance and relative abundance per species collected by VET and CUFES

		Egg density	(for 20m ³)	Relative j	Relative proportion			
Spacios		VET	CUFES	VET	CUFES			
Species		mean (sd)	mean (sd)	mean (sd)	mean (sd)			
Cod		4.48 (9.59)	3.82 (10.32)	0.07 (0.18)	0.05 (0.14)			
Dab		95.32 (244.53)	54.51 (114.19)	0.46 (0.36)	0.34 (0.36)			
Plaice	All	8.68 (16.65)	7.36 (16.09)	0.10 (0.17)	0.11 (0.21)			
Flounder	stages	8.66 (37.88)	24.55 (81.69)	0.05 (0.13)	0.11 (0.21)			
Whiting		15.69 (49.06)	8.45 (28.86)	0.08 (0.16)	0.07 (0.18)			
Am. Plaice		0.77 (2.69)	0.55 (2.44)	0.01 (0.05)	0.01 (0.08)			
Rocklings		0.95 (2.59)	0.96 (3.78)	0.02 (0.07)	0.02 (0.09)			
Cod		2.48 (5.79)	2.58 (8.06)	0.08 (0.20)	0.06 (0.15)			
Dab		54.29 (135.31)	40.53 (90.72)	0.62 (0.35)	0.49 (0.39)			
Plaice	Stage	2.78 (9.18)	2.69 (6.33)	0.08 (0.16)	0.08 (0.18)			
Flounder	1	5.25 (26.81)	14.86 (61.16)	0.06 (0.18)	0.12 (0.25)			
Whiting		8.27 (27.60)	5.41 (19.96)	0.10 (0.19)	0.09 (0.21)			
Am. Plaice		0.39 (1.64)	0.31 (1.32)	0.01 (0.04)	0.01 (0.08)			
Rocklings		0.58 (1.65)	0.61 (2.55)	0.03 (0.10)	0.03 (0.13)			
Cod		2.00 (5.65)	1.21 (3.40)	0.06 (0.15)	0.04 (0.10)			
Dab		41.02 (131.92)	13.98 (37.86)	0.46 (0.36)	0.31 (0.34)			
Plaice	Stage	5.90 (12.18)	4.66 (12.02)	0.20 (0.29)	0.23 (0.32)			
Flounder	2+	3.41 (13.99)	9.65 (27.19)	0.08 (0.21)	0.22 (0.32)			
Whiting		7.42 (24.12)	2.97 (11.75)	0.10 (0.20)	0.06 (0.15)			
Am. Plaice		0.38 (1.93)	0.23 (1.82)	0.02 (0.08)	0.01 (0.07)			
Rocklings		0.38 (1.41)	0.31 (1.40)	0.03 (0.13)	0.01 (0.09)			

1.3.5 Predicting the abundance of eggs in VET samples from CUFES

The density of eggs in VET samples were linearly related to those in the CUFES samples (Fig. 1.7) and local hydrological parameters (Fig 1.8).



Figure 1.7: Log-transformed egg abundance collected by VET as a function of logtransformed egg abundance collected by CUFES, a) dab, b) cod, c) plaice



Figure 1.8: Log-transformed egg abundance collected by VET as function of local hydrological parameters, a) wind speed, b) wind speed squared, c) inverse Depth and d) bedstress

This suggests that linear models (GLM) could be used to estimate egg densities over the whole water column (assuming that the VET acts as a 100% efficient sampling device) as a function of near-surface egg densities (CUFES) and additional parameters such as wind, wind², seabed stress and the inverse of the depth.

The best model selected on the basis of AIC for presence/absence are shown for each of the main species. Bedstress and to a lesser extent wind speed had an adverse effect on the probability of presence over all the water column of some species relative to surface samples (Table 1.4). However, the inverse of the depth seemed to have a positive effect on the probability of presence of eggs (mainly for flatfishes). Therefore shallow waters, low wind speed and high bedstress may increase the occurrence of eggs over the whole water column relative to surface samples. These effects however are variable among species.

Table 1.4: Binomial GLM models summary

	GLM binomial										
	CI	wind (p-value)		wind ² (p	-value)	1/dep	thT	Stres	sT		
	Slope	Slope p-value	Reg. Co	ef p-value	Reg. Coef	p-value	Reg. Coef	p-value	Reg. Coef	p-value	Adj-Ksq
Cod	-0.37	•	- 				- 		-1.48	NS	0.09
Dab	-7.96	***			0.00	**	15.29	***	-7.32	***	0.38
Plaice	-2.62	*					4.42	*	-6.57	***	0.26
Flounder	-6.79	***					6.86	*	-3.02	•	0.21
Whiting	-3.55	**	-0.04	•			4.59	*			0.12
Long rough dab	1.02	NS	-0.09	*			- 		-23.27	***	0.32
Rockling sp.	-0.96	*	-0.06	*	, , ,		1 1 1 1				0.11

NS p >0.05, • p = 0.05, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table	1.5:	Gaussian	GLM	models	summarv
1 4010	1.5.	Guussiun	OLM	moucib	Summary

		GLM Gaussian										
	Slope	n voluo	wind (p-	value)	wind ² (p	-value)	1/dep	thT	Stres	sT	Adi Dag	
	Slope	p-value	Reg. Coef	p-value	Reg. Coef	p-value	Reg. Coef	p-value	Reg. Coef	p-value	Auj-Ksq	
Cod	-0.17	NS	 		1 1 1		1.05	•	 		0.22	
Dab	-0.73						2.46	***			0.41	
Plaice	-0.20	NS	-0.05	*	0.00	**	1.74	**			0.33	
Flounder	0.28	NS			0.00	**			1.42		0.35	
Whiting	-0.90	NS	1 1 1		1 1 1		1.83	•	1 1 1		0.58	
Long rough dab	-1.57	NS			1 1 1 1 1 1		3.29	NS	1 1 1 1 1		0.46	
Rockling sp.	-0.78	NS					1.79	•			0.43	

NS p >0.05, • p = 0.05, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

In the conditional-abundance models (Table 1.5), wind speed and bedstress did not have a significant effect on most species egg densities over all the water column. The inclusion of the inverse of depth however, improved the relation between egg counts from CUFES and VET samples. Gaussian models appeared to have higher adjusted R^2 than binomial models illustrating that it may be possible to reproduce correctly the non null density levels using simple regression techniques such as ordinary linear regression. Still, for some species, the prediction may be improved by using the inverse depth as covariable. The effect of this covariable seemed similar to that described in the binomial model. Still, it seems more difficult however to correctly reproduce the occurrence of eggs over the water column from surface samples.

The predicted values of egg densities in VET from binomial and gaussian submodels were combined to form the delta model predictions which could be compared to the observed VET values (Table 1.6). The Spearman correlation present a significant correlation between observed and predicted values suggesting that the abundance of fish eggs in the water column can be estimated from CUFES data and hydrographical co-variables. However, Wilcoxon rank test showed that, apart from flounder, there was a significant difference between the means of VET observation and prediction. This represents a significant bias meaning that it may be difficult to use delta GLM model to accurately reproduce total abundance from surface samples, even with the help of hydrographical covariables. For each delta model, the adjusted R² was computed and showed that the fit of the delta models differed for each species. Generally, the adjusted R² was higher for abundant species like dab and plaice and lower for less abundant such as Americain plaice and rockling sp.

Delta model									
	Spearma	Spearman correlation Wicoxon rank test							
	Rho	p-value	V	p-value	Adj-Ksq				
Cod	0.4	***	9739	***	0.48				
Dab	0.5	***	15173	***	0.59				
Plaice	0.6	***	9819	***	0.63				
Flounder	0.48	***	3312	NS	0.22				
Whiting	0.43	***	6552	***	0.42				
Long rough dat	0.37	***	1040	***	0.31				
Rockling sp.	0.37	***	2711	***	0.3				

Table 1.6: Delta model evaluation summary: Spearman correlation, Wilcoxon rank test, Adjusted R² results

NS p >0.05, • p = 0.05, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

1.3.6 Diurnal rhythm: day-night variation

Bar charts were prepared to compare abundance of egg collected by CUFES during day and at night sampling for each species (Fig. 1.9). However, common sole egg density was too low to be represented on this figure.



Figure 1.9: Mean density (log-transformed numbers for 20m³) of eggs collected by the CUFES during day and night for each species

Regardless of species, the mean density of eggs collected by CUFES during day time and at night were 0.812 and 0.846 respectively which was not significant at this level of aggregation. When considering each species separately (Table 1.7), the ANOVA confirmed that there were little significant differences for many species. That why common sole and long rough dab occurred at too low numbers to be included in the ANOVA study (Table 1.8).

of day or night sampling		1 00	·
	Day	Night	

Table 1.7: Occurrence, mean and standard deviation of each species egg density as a function

	Da	ay	Night		
	Occurrence	Mean (Std)	Occurrence	Mean (Std)	
Dab	310	1.49 (0.68)	286	1.44 (0.69)	
Flounder	94	0.9 (0.43)	110	1.01 (0.46)	
Rockling species	76	0.49 (0.29)	79	0.41 (0.16)	
Cod	374	0.57 (0.34)	477	0.62 (0.33)	
Whiting	350	0.73 (0.47)	417	0.82 (0.55)	
Common sole	24	0.43 (0.19)	13	0.42 (0.15)	
Plaice	380	0.66 (0.34)	433	0.68 (0.35)	
Long rough dab	19	0.56 (0.28)	24	0.34 (0.11)	

Table 1.8: ANOVA results

Sq	Df	F-value	P-value	
0.44	1	0.9474	0.3307	NS
0.599	1	3.0212	0.0837	•
0.265	1	5.1069	0.02524	*
0.479	1	4.294	0.03855	*
1.613	1	6.1178	0.0136	*
0.049	1	0.425	0.5146	NS
	Sq 0.44 0.599 0.265 0.479 1.613 0.049	Sq Df 0.44 1 0.599 1 0.265 1 0.479 1 1.613 1 0.049 1	SqDfF-value0.4410.94740.59913.02120.26515.10690.47914.2941.61316.11780.04910.425	SqDfF-valueP-value0.4410.94740.33070.59913.02120.08370.26515.10690.025240.47914.2940.038551.61316.11780.01360.04910.4250.5146

NS: not significant, \bullet p-value = 0.05, * p-value < 0.05

There is no significant difference for flatfishes such as dab, flounder and plaice. But there is a significant difference for Gadidae species. Indeed whiting and cod eggs were at higher abundance at night whereas rockling species eggs were more numerous in day samples. This may have implication for the interpretation of CUFES use for these species.

1.3.7 Temporal variation analysis

The temporal analysis was carried out near Boulogne sur Mer and near Ijmuiden. Firstly, near Boulogne sur Mer, plot analysis showed that although the egg density was very variable, no particular temporal trend in egg density seemed to occur over the studied period (Fig.1.10).



Figure 1.10: Log-transformed stage 1 eggs densities for all species, collected during IBTS 2009 in function of time (in hours), near Boulogne sur Mer.

This analysis was performed for each species (ANNEX D) and demonstrated that cod, whiting and dab were very abundant near Boulogne sur Mer, but that their densities had

decreased towards the end of the survey. Dab eggs however were abundant over all the survey at this location. Similarly, plaice eggs, although less abundant displayed no evolution in density during the survey duration. From this analysis, four periods were defined during IBTS 2009: 17-18 January, 19-20 January, 21-22 January; these three periods corresponds to trawling and acoustic prospecting in the study area and 13 February that corresponds to the return to Boulogne Harbour at the end of the survey. All ANOVA yielded non-significant results and no differences in each species egg density could be detected during the study period in 2009, with the exception of whiting for which a slight decrease of abundance was observed at the end of the survey in that area (Fig. 1.11).



Figure 1.11: Log-transformed stage 1 eggs densities of whiting, collected during IBTS 2009 in function of time (in hours) near Boulogne sur mer.

The same analysis was performed near Ijmuiden where three periods were defined: 30 January that corresponds to the arrival at Ijmuiden port, 31 January -1 February, that corresponds to departure to Ijmuiden port and 10-11 February that corresponds to trawling at this location (Fig. 1.12). Here again, no significant difference in egg density of any species could be detected between the three periods defined. These results revealed that for most species studied, in 2009 and in the two locations studied, there may be little change in egg density over the survey duration as a result of increased or decreased spawning intensity.



Figure 1.12: Log-transformed stage 1 eggs densities of all species, collected during IBTS 2009 in function of time (in hours) near Ijmuiden

1.4 Discussion

In order to evaluate the utility of CUFES for the conditions and species found in the southern North Sea, this study aimed to compare results from CUFES with those from conventional, depth-integrated plankton sampling. This comparison was made in terms of mapping the distributions of the fish eggs, comparing the densities and relative composition of numerous species and attempting to estimate the total egg densities in the water column from surface samples.

Because the intake of the CUFES is at a fixed depth close to the sea surface, its sampling efficiency is affected by multiple interacting factors including fish spawning depth, changes in egg buoyancy with development and water column conditions. Healthy pelagic fish eggs are generally positively buoyant and under calm conditions are expected to accumulate close to the surface (Ådlandsvik *et al.*, 2001; Conway *et al.*, 1997). The vertical profile of egg abundance often follows an exponential-decay model (Pépin *et al.*, 2005) but under conditions of wind stress eggs will be mixed down in the water column which can lead to a sub-surface peak in abundance. Given data on egg size, buoyancy and wind-stress it is sometimes possible to produce reasonably accurate predictions of the vertical distribution of fish eggs assuming steady-state conditions (Sundby, 1983; Pepin *et al.*, 2005) but, as pointed out by Pepin *et al.*, the buoyancy has only been conducted on a limited range of species.

Vertical egg distributions with sub-surface peaks are not uncommon, for example Coombs et al. (1985), sampling in the western English Channel, reported that the highest

concentrations of sprat eggs were found just above the thermocline at 20-30 m depth. Strongly stratified water columns often appear to be associated with sub-surface egg maxima (Coombs *et al.*, 1985; Ouellet *et al.*, 1997; Pepin *et al.*, 2005) and CUFES may not sample efficiently in such conditions. Although the water column in the southern North Sea during winter and spring is generally well mixed due to strong tidal action (Radach *et al.*, 1993; Lund-Hansen *et al.*, 1996; Fox *et al.*, 2005) salinity gradients do occur, especially close to the coasts (Munk *et al.*, 2009). However, the CTD profiles collected during the IBTS showed that there was minimal thermal or salinity vertical stratification across the majority of the study area in January-February.

In the present study, the probability of finding a species was higher in VET samples compared with CUFES. This could reflect vertical distribution patterns but might also relate to the total volumes of water sampled by the two gears (CUFES approx. $20m^3$ per sample compared with VET up to $67m^3$ per sample). Differences in sampling efficiency between the two gears were not however large enough to unduly influence distribution maps. However complementary sampling using both gears may be necessary if the aim is to assess ichthyoplankton biodiversity or to map the distribution of rare species (Checkley *et al.*, 2000; Pepin *et al.*, 2005).

Comparison of the relative proportions of eggs of different taxa in CUFES and VET samples from the southern North Sea also showed similar species compositions although flounder was much better represented in CUFES than in VET. This could be the result of either very positive egg buoyancy for this species or a near-surface spawning behaviour. There are few reports on natural spawning behaviour of fishes and most of our knowledge has come from studies on captive fish. Several species are known to spawn near the surface e.g. Baynes (1994) observed tank-reared sole swimming to the surface to spawn and there are anecdotal reports of sole spawning at the surface at night in the wild. Borremans (1987) however stated that sole spawn around shallow (< 30 m) sandbanks but buoyant eggs would probably still reach the surface relatively quickly. However, other species are thought to spawn in mid-water or at depth e.g. acoustic observations of cod spawning columns in western Atlantic suggested that the fish were spawning at 75m off the bottom when total water depth was 350 m (Rose, 1993).

Pépin *et al.* (2005) studying American plaice and Ouellet *et al.* (1997) studying cod both reported that stage 1 eggs were more abundant at depth relative to later stages. Moreover, egg density may increase just prior to hatching resulting in a deeper abundance maxima for later stage eggs (Coombs *et al.*, 2004). This was not apparent in our results where both early and later developmental stages were equally represented in VET and CUFES samples (Zwolinski *et al.*, 2004; Checkley *et al.*, 1997). The relative shallowness of the southern North Sea compared with other areas such as the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the lack of thermal stratification in the southern North Sea could explain these differences.

Because egg based methods are increasingly being used to generate stock assessments, there has been great interest in whether CUFES data can be used to estimate total egg abundance in the water column (Pépin *et al.*, 2005; Pépin *et al.*, 2007). Simple models based on egg density, water column density and wind stress have been used to successfully model the vertical distribution of cod (Sundby *et al.*, 1983), anchovy and sardine eggs (Boyra *et al.*, 2003). Similarly, using a 1D hydrodynamic model, Petitgas *et al.* (2006 a) succeeded in reproducing observed vertical egg distributions for several different species (sardine, sprat, anchovy and blue whiting) in the Bay of Biscay. Such results suggest that it should, in theory, be possible to predict total egg abundance in the water column from CUFES data.

In the present study there was a positive and significant correlation between egg densities found in CUFES and VET samples collected at the same location and time confirming the general proportionality between the two gears. However, Pépin et al. (2007) concluded that the increased variance in CUFES compared with Bongo net samples would lead to a significant loss in precision in estimates of total egg abundance and inclusion of environmental variables did not lead to any major improvement. In the present study, the addition of wind speed, bedstress and depth parameters did lead to some improvement in model fit between CUFES and VET data. As observed in previous studies (Coombs et al., 2003; Pépin et al., 2007), wind speed and bedstress had a slight effect egg density predictions, but only for some species. Results indicated however, that low wind speeds combined with shallow water and low bedstress increased the probability of eggs being found in the rest of the water column rather than at the surface. In these particular conditions, typical of the German Bight during the period of study, CUFES samples had lower occurrence frequency than VET. In this area, eggs seemed to be out of reach of CUFES operating depth (5m) being either closer to the surface or, on the contrary, held down at a lower depth. However, when it came to reproducing the egg density levels, only depth was truly relevant. Selected models were different for each species showing that spawning behaviour and location as well as species specific egg buoyancy will affect relative catch ratios between CUFES and VET. Finally, the delta model failed to reproduce accurately the density levels observed in the water column, partly because the underlying binomial GLM could not fully account for difference in occurrence frequency between both devices. Moreover, the delta model reproduced the

average positive densities weighted by the probability of presence. GLM being based on mean values, the Gaussian model tend to smooth predictions and not reproduce extremely high observations. However, the binomial model will generate low probability of presence by taking into account absence data. As a result, the delta model will often produce lower predictions than observed.

Moreover, major egg production occurs at night but sporadic spawning may occur during the day (Solmundsson *et al.*, 2003). However, Nichols (1989) showed that 90% of plaice spawn at night, with a peak of spawning before midnight. A complementary but limited study of the 2009 data revealed that there was no significant day/night difference in flatfishes egg densities such as dab, flounder and plaice. However, there was a significant difference for gadidae with whiting and cod eggs were in higher abundance at night whereas rockling species eggs were relatively more abundant in day samples. For these species, the continuous use of en-route CUFES over day and night may generate errors as area sampled at day may yield different density levels that than those sampled at night. However, considering the amount of variability generated by the daytime of sampling, it would likely be screened by the much larger spatial variability resulting from the ship displacement from a low density area to a large density area for any given species. Moreover, there was hardly any difference in egg density at two given location over the survey duration in 2009, proving that the CUFES results may almost be used as a synoptic view of the study area at that time of the year.

The main advantage of CUFES is that sampling does not interfere with other ship activities and can continue, even in bad weather conditions whereas VET require stationary sampling and cannot be performed in rough seas (Checkley *et al.*, 2000). CUFES has proven to be dependable, simple to operate and reliable on the abundance (Lo *et al.*, 2001). The present study proved the effectiveness of the CUFES to estimate the abundance of eggs named from several bentho-demersal species in the Eastern English Channel and Southern North Sea during winter. Providing that a more performant model may be found to interconvert surface and water column densities, such data may therefore be used to improve both stock assessment based on Daily Eggs Production Method (DEPM, Checkley *et al.*, 2000) as well as the precise delineation of spawning areas and ecological studies of processes generating small scales aggregation structures.

CHAPTER 2

Geostatistical analyses and spatial distribution of fish eggs

This chapter presents maps, geostatistical analyses and interpolated results, based on two submitted articles. The first (2) which presents maps of the distribution of fish eggs per species collected by Vertical Egg Trawl (plankton net or VET) and Continuous Underway Fish Eggs Sampler (CUFES), and illustrated that the same patterns of distribution may be obtained by both methods. It concludes that CUFES allows higher resolution mapping. The second (4) which presents the data of each IBTS that was used to study the spawning areas.

(1) Lelièvre S., Vaz S. and Fox C. The effectiveness of the Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler (CUFES) compared with standard vertical plankton hauls for sampling the eggs of demersal species in the southern North Sea. *Submitted to Fisheries Oceanography*.

(5) Lelièvre S., Vaz, S. and Loots, C. Recurrent spawning grounds and spawning habitat modelling of dab (*Limanda Limanda*), plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*), cod (*Gadus morhua*) and whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*), in the North Sea between 2006-2009. *Submitted to ICES Journal of Marine Science*.

Mapping of egg distribution resulting from sampling with VET and CUFES (chapter 1) revealed fairly similar patterns although null density could occur more often in CUFES in particular hydrological conditions. Geostatistical analyses revealed that although variability of CUFES at a small scale was higher compared to VET, it may be able to reveal finer spatial structures. Broad spatial patterns were similar but because CUFES has a higher horizontal sampling intensity compared to VET, it provides a suitable method for mapping egg distributions of the main fish species producing planktonic eggs during winter in the Southern North Sea. The location of winter spawning grounds of fishes in the Southern North Sea and

the Eastern Channel was determined and the changes of several winter spawning species spatial distribution and their extent was described between 2006-2009.

2.1 Introduction

Fish populations are not distributed randomly in space but exhibit spatial patterns (Loots, 2009). The spatial distribution of fish eggs is influenced by environmental parameters (Bellier et al., 2007) and the location of spawning may be for example related to the formation of frontal area (Munk et al., 2002; Munk et al.2009). As a result, spawning grounds may partly reflect the spatial pattern of environmental characteristics favouring them. Moreover, the life cycle of fish often has a spatial structure of different phases that is very important. Indeed, the reproduction areas, where adults are encountered, are distinct from those where the juveniles are and those occupied by eggs and larvae. From a spatial perspective, spawning areas are essential because they are considered as crossroads through which individuals of different stages pass at a giving time. Moreover, it was hypothesized that the patterns of spatial distribution of the reproduction will affect the recruitment (Borja et al., 1998, 2008) and the distribution of reproduction by altering the demographics of the population (Bellier et al., 2007). So, location of spawning grounds is an essential point for understanding the spatial and temporal dynamics of fish populations. The ability to map habitats where spawning actually occurs is essential to describe what Planque et al. (2007) defined as « realised habitat ».

CUFES has been successfully used to collect pelagic fish eggs (Checkley *et al.*, 1997 and chapter 1) and to map the distribution of eggs of pelagic species such as sardine and anchovy (Petitgas *et al.*, 2006 b). Spatial structure can be identified and described using geostatistics (Petitgas, 1993; Petitgas, 2001). Geostatistical interpolation techniques were applied in order to produce the spatial pattern of any given marine species (Carpentier *et al.*, 2009).

The aim of this chapter was to present distribution maps, some obtained by geostatistical analyses and interpolated methods to produce spatial distribution of eggs. Results from CUFES were compared with those from conventional depth-integrated plankton sampling in terms of distributions of the fish eggs. Spatial structures can be identified and described quantitatively using geostatistics (Matheron, 1962; Petitgas, 1993; Petitgas, 2001). Geostatistical analyses were used to study the spatial structures obtained by both methodologies and to produce spatial distribution of fish eggs collected by VET and CUFES

in order to illustrate the reliability of CUFES in describing spatial patterns. Geostatistical analyses were also used to observe the distribution of fish eggs collected by continuous sampling (CUFES) to localise spawning areas of each species in the Eastern Channel and southern North Sea. CUFES sampling yielded a high sampling resolution and allowed to better delineate the location of winter spawning grounds of fish in the Southern North Sea and the Eastern Channel.

2.2 Material and method

2.2.1 Data collection

All eggs samples were collected during the IBTS (International Bottom Trawl Survey) sea survey that takes place each year in the North Sea and eastern part of the English Channel (Chapter 1). Fish eggs were collected by the CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Eggs Sampler, cf chapter 1) and were fixed in a 0.9% buffered formalin seawater solution (Mastail and Battaglia, 1978, chapter 4). Fish eggs were identified to species level, under a binocular microscope, based on morphological criteria. Eggs numbers were standardised in term of abundances within a volume of 20 m³ (close to that filtered during 30mn) (chapter 1).

The first part of this study was to compare fish eggs distribution collected by CUFES with fish eggs distribution collected by plankton net. For that, stationary VET and CUFES data from IBTS 2006-2008 was used (same data as chapter 1). The second part of the study is based on the first quarter (January-February) of the survey from years 2006 to 2009 (Table 2.1) in order to observe spatio-temporal dynamic of the fish eggs distribution of each species.

Table 2 1: Survey period between 2006 and 2009. For each year, the number of samplescollected with the Continuous Underway Fish Eggs Sampler is also indicated

	Start of the sea	End of the sea	Number of CUFES
	survey	survey	samples
2006	28 th January	21 st February	884
2007	29th January	22nd February	878
2008	27 th January	21 st February	1 050
2009	14 th January	13th February	1 103

Figure 2.1 shows the vessel trajectories with the number of CUFES samples collected during the surveys between 2006 and 2009 and illustrates the high sampling intensity (every 30 min). The French research vessel "Thalassa" samples yearly the southern part of the North Sea and the Eastern Channel and all the study area was covered by CUFES samples.



Figure 2 1: Sampling design performed using the CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish egg Sampler) during the first quarter of the IBTS (International Bottom Trawl Survey) for each year between 2006 and 2009. (IBTS 2006 + left, IBTS 2007 O middle left, IBTS 2008 X middle right and IBTS 2009 \blacktriangle right)

2.2.2 VET-CUFES mapping distribution comparison

Rough maps of fish egg densities of different species and egg developmental stages were generated from the CUFES and VET (Vertical plankton haul) data at stationary locations to illustrate their distribution. However, only rough maps of dab egg distributions (all stages combined) for each year and the average distribution of the three years (2006-2008) for cod and plaice for each developmental stages (earlier stage and advanced stage) are presented here. Then, continuous maps of all en-route CUFES samples were produced using geostatistical analyses on fish eggs distribution all stages combined for each year (Webster and Oliver, 2001) to illustrate the distribution patterns of some selected species and to compare spatial pattern resulting from sampling in station and en route sampling.

2.2.3 Geostatistical analyses

Spatial structures can be identified and described quantitatively using geostatistics (Matheron, 1962; Petitgas, 1993; Petitgas, 2001). Geostatistics embody a suite of methods for analysing spatial data and allow the estimation of the values of a variable of interest at non-sampled locations from more or less sparse sample data points based on spatial auto-correlation between these points. Geostatistical estimation is known by the general term kriging. Geostatistics and kriging were used extensively to produce species distribution and environmental continuous maps (Webster and Oliver, 2001).

Prior to analysis, longitudes were transformed into equivalent decimal degrees of latitude (longitude×cos((latitude× π)/180)) which are of constant distance using a mercator-

like projection formula. Also, abundances of the eggs were log-transformed $(\log 10(x+1))$, with x the abundance) to be closer to normality.

For each variable of interest and each year, a variogram was calculated. The variogram (Figure 2.2), the central tool of geostatistics, is a function that measures the relation between pairs of observations, which are certain distances apart. It describes the way the variable of interest varies as the function of the distance between the data points. The distances between the points were calculated using latitudes and corrected longitudes. In the presence of a spatial drift, the variable of interest was primarily modelled by fitting a low-order polynomial (linear or quadratic regression) to the spatial coordinates using the least-square regression method. If the variance explained by the regression accounted for more than 30% of the total variance, the experimental variogram was then calculated on the residuals. There is no strict statistical criteria to decide when this detrending procedure should be carried out but empirical observation confirmed that it makes little difference and certainly no improvement to the variogram shape when the amount of trend is below this threshold.

Four models (exponential, circular, spherical and pentaspherical) were visually and statistically adjusted to the experimental variogram using least-squares regression in order to determine the nugget, the sill and the range.

The range, which marked the limit of spatial dependence, indicated the average diameter of patches (Webster and Oliver, 2001). Furthermore, the amount of spatial structuring (i.e. the proportion of data variability) explained by the variogram was estimated as the variance attributable to spatial dependence (C) divided by the sill variance (i.e. the maximum variance in the data calculated as the sum $(C + C_0)$, C_0 being the nugget variance). The nugget was the amount of variance not explained by the spatial model and arising mostly from variation occurring over distances smaller than the sampling interval. Q was null in the case of 'pure nugget' variograms (modelled by a constant value equal to the sill variance) indicating the lack of detectable spatial dependence at the survey scale, although the spatial structuring might have occurred at a finer scale. As Q increased, a greater proportion of the data variability could be explained by the variogram model. High values of Q (up to a maximum of 1) indicated that the variable distribution was strongly structured in space. The model with the best visual and statistical fit was usually retained as the theoretical variogram. Nevertheless, for the purpose of spatial pattern comparison between VET and CUFES samples, the same model was retained for both type of data and was chosen as the one with the highest fit in both cases.

Finally, the theoretical variogram parameters obtained from en-route CUFES samples data were used to estimate egg densities on the knots of a regular grid using ordinary kriging or universal kriging in the case of a spatial drift. Kriging interpolations resulted in continuous maps illustrating the distribution patterns of some selected species.

There was a difference of sampling location between each year and in order to eliminate its potential effect on the interpolation, a preliminary data exploration resulted in optimised and constant interpolation parameters to suit the survey design across all years. This analyse consisted in resampling a given continuous map using the four different sampling designs and in evaluating and comparing the effect of different kriging parameters on the re-interpolation of this known property.

The average distance between nearby pairs of observations from adjacent transects, corresponding to the survey resolution, was 0.25 decimal degree of latitude (ie around 21.87 km) and was used to set the mesh size of the interpolation grid, the search radius of nearby values was set to 0.5 (i.e. twice the average separation distance between transects) and the number of neighbours used were taken between a set minimum of five and maximum of fifteen data points. The geostatistical analyses were undertaken using Genstat (GenStat Release 7.1., 2004).



Figure 2 2: Experimental (X) and a circular theoretical (curve) variograms. The variogram increases to a maximum called sill variance. The lag distance at which the sill is reached (the range) marks the limit of spatial dependence. The variogram has a positive intercept on the ordinate axis, called nugget variance

2.2.4 Checking the persistence of the observed patterns

Using the interpolated fish egg distribution, the ratio of spatial variance over temporal variance was calculated as a criteria to examine how the distribution varies in space and time (Planque *et al.*, 2006). Firstly, the spatial variance was calculated as the mean variance between all grid cells over all years and the temporal variance as the mean variance between years over all grid cells. A ratio exceeding 1 means that the egg distribution is more variable in space than in time, which indicates a spatial structure that tends to persist in time. A ratio less than 1 indicates that there is more variation in time than in space, which means that temporal variance greatly exceeds geographical difference (Planque *et al.*, 2006; Loots 2009).

2.2.5 Production of continuous representation of fish egg distribution

Abundances of fish eggs were mapped into a geographical information system using ArcMap 9.1 (ESRI) software with the spatial analyst extension in order to create a continuous raster of 0.008 decimal degree resolution displaying the spatial patterns of each variable, as described by the variogram. Extrapolated areas (located outside of the study area were suppressed from the maps. For each year and each species per stage of development, an experimental variogram was computed.

2.2.6 Studying the effect of reduced sampling intensity on observed spatial patterns

CUFES occurred continuously during the entire IBTS sea survey thus allowing a much higher resolution than VET. Nevertheless, each survey generated close to 1000 samples and it may be reasonable to reduce this number in the future if it does not alter the overall resolution. A resolution analysis was performed to investigate the effect of reducing the sampling intensity to 1/3 without changing the sampling protocol (30 minutes samples) to maintain the compatibility between data and enable future inter-annual comparison. Three datasets simulating the collection of one sample out of three were built. Geostatistical analyses and interpolated maps were done for each subset to observe the potential effect of a lower CUFES sampling resolution.

2.3 Results

2.3.1 VET-CUFES mapping distribution comparison

Dab (*Limanda limanda*) was the most abundant and frequent species in both VET and CUFES samples. The distribution pattern of dab eggs (all stages combined) was, on first inspection, similar comparing the initial maps based on CUFES and VET data for all years (Fig. 2.3). Both VET and CUFES sampling showed that dab eggs were widely distributed in the central and eastern parts of the study area, from the English Channel to the German Bight but were less common in deeper water off the north-eastern coast of England.



Figure 2 3: Distribution maps of eggs of dab (log-transformed of standardised number of eggs for 20 m³), all developmental stages combined collected by CUFES and VET for each year

Although maps were produced for each species, only the second most important species in terms of abundance and frequency cod (Fig. 2.4) and plaice (Fig. 2.5) are presented here for each developmental stage. Distribution patterns for each separate year were, like dab, visually, fairly similar each year so only the aggregate (of the 3 years) data are presented.

Cod and plaice egg distributions were similar using both CUFES and VET data although overall egg densities were lower than for dab. Whether early or later stages of eggs were considered, the distribution appeared to be visually fairly similar in both devices but there were more samples with zero eggs using the CUFES. This was particularly noticeable in the German Bight.



Figure 2.4: Distribution maps of cod egg densities $(\log_{10}(\text{egg number for } 20\text{m}^3 \text{ filtered } + 1))$ collected by VET and CUFES over the three years (2006-2008, all years were overlaid) for early and older stages.



Figure 2.5: Distribution maps of plaice egg densities ($log_{10}(egg number for 20m^3 filtered + 1)$) collected by VET and CUFES over the three years (2006-2008) for early and older stages

Variogram parameters for the most abundant species and each year were determined for stationary data in order to compare CUFES and VET representation of egg density spatial structure (Table 2.2). The presence of spatial trends or drift was explored before each geostatistical analyses and, if this percentage exceeded 30%, the same trend was generally observed for a given species in data from both the CUFES and VET. Some variograms appeared completely unstructured meaning that there was no obvious spatial dependency in the data and only a nugget variance could be estimated ("pure nugget") e.g. for cod eggs in 2006 there was no detectable spatial structure either in the VET or CUFES data. Finally the amount of spatial structure and the range of the theoretical variogram could only be compared for those variables for which no trend or the same amount of trend could be detected in both CUFES and VET datasets and if the same variogram model was used. Generally, VET sampling explaines a larger amount of spatial structure than CUFES indicating that egg densities were more variable at small distances than VET's. However, the ranges determined from CUFES samples were generally similar or lower than those determined from VET samples. This indicated equivalent or slightly smaller patch sizes than what would be inferred from VET data.

Table 2 2: Comparison of geostatistical analyses between VET and stationary CUFES from 2006 to 2008 (n = 274)

			VET				CUFES			
Species	Year	Trend fit	Model	% spatial structure	Range	Trend fit	Model	% spatial structure	Range	
Dab	2006	57.7	pentaspherical	0.80	1.72	36.2	pentaspherical	0.63	1.96	
Plaice	2006	-	circular	0.82	2.66	-	circular	0.62	1.99	
Cod	2006	-	pure nugget	-	-	-	pure nugget	-	-	
Dab	2007		circular	1.00	2.58		circular	0.91	2.06	
Plaice	2007	40.2	circular	0.22	2.52	40.4	circular	0.22	2.75	
Cod	2007		circular	0.88	3.14		circular	0.90	2.81	
Dab	2008	-	circular	0.64	0.80	-	circular	0.36	0.49	
Plaice	2008	-	circular	0.61	0.85	-	circular	0.68	0.84	
Cod	2008	-	circular	0.49	0.56	-	circular	0.27	0.68	

Trend fit : % variation explained by quadratic trend and removed before variographic analysis; Model: variogram model used; % spatial structure: the amount of spatial structuring explained by the variogram; **Range: approximate the** average diameter of patches

However, underway CUFES sampling resulted in a very large number of samples, which greatly increased the spatial cover and the egg distribution resolution. During the IBTS, CUFES ran continuously and 947 samples were collected in 2006, 878 in 2007 and 1,050 in 2008 (Figure 2.1). Variogram parameters for each species and year were determined and are presented in ANNEX E. Kriged interpolation based on geostatistical analyses results of these large datasets may be used to produce higher resolution maps that could be averaged over the available period of time. Figure 2.6 present the distribution of all species combined collected underway by CUFES for each year.



Figure 2 6: Distribution of all eggs regardless of the species collected underway by CUFES in 2006, in 2007 and in 2008

Similarly, interpolated maps by year were produced (ANNEX H) for each species but only the interpolated maps of the mean of the 3 years of the eggs distribution for dab, cod and plaice (Fig. 2.7) are presented.



Figure 2 7: Distribution of eggs collected underway by CUFES from 2006-2008, for dab, cod and plaice

Similarly, no major differences between years so amalgamated maps are presented here. Plaice eggs were widely distributed over the study area, mainly in the central part, just as dab eggs, wich presente also another patch near the Belgian and Dutch coasts. Cod also presented a concentration of eggs in the Channel. The egg distributions depicted earlier in VET and stationary CUFES may be compared to these later interpolated maps of the underway data and show similar distribution patterns. However, the larger number of samples collected underway by CUFES generated more finely-resolved maps revealing finer spatial detail than could be achieved using the VET data alone.

2.3.2 Spatial distribution of spawning area

Geostatistics

Seventy variograms (one per species, per development stage and per year) were computed and adjusted on the abundance of fish eggs between 2006-2009. Variogram parameters (the spatial trend, the sill, the nugget and the range) were presented in ANNEX E.
The amount of variance explained by extracting a quadratic trend prior to variographic analyses of each year were given in figure 2.8. The amount of variation explained by long-range trend for fish eggs stage 1 seemed to be fairly constant from year to year conversely to older stages where there was a high variability between years. Generally, the fit of the resulting variogram model was high, between 70 and 100% with a majority around 95% and the same model was generally used for a same species over the four year. For Rockling species, stage 1, in 2008 and 2009, no spatial structure could be detected and pure nugget effect model was used. The same occurred for both stages of sole, in 2009.



Figure 2 8: The Amount of long-range trend (% variance explained by the quadratic trend) for each species, per year and developmental stage.

The range, which marked the limit of spatial dependence, indicated the average diameter of patches (Fig. 2.9). It seemed to remain stable over time for each species with the exception of cod which increased in 2008. The observed ranges were generally smaller for stage 1 eggs that for older stages which were more variables. This indicated constantly smaller patches for early stages than for older stages. The amount of spatial structuring of early stage eggs showed high values indicating that these were generally strongly structured in space with the exception of rockling species and cod eggs (Fig. 2.9). The amount of spatial structuring was generally lesser for stage 2 eggs indicating that these were less spatially structured in space and more variable.



Figure 2.9: The range extent (decimal °) extracted from the variogram for each species per year and development stages.



Figure 2.10: The amount of spatially structured variability (Q) extracted from the variogram for each species per year and development stages

Optimisation of interpolation parameters

Geostatistical analyses and interpolations were adapted to map high resolution CUFES samples. The average distance between nearby pairs of observations on adjacent transects, corresponding to the survey resolution, was close to 0.25 and was used to set the mesh size of the interpolation grid. The search radius of nearby values was set to 0.5 (i.e. twice the average separation distance between transects) and the number of neighbours used were taken between a set minimum of five and maximum of fifteen data points to obtain a degree of

smoothing which prevent yearly trajectories to create specific pattern as artefact (ANNEX F). The same kriging parameters were used to performed all the interpolations in order to smooth out any sampling design effect. As a result, a simple visual inspection confirmed that the difference in boat trajectories had little effect on the interpolated patterns.

Reduction of the sampling intensity on the observed patterns

The resolution analysis undertaken to investigate the effect of reducing the sampling intensity to 1/3 showed that little information was lost in term of spatial structure and pattern description. All three subsets had very similar variographic properties and pattern of egg distribution for most species, with the exception of relatively low occurrence species such as long rough dab or rockling species (ANNEX G).

Fish eggs distribution patterns

The geostatistical interpolation method (kriging) has enabled mapping of most species egg identified. The resulting maps illustrated the distribution of spawning grounds from 2006 to 2009. and allowed the comparison of distribution patterns across years, for each species stage (ANNEX H).

Generally, stage 1 fish eggs (ANNEX H1) were widespread over the study area, except in the northwestern part of the North Sea, near the Scottish coasts. Spawning areas seemed more important near Belgian, Dutch and Danish coasts. Due to the low occurence and abundance of trisopterus sp., this group could not be represented spatially. The logtransformed density of eggs regardless of species and egg stage increased from 2006 and 2007 (5.8 and 10.2, respectively) and remained between this range of value thereafter (7.4 in 2008) and 9.14 in 2009). Many species were widespread over the study area such as plaice; dab and cod with higher concentrations offshore the Dutch and Danish coasts. Plaice and dab were the most abundant species egg found. Dab was also very abundant on the Dogger Bank. Cod abundances were similar between years with locally high concentrations near Dutch coasts and low abundances in Channel. Conversely, flounder and whiting seemed to be more inshore near the French, Belgian and Dutch coasts. Flounder egg distribution may extend northward up to the Danish coasts and its abundance remained similar over the study period. Whiting egg density, however, were in constant increase over the period of study. Rockling eggs, were suspected to include two or three different rockling species spawn, which could not be distinguished by morphological criteria. These eggs were mainly found inshore in 2006 and 2008 and offshore in 2007 and 2009. Long rough dab was mostly localised in the north of the

study area and its abundance remain stable over the period of study (between 0.68 and 1.04). Sole showed a very localised spawning area in the Eastern English Channel and in the south of the study area with very low abundance and no sole egg could be identified in 2006.

Little difference was visually observed in the spatial distribution of early stage eggs (1) and older stage eggs (2 and over) (ANNEX H2). Generally, well developed eggs were more diffused and less abundant but the average patch size described by the variogram range were of the same order of magnitude.

Spatio-temporal variability

The ratio of the spatial variance over the temporal variance was over 1 for all species (table 2.3), indicating that the pattern of fish eggs distribution was quite constant in time. With the exception of flounder, which has a ratio of 0.67, indicating, that the pattern of flounder eggs distribution varied greatly from year to year.

Table 2 3: Ratio of the spatio-temporal variability of fish eggs (stage 1) distribution, between 2006-2009 for all species combined and each species. A ratio exceeding 1 means that the fish eggs distribution tends to persist in time

	All species	Dab	Flounder	Rockling	Whiting	Cod	Sole	Plaice	Am. Plaice
Spatial variability	3.87	0.66	0.13	0.02	0.15	0.12	0.01	0.18	0.02
Temporal variability	1.31	0.15	0.20	0.02	0.12	0.10	0.01	0.12	0.01
Ratio spatio-temporal variability	2.96	4.34	0.67	1.06	1.24	1.19	1.35	1.51	1.85

2.4 Discussion

This study has enabled the mapping of fish eggs for each developmental stage and highlighted the distribution of spawning grounds for each species. It is well known that plankton in general tend to occur patchy so it is very likely that some differences in the species collected by VET and CUFES occur. Maps of distribution of fish eggs collected by both devices, for each species were made and illustrated that the almost the same general patterns of distribution may be obtained by both methods regardless of stages.

However, slight differences may be noted in term of lesser occurrence frequency in the German Bight in the CUFES samples than in the VET samples. Our study also distinguished eggs of stage 1 (early stage of development) and stage 2 and over (advanced development stage). Pépin *et al.* (2005) and Ouellet *et al.* (1997) found that stage 1 eggs may be more

abundant in the sub-surface layer than later stages which may be distributed all over the water column. Our results showed that both stages were equally represented in VET and CUFES samples and confirmed other studies (Checkley *et al.*, 1997; Zwolinski *et al.*,2004). However, our data show that these differences are generally relatively small but it may be necessary to undertake complementary sampling using both gears when the aim is to assess ichthyoplankton biodiversity or to map the distribution of rare species (Checkley *et al.*, 2000).

Regardless of sampling device, there were some differences between spatial distributions of early and later stage eggs by species. Such differences would be generated by dispersal and mortality due to bad environmental conditions, predation, cannibalism (Bunn *et al.*, 2000) or adult spawners displacement along the spawning season. In the southern North Sea, there is a strong tendency for eggs spawned in the western Channel to be transported eastwards as a result of tidal and wind-driven flows towards the Dutch coast and the German Bight (STST, Harden *et al.*, 1979; Bakun, 1996; Van der Veer *et al.*, 1998; Bolle *et al.*, 2009) corresponding to coastal nursery grounds.

Geostatistical analyses, aimed at quantifying the spatial structures in the data, confirmed that the observed patterns were comparable in many ways between the two sampling gears. Nevertheless, a larger amount of spatial structure could be explained with VET sampling than CUFES indicating that the CUFES samples egg densities were more variables at smaller distances than VET's. Such differences were probably reflect horizontal patchiness in egg distributions but can also be generated by differences in water volumes sampled by the two gears. As noted by Pépin *et al.* (2005), CUFES can generate greater accuracy in mapping but has lower precision than vertically deployed plankton sampling.

Although the VET samples nearly the full water column, its surface area coverage is relatively small. In contrast, and although it was operated at stations too, the CUFES integrated a larger water volume from the horizontal sub-surface layer. This results in an accumulation of eggs in area of large egg abundance or, on the contrary, to lower densities than in the water column in area of low egg abundance. This effect may be compared to additional noise in CUFES sampling as a result of stationarity. En route CUFES may not suffer such effect. However, the ranges determined from both devices were similar or slightly smaller for CUFES, indicating that equivalent patch sizes would be inferred from both devices. There is therefore a trade-off between the two sampling strategies and which is more optimal will depend on the aims of the survey.

Although, the boat trajectory was not identical each years, geostatistical analyses and kriging parameters could be tuned to eliminate the possible effect of changing sampling

design on the observed distribution patterns. This study also showed that geostatistical analyses and kriging were adapted to map high resolution CUFES samples.

The resulting larger numbers of samples collected underway by CUFES greatly enhanced the horizontal sampling resolution and enable the production of more accurate interpolated maps of the spawning grounds. High-resolution distribution maps of fish eggs were obtained using CUFES en route data. Aside from increasing precision, the higher horizontal resolution saves time and improves survey efficiency (Van der Lingen *et al.*, 1998). But this study shows that a so intensive sampling is not always necessary to locate fish eggs distribution. The use of the third of the data (systematically subsampling one out of three consecutive samples) to map the distribution suffered little loss of information in comparison to the full dataset. Random subsampling was not deemed an appropriate way to carry out this analysis as the effort reduction envisaged is unlikely to be random but rather a fraction of the actual total effort. In the future, the sampling protocol may therefore evolve towards a reduced sampling effort without loss of accuracy for the most abundant species.

However, as already raised in the general introduction, this study must be taken with caution because it took place in January-February over four years (2006-2009). Indeed, at that time of the year, the studied species are not in the same spawning condition. The studied period corresponded to the peak of spawning for plaice (Harding et al., 1978), which spawn from December to April (Munk and Nielsen, 2005) or cod (Heessen and Rijnsdorp, 1989), which has peak of spawning from the last week of January to mid-February, whereas in the northern part of the North Sea, the peak may occur in April (Heessen and Rijnsdorp, 1989). However, and although their eggs were very abundant, dab and whiting are supposed to spawn from February to April (Htun-Han, 1978) and from February to June with a peak in April (Gibb et al., 2004) respectively. Therefore, this study may give an incomplete view of the spawning activity of whiting and dab due to the survey timing. This limitation may also partly explain the difference in egg stage distributions. Moreover, an increase of whiting eggs abundance was observed meaning that the spawning started earlier than reported. The large dominance of dab eggs in our observation also suggested that this species had already started spawning. Common sole spawning period is supposed to begin only in March (Munk and Nielsen, 2005) but a few sole eggs were identified during IBTS showing that some individuals may start spawning well in advance from the bulk of their population.

These effects set aside, CUFES has proven to be dependable, simple to operate and reliable on distribution of eggs as already reported by Van der Lingen *et al.* (1998) for sardine and round herring eggs. The present study proved the CUFES effectiveness to estimate

distribution of eggs emitted from several bentho-demersal species in the Eastern English Channel and Southern North Sea during winter. Whereas VET provide a vertically integrated estimate of egg density from a single location, CUFES samples provided a horizontally integrated estimate of egg from a single depth along a survey path and high resolution distribution maps of fish eggs were obtained using CUFES en route data. Aside from increasing spatial accuracy through higher horizontal resolution, CUFES does not require stationary sampling which saves time and may improve survey efficiency when the aim is to delineate spawning areas (Van der Lingen *et al.*, 1998). As already reported by Pépin *et al.* (2005), CUFES may have significant potential for studying egg transport. In winter, in the North Sea, our study showed that this was true since the representation of eggs stages was similar in CUFES and in VET collection. With the current state of modelling fish egg vertical dispersal, CUFES appears most useful for detailed delineation of spawning areas.

Variogram model parameters (amount of spatial trend, nugget and sill values) represented a certain stability in fish eggs long range distribution and short range variance between years. This was also evidenced by the ratios of spatio-temporal variability which showed how the spatial variability was much higher than the inter-annual variability. This reflected a certain site fidelity for most of the species found spawning in our study. Early stage fish eggs distribution mapping helped delineate the realised habitat of each species ie the amount of habitat they have effectively used to spawn each year. These maps showed the importance of the Eastern English Channel and south-eastern part of the North Sea for spawning. Few eggs were observed in the western part of the study area, along the Scottish coasts. The fish eggs distribution may be used to study inter-annual variability to define recurrent, occasional, unfavourable and rare spawning areas (Bellier *et al.*, 2007). This analyse is presented in chapter 3.

But, geostatistics have an handicap, it is complicated by the lack of objective criteria to standardize the experimental variogram which is mainly based on subjectif choice, empirical criteria and expert knowledge. This is why study are needed to standardize such procedures and obtained an automation of different stages of geostatistical analyses by the use of objective criteria to both assess the computation and the modeling of the experimental variogram. Moreover, it would be interesting to develop a surveillance system to detect and alert when changes occur in a series of maps of given parameter and test the relevance of such indicators.

Fine resolution maps of spawning grounds are likely to be of significant benefit in relation to Environmental Impact Assessments where the spatial scales of the assessments are

typically at 1-20 km scales. Fine-scale mapping may also be of value in relation to the design of marine protected areas (MPAs, cf chapter 7), where large-area closures may be unacceptable. Mapping of spawning areas has been recommended as a component of an ecosystem approach to marine management but because spawning grounds expand and contract in relation to changes in spawning stock size (and may even shift location in response to environmental change), mapping may need to be repeated periodically. Because CUFES can be integrated into existing trawl or acoustic surveys relatively easily, it may prove to be an ideal tool when monitoring programs for fish spawning areas are implemented in areas such as the North Sea.

CHAPTER 3

Inter-annual variability in spawning area

This chapter is based on an article in preparation (4), which presents the inter-annual variability analysis. For each species and each year, the spatial distribution of fish eggs was mapped using geostatistics into a geographical information system (chapter 2). These maps were analysed during the full studied period to define recurrent, occasional, unfavourable and rare spawning areas.

(5) Lelièvre S., Vaz, S. and Loots, C. Recurrent spawning grounds and spawning habitat modelling of dab (*Limanda Limanda*), plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*), cod (*Gadus morhua*) and whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*), in the North Sea between 2006-2009. *Submitted to ICES Journal of Marine Science*.

3.1 Introduction

Understanding the patterns of spatial and temporal variation in fish eggs distribution is a fundamental question. An accurate description of fish eggs distribution is required to identify spawning areas for each species collected during IBTS in Eastern Channel and southern North Sea.

The spatial extent and location of spawning, which is critical to the fate of eggs and larvae, can vary strongly from year to year, as a result of changing population structure and environmental conditions (Planque *et al.*, 2004). However, tagging experiments demonstrated strong fidelity of spawning plaice in the North Sea (De Veen, 1978; Hunter *et al.*, 2003) and around Iceland (Solmundsson *et al.*, 2005). Moreover, Fox *et al.* (2000) suggested that the spawning locations of cod and plaice have probably not changed greatly over the last 30 years.

Repeated observations may enable to study the spatio-temporal variability of habitats used by fish species, particularly during spawning (Bellier *et al.*, 2007). This descriptive approach may enable to detect grounds that are repeatedly used for laying eggs and to define the most essential areas of this sensitive phase of the life cycle.

The aim of this study was to determine the spatio-temporal dynamic of winter spawning grounds for several fish species encountered during winter in the Southern North Sea and the Eastern Channel. The temporal variability in their spatial distribution was studied using the methodology presented in Bellier *et al.* (2007) stemmed from the approach proposed by Taylor (1961). This method relied on models of the relationship between temporal mean and variance in the spatial distribution of fish eggs abundance in order to define (1) recurrent spawning areas, where spawning is observed every year, (2) occasional spawning areas, where the intensity of spawning varies greatly from year to year, (3) rare spawning areas where spawning is rarely observed and (4) unfavourable spawning areas, where spawning is almost never observed (Bellier *et al.*, 2007). Here we propose to use the annual maps of stage 1 eggs from 2006 to 2009 (Chapter 2) as proxies to the location of fish species spawning grounds and to apply Bellier's methodology to define the core areas of these spawning grounds. This study revealed that spawning grounds of each species remained stable in time and were recurrent in the south-eastern part of the study area, along the Dutch to German coasts.

3.2 Material and method

3.2.1 Data collection

All eggs samples were collected during annually IBTS (International Bottom Trawl Survey) during the first quarter (January-February) by the CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Eggs Sampler). IBTS and CUFES were presented in chapter 1, from years 2006 up to 2009 and were fixed in a 0.9% buffered formalin seawater solution (Mastail and Battaglia, 1978) presented in chapter 4. Fish eggs were identified to species level by morphological criteria (egg size, oil globule, pigmentation). Log-transformed densities for 20 m³ of filtered water, were used to perform geostatistical analyses and depict fish eggs distribution (Chapter 2). Only stage 1 fish eggs were used in this study because older stages may have drifted away from their initial location when spawned. Stage 1 egg may also have drifted away a little from their initial location and strictly speaking their presence do not exactly relate to the genitor spawning grounds, here, we considere that fish eggs stage 1 represent spawning location.

3.2.2 Inter-annual variability

Maps of the spatial distribution of fish eggs resulting from geostatistical analyses were used to explore the inter-annual variability of spawning areas for each species between 2006 and 2009 (Chapter 2). Prior to analysis, each species stage 1 maps between 2006 and 2009 were rescaled between 0 ant 1 by dividing them by their yearly maximum value. An average map was computed over the 2006-2009 period using the Spatial Analyst extension of ArcMap and illustrated the average spawning area. Using the same GIS extention a variability map was calculated for each species as the standard deviation overall the maps between 2006 and 2009. This variability map depicted the inter-annual variability in the spawning pattern of fish eggs.

The average and variability maps were combined in order to identify four categories of spawning areas (Bellier *et al.*, 2007): recurrent spawning areas, where spawning is observed every year (high mean and low standard deviation), occasional spawning areas, where the spawning occurrence varies greatly from year to year (high mean and standard deviation), rare (low mean and high standard deviation) and unfavourable (low mean and standard deviation) spawning areas, where spawning is almost never observed. The splitting thresholds between high and low values for the mean and the standard deviation were determined using the histogram distribution as the third and fourth quintile respectively. The raster calculator of the Spatial Analyst extension of ArcMap 9.1 was used to combine the average and variability maps into the final map of recurrent, occasional and unfavourable spawning sites.

3.3 Results

3.3.1 Spatial distribution of fish eggs

Mean of distribution pattern of stage 1 fish eggs were averaged over the 2006 to 2009 period for each species and are presented in Figure 3.1, left. Eggs were on average widely distributed throughout the study area, except in the north-western part close to the coast of Scotland.

Dab eggs were the most abundant eggs observed in the study and were widespread over the study area, and concentrated near the Dutch, German and Danish coasts and also on the Dogger Bank in the centre of the study area. Flounder was located mainly near the Dutch coast, but was also found near the German and Danish coasts and on the Dogger Bank. A concentration of flounder was also observed nearing the Eastern English Channel in the Seine Bay. Rockling eggs included eggs from several rockling species and were located offshore from the German and Danish coasts. Relatively high densities were also observed inshore of the French, Belgian and Dutch coasts. Cod and whiting high concentrations had similar density levels, but eggs distributions were quite different. Indeed, cod spawning areas were found throughout the North Sea, particularly near the Dutch coasts and offshore of the German and Danish coasts. Low abundances were observed inshore of the French and Belgian coasts. Conversely, eggs of whiting had a more inshore distribution, from French to the Dutch coasts. As for dab, an aggregation of whiting eggs was also found on the Dogger Bank. No common sole was observed during IBTS 2006 so this species presented the lowest abundances of all. Common sole eggs were mainly present in the Eastern Channel and Southern of the study area, along the French and Belgian coasts. Plaice eggs were quite abundant and the largest concentration was found offshore of the Dutch, German and Danish coasts. Long rough dab was mainly located offshore in the north of the study area.

3.3.2 Inter-annual variability in spawning location

For each species, the variability maps were calculated as the standard deviation of all the maps of stage 1 distribution over the four available years (figure 3.1, middle). The degree of temporal variability varied across species and was lower for dab and plaice than for the others but it was certainly due to relatively high frequency occurrence and constant density levels of these species. Variability levels were high for whiting from Belgian to Dutch coasts. Higher variability for cod was observed in the Channel and offshore of the German and Danish coasts. Largest variability of flounder eggs distribution was observed offshore on the north of the Dogger Bank just as for dab which also had another high variability area more inshore along the Belgian coasts.

3.3.3 Spatio-temporal fluctuations in spawning location

Maps of recurrent, occasional, rare and unfavourable spawning areas (figure 3.1, right) resulted from the combination of the average (figure 3.1, left) and variability maps (figure 3.1, middle). On the whole, recurrent areas of all species were mainly located in the Southeastern part of the North Sea, inshore of Dutch, Danish and German coasts. The northwestern part of the study area, near the Scottish coast seems to be unfavourable to spawning for these species in January-February. The Eastern Channel was overall an unfavourable spawning area for dab, plaice and long rough dab. Moreover, Eastern Channel was a rarely used spawning area

for cod, except for a small area along the Opal Coast that appeared to be occasional. On the contrary, the English Channel was a recurrent spawning area for whiting and common sole.



Figure 3 2: Average, variability maps of fish eggs distribution and location of recurrent, occasional, rare and unfavourable spawning areas for each species during the winter period (January-February) between 2006 and 2009



Figure 3.1 (continued)

Dab covered most of the study area, but the centre of the study area, inshore near Dutch, German and Danish Coasts constituted a recurrent spawning site and the Belgian coast seemed to be an occasionally used spawning area. Flounder recurrent spawning areas were observed near the Belgian, Dutch, German and Danish coasts and the Seine Bay. However, the centre of the study area (over the Dogger Bank) seemed to constitute an occasional spawning site. The Rockling group did not have clearly localised recurrent area. More important areas were located offshore of the Dutch coasts, in the German bight and in the Dover strait.

Cod was distributed offshore and a large recurrent spawning area seemed located in the centre of the study area, near the Dogger Bank and the Dutch coasts or offshore of the Danish coasts, although smaller occasional areas may be found along the Belgian coasts and in the Eastern English Channel. Whiting spawned mainly inshore near the French, Belgian and Dutch coasts which seemed not to be recurrent but occasional spawning areas rather. Indeed, since areas of high abundance were also often areas of high variability, occasional areas seemed to be more important for whiting. Common sole was mainly present in the Eastern Channel and to the South of the study area but this area seemed not to be very recurrent, with the exception of the Dover strait. However, the common sole analysis was done only using 3 years of data, because no sole egg was identified in 2006.

Plaice was widely distributed offshore of the Dutch, German and Danish coasts, which corresponded to a recurrent spawning area. Conversely, the Belgian coast seemed to be an unfavourable spawning area. Long rough dab recurrent spawning areas were located mainly offshore to the north of the study area.

3.4 Discussion

This study allowed to map the spawning grounds of fish eggs (stage 1) abundance estimation. The mean and inter-annual variability of fish eggs distribution were computed to map recurrent, occasional, rare and unfavourable spawning areas. The use of Bellier's method (Bellier *et al.*, 2007) was adapted to account for the fact that high variability levels may reflect both large concentration values and high inter-annual variability. The rescaling of each yearly map between 0 and 1 enabled to disentangle both type of variability and to improve the delineation of the recurrent areas. However, the length of the time series is most important and the four years of data available may not fully encompass the possible condition of the spawning habitat use for most species. This would probably affect the delineation of the

boundaries between recurrent and occasional sites. In spite of these limitations, fish eggs distributions of cod, whiting and plaice obtained in the present study between 2006 and 2009 were similar to those obtained by Höffle and Munk (2010) in 2004 and 2009.

Eggs of dab were widely distributed throughout the study area, mainly offshore, over the Dogger Bank, which represented a recurrent spawning area and corresponded to large adults distribution (Martin *et al.*, 2010). However, aggregations of dab eggs could also be found near the Dutch, German and Danish coasts. These patterns were partly confirmed by previous studies that showed that dab spawning occurs throughout the south-eastern part of the North Sea with offshore concentrations of eggs in the German Bight and on the Dogger Bank (Bohl, 1957; Van der Land, 1991; Rijnsdorp *et al*, 1992). Although Harding and Nichols (1987) also found some dab eggs concentrations in the northeast of Flamborough Head, this was not the case in our results, may be due to the difference in the period of the study (end of January to end of May for Harding and Nichols' study).

Flounder is located mainly near Dutch, German and Danish coasts. It appears that the flounder is a species with a well-defined spawning period and spawning area because these results confirm those of Van der Land (1991).

Rockling species were located offshore of the German and Danish coasts. However, this group included many species known to have different habitat preference. Probably as a result, it was difficult to distinguish coherent recurrent spawning areas for the whole rockling group.

Eggs of cod were mainly distributed near the Dutch, German and Danish coasts. This distribution was similar to historical patterns where eggs were the most abundant around the southern and eastern edge of the Dogger Bank and in the German Bight. (ICES Oceanography Committee, 2005 b). Although spawning aggregations may be found offshore all over the North Sea, a survey in spring 2004, showed that the most important concentration was found in a limited area to the north-west of the Dogger Bank (Fox *et al.*, 2005) and that eggs abundance in the southern North Sea was much lower than in the past as reported in Daan *et al.* study (1978). Cod spawning grounds seemed to be recurrent in the south of the North Sea and occasional in the Eastern English Channel as for whiting.

Indeed, high concentration of whiting eggs were mainly located in the Eastern Channel, in the Southern Bight and to the south of the Dogger Bank. However, these areas were considered as occasional due to high inter-annual variability. Indeed, in 2008, whiting eggs distribution was different compared to other years, being mainly located near the Dogger Bank with low abundance of eggs in the Eastern Channel. However, these results are still in agreement with historical spawning areas described by Coull *et al.* (1998) and Gibb *et al.* (2004).

High common sole egg production was recorded in the eastern English Channel, off the Belgian coast (Van der Land, 1991) just as in this study. So recurrent spawning area may exists in the area listed abovebut were not identified in our results. However, the common sole analysis was done over 3 years of data only because no sole egg was identified in 2006. Hence the survey period was far too early to detect the bulk of the sole spawn. However, egg production of common sole was recorded earlier (in April) in the year in 1988 to 1990 than in 1984 (in May) which may indicate a shift of common sole spawning season over the last decades (Van der Land, 1991). This may explain why sole spawn could already be detected in February and the continuation of this study may be used to monitor common sole early spawn in the future.

Spawning grounds of plaice were mainly distributed offshore the Dutch, German and Danish coasts. Harding *et al.* (1978) reported that plaice spawning occurs over most of the offshore and deeper parts of the southern North Sea, which corresponded in the present study to a recurrent spawning area. However, in our study, conversely as described by Hessen and Rijnsdorp (1989) and Fox *et al.* (2005), lower abundances of eggs were found in the Eastern English Channel and in the southern Bight. Here, the Eastern English Channel was characterised as a rare spawning area with low abundance of eggs and high inter-annual variability in January-February. It may be due to northward extension of plaice spawning season in the English Channel.

Long rough dab eggs were abundant in the north, with a large concentration area in the north-eastern part of the study area (above 55°N) (Martin *et al.*, 2007) such as in our study. which appeared to be recurrent.

For each species, eggs distribution patterns tended to repeat themselves in time so that many recurrent areas were observed. This highlights a strong fidelity of adults for their spawning grounds. Indeed, it was already reported (ICES, 2005 a and c and ICES, 2007 d), that spawning plaice distribution was still similar to that from historical results such as Simpson (1959). Moreover, tagging experiments demonstrated strong fidelity behaviour of spawning plaice in the North Sea (De Veen, 1978; Hunter *et al.*, 2003), around Iceland (Solmundsson *et al.*, 2005) and in Scottish waters (Wright *et al.*, 2006). Indeed, Fox *et al.* (2000) suggested that spawning location of cod and plaice have probably not changed greatly over the last 30 years. Moreover, Loots *et al.* (2010 a and b) and Loots *et al.* (*in press a*)

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showed that spawning adults of plaice and whiting had a strong geographical attachment for their spawning grounds, which suggests a homing mechanism (Papi, 1992).

The delineation of recurrent and occasional spawning grounds does not elucidate the factors explaining their location. Variable fish egg production, both in term of quantity and quality may be due to age composition of the population, which both reflect and affect growth, maturation and fecundity (Rijnsdorp *et al.*, 1991). If growth is influenced by stock size, fecundity rate is influenced by pre-spawning conditions factors (Rijnsdorp *et al.*, 1991). It is therefore natural that environmental conditions, affecting both the population distribution and the recrutment, has been found to have an effect on the spatio-temporal distribution of spawning grounds (Bellier *et al.*, 2007).

As described earlier, over the four years of sampling, the timing and duration of surveys have changed a little. The tuning of the kriging parameters helped eliminate the effect of the boat trajectory on the resulting interpolated patterns thus insuring that the sampling design would not be an important source of variability. Hence, the method proposed provides a practical tool for measuring the temporal variability associated with fish eggs distribution.

Also, the pattern revealed in this study must be taken with caution, because the French part of the IBTS is both limited in time (January-February) and space (south of 56.5°N). At that time of the year, each species are not in same spawning condition. Hence, an incomplete view of the winter distribution of the spawning grounds may results from these limitations that may increase the observed inter-annual variability. Some spawning grounds may not be yet in use at that time of the year and the abundance of eggs found may greatly vary. This will both impact the recurrence maps (whereby recurrent areas may be classified as occasional) and the habitat models (whereby potentially suitable habitats may not be observed in use). This time period corresponds to the peak of spawning for plaice (Harding et al., 1978), which spawn from December to April (Loots, 2009) and cod (Heessen and Rijnsdorp, 1989), which has peak of spawning from the last week of January to mid-February, whereas in the northern part of the North Sea, the peak may occur in April (Heessen and Rijnsdorp, 1989). However, and although their eggs were very abundant, dab and whiting are supposed to spawn from February to April (Htun-Han, 1978) and from February to June with a peak in April (Gibb et al., 2004) respectively. Moreover, an increase of whiting eggs abundance was observed meaning that the spawning started earlier than reported. The large dominance of dab eggs in our observation also suggested that this species had already started spawning. Common sole spawning period is supposed to begin only in March (Munk and Nielsen, 2005) but a few sole

eggs were identified during IBTS showing that some individuals may start spawning well in advance from the bulk of their population.

This analysis was performed on fish eggs identified visually by microscope so, another problem may arise from the misidentification problem of some fish eggs; especially dab and flounder on one hand and cod and whiting on the other hand (Taylor *et al.*, 2002). Parallel studies (cf Chapter 4) reported a misidentification rate of 2% for cod, 19% for whiting, 7.5% for dab in the 2008 dataset. Even if these misidentification rates were relatively low (except for whiting), in future studies, molecular analyses, may be used to correct the identification and improve habitat modelling of spawning grounds.

Finally, this study should be repeated each year and all along the spawning season in order to have a longer time series of data which would improve our knowledge of the spawning grounds distribution in the North Sea. These results may be discussed in relation to local oceanography, used to characterise and quantify the importance of the environment on the use of these habitats (Chapter 6) and to determine the potential location and size of marine protected areas (MPAs) in a multi-specific context (Chapter 7).

CHAPTER 4

Identification of formalin fish eggs in the Eastern Channel and Southern North Sea by molecular analyses

This chapter is based on two papers: a published article (1) which presents the use of a PCR-RFLP method on cytochrome *b* gene to identify formalin fish eggs of cod (*Gadus morhua*), whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*), haddock, (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*) and three rockling species (*Ciliata mustela, Ciliata septentrionalis* and *Enchelyopus cimbrius*), which have the same range of size and cannot be distinguished with morphological criteria. And a second article (5), submitted, which presents the use of PCR-RFLP on 16S rRNA gene, to identify fish eggs of dab (*Limanda limanda*), flounder, (*Platichthys flesus*) and three pout species (*Trisopterus esmarkii, Trisopterus luscus* and *Trisopterus minutus*). In this study, formalin fixation, egg conservation and DNA extraction were optimized in order to develop specific PCR-RFLP methods. Molecular-based techniques can improve the accuracy of egg taxonomic identification, and hence the reliability of studies on spawning areas.

(2) Lelièvre S., Verrez-Bagnis, V, Jérôme, M. and Vaz, S (2010) PCR-RFLP analyses of formalin-fixed fish eggs for the mapping of spawning areas in the Eastern Channel and Southern North Sea. *Journal of Plankton Research*, 32: 1527-1539.

(3) Lelièvre S., Jérôme, M., Maes, G., Vaz, S., Sachidhanandam, C. and Verrez-Bagnis, V. Molecular validation and comparative mapping of morphologically identified eggs of dab (*Limanda limanda*), flounder, (*Platichthys flesus*) and Trisopterus sp from the Eastern English Channel and southern North Sea. *Submitted to Marine Ecology Progress Series.*

4.1 Introduction

A rapide and reliable identification of fish eggs will be suitables for mapping and management spawning grounds of commercially important fishes. However, fish eggs are mainly identified by visual methods under binocular microscope through morphological criteria such as egg size, oil globule, developmental stage and pigmentation of the embryo. But many eggs, like those of cod (*Gadus morhua*) and haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*) or dab (*Limanda limanda*) and flounder (*Platichthys flesus*) have the same range of size and thus, the visual identification of early stages is very difficult (Taylor *et al.*, 2002; Bahya *et al.*, 2008).

Biochemical techniques can be adapted to identify fish eggs, such as isoelectric focusing (IEF) (Mork *et al.*, 1983). IEF combined with staining of isozymes has been used to identify Gadidae and Pleuronectidae eggs by Hefferman *et al.* (2004). Only 6% of the eggs were not identified, even by comparison with the known standards, and approximately 36% of all samples analysed were unidentified as they expressed neither LDH (lactate dehydrogenase) nor SOD (superoxide dismutase) isozymes.

Immunological probes, based on antigen-antibody reactions, have allowed identification of zebrafish eggs (*Danio rerio*, Del Giacco *et al.*, 2000) and malabar grouper (*Epinephelus malabaricus*) eggs among mixed egg populations (Chiou *et al.*, 2004). But these techniques, using an immuno-probe against a glycoprotein in the egg chorion, are time consuming as they require, for each studied fish species, to purify an antigen, then to induce specific antibody production, and finally to develop and validate the method. Onishi *et al.* (2003) have also used MT-1 monoclonal antibody method to identify pelagic eggs of red seabream (*Pagrus major*) of the coastal area of Wakasa Bay.

Besides these biochemical methods, a large range of molecular tools based on DNA have already proven their usefulness for the identification of marine organisms, mainly for traceability of processed fish (for complete review, see e.g. Teletchea, 2009; Puyet and Bautista, 2010; Rasmussen and Morrissey, 2011). These molecular tools allow identification of all life stages from eggs to adults (Karaiskou *et al.*, 2007).

Numerous DNA-based methods have been described in the literature for the identification of adult fish, particularly for Gadiforme which are commercial important species. Especially, Ingrid Bakke *et al.* (1999) described a unique intergenic sequence, specifically present in several species of Gadiformes. The nature of this intergenic space (size/nucleotides composition) allows it to be a very efficient marker to distinguish cod,

haddock and whiting. Babola et al. (2004) were the first to provide a microarray for fish species identification (Kochzius et al., 2008; Teletchea et al., 2008). Moreover, plaice and cod could also be identified by microsatellite loci (Hutchinson et al., 2001; Hoarau et al., 2002; Hoarau et al., 2004). Forensic Informative Nucleotide Sequencing (FINS), technique initially developed by Bartlett and Davidson (1992), have been extensively used to identify fish species or fish products (Jérôme et al., 2003 a; Jérôme et al., 2008). DNA barcoding approach, which allows to identify the species of an individual, thanks to a single DNA universal markers, can be used (Herbert et al., 2003; Pegg et al., 2006; Ekrem et al., 2007; Sevilla et al., 2007; Frézal and Leblois, 2009). Particularly, the "DNA Barcode of Life" project (http://www.barcodeoflife.org/) aims to develop a standardized, rapid and inexpensive species identification method accessible even to non-specialists. The DNA barcode using the mitochondrial gene cytochrome c oxidase I (COI) (Herbert *et al.*, 2003) was employed to discriminate fish species (Ward et al., 2005) and can be adapted and used to identify fish eggs. In the same way, FishTrace European project (http://www.fishtrace.org/) is based on design and implementation of a number of "smart" pattern recognition of fishes. FishTrace database offers pooled data and material for genetic identification and characterisation of marine fish species from European waters and/or marketed in Europe. The FishTrace database covers most of the fish species of commercial, ecological and zoological interest of European countries and provides protocols and tools for correct identifications. Then, FishPopTrace (The Structure of Fish Populations and Traceability of Fish and Fish Products) is a European project based on research on SNPs (Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms) on four fish species: cod, hake, common sole and herring with product traceability and policy related monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) in the fisheries sector for goals. Pursuing a holistic approach, FishPopTrace can contribute to fisheries management and conservation measures focusing on global attempt to move towards sustainable fisheries.

Eggs of different species have been identified using PCR analyses of 16S rRNA (Akimoto *et al.*, 2002; Perez *et al.*, 2005; Garcia-Vasquez *et al.*, 2006). In the same way, Aranishi (Aranishi, 2006) has identified a single egg of walleye Pollack (*Theragra chalcogramma*), and Hyde *et al.* (2005) have distinguished blue marlin (*Makaira nigricans*), dolphinfish (*Coryphaena equiselis* and *Coryphaena hippurus*), shortbill spearfish (*Tetrapturus belone*), swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) and wahoo (*Acanthocybium solandri*) eggs in one-step PCR (multiplex PCR). Both were based on cytochrome *b* gene.

TaqMan DNA technology has also been successfully applied on cod eggs (Fox *et al.*, 2005 a). This method used a species-specific labelled probe to amplify the cytochrome *b* gene

by PCR (Taylor *et al.*, 2002; Fox *et al.*, 2005 a and b; Fox *et al.*, 2008). An alternative to TaqMan DNA method is the Taqman real-time PCR (Taylor *et al.*, 2002; Bayha *et al.*, 2008) using locked nucleic acid probes to identify three fish species from the northern Gulf of Mexico or to distinguish cod, haddock and whiting eggs (Goodsir *et al.*, 2007).

PCR-SSCP (Single Strand Conformation Polymorphism) is also a successful technique used to distinguish eggs of *Merluccius merluccius*, *Scomber scombrus*, *Macrorhamphosus scolopax* and *Lepidorhombus whiffiagonis* (Garcia-Vasquez *et al.*, 2006).

PCR can be coupled with sequencing to identify fish eggs or confirm identification (Aoyama *et al.*, 2001; Akimoto *et al.*, 2002; Shao *et al.*, 2002; Saitoh *et al.*, 2009; Kawakami *et al.*, 2010).

However, among the numerous methods developed to identify fish eggs, PCR-RFLP (Restriction Fragment Length Polymorphism) is the most used (Comesana *et al.*, 2003; Aranishi *et al.*, 2005 a et b; Akasaki *et al.*, 2006; Karaiskou *et al.*, 2007; Teletchea, 2009) as it is a simple, easy, robust and inexpensive method which can be applied to routine surveys, but it depends on DNA quality (Di Finizio *et al.*, 2007). This technique has already been applied using the cytochrome *b* gene to identify eggs of 18 Gadidae species (Calo-Mata *et al.*, 2003) or to distinguish Alaska pollack, Pacific cod and Atlantic cod (Aranishi *et al.*, 2005 a) or to discriminate walleye pollack from cod (Aranishi *et al.*, 2005 b).

As seen above, there is a lot of molecular markers and techniques and the choice the DNA marker is very important. Indeed, markers of mitochondrial gene (mt DNA) were more often used to identify species as it is circular genome and as a single cell contains several copies of mt compared to nuclear DNA, its amplification is so easier, and makes this methodology more robust (Teletchea, 2009). Many mt DNA markers exist; the most used were cytochrome *b* gene and 16S rRNA gene. Indeed, Aoyama *et al.* (2001) and Akimoto *et al.* (2002) used 16S rRNA to identify eggs of Japanese eel *Anguilla japonica* and Beryx genus respectively. In parallel, cytochrome *b* gene can be used to distinguish mackerel eggs species *Scomber japonicus* and *S. australasicus* (Sezaki *et al.*, 2001) or gadidae eggs (Calo-Mata *et al.*, 2003).

The main problem, regarding genetic identification of eggs, is the chemicals used to fix and conserve samples. Many preservatives may be used: DMSO (dimethyl sulfoxide), ethanol and formalin (Karaiskou *et al.*, 2007). When studies have successfully distinguish ethanol-preserved egg (Taylor *et al.*, 2002; Kawakami *et al.*, 2010), Akimoto *et al.* (2002) determined sequences for only six out of 10 eggs belonging to the genus *Beryx* from formalin-fixed eggs. Moreover, also using a PCR-RFLP approach, successful identification was

achieved on chub and spotted mackerel formalin-fixed eggs based on a 320 bp region of cytochrome b gene (Sezaki *et al.*, 2001). By the way, Karaiskou *et al.* (2007) showed that a 370-bp fragment of cytochrome b was successfully amplified followed by restriction fragment analysis (PCR-RFLP method) to identify eggs of European horse mackerel species. However they reported that eggs' identification was accomplished with the maximum success in ethanol-preserved eggs compared to formalin-preserved eggs.

In our study, fish eggs are fixed in formalin to be visually identified and to avoid shape and colour changes induced by DMSO and ethanol as it may complicate their morphological identification. Formalin fixation, by reducing egg diameter, may impacted eggs for their morphological identification. Indeed, Hislop and Bell (1987) found out that formalin decreased egg size, for example, formalin fixation at 4% reduced plaice egg diameter from 0.4 to 0.7% (Van der Wateren *et al.*, 1990).

Furthermore, DNA analyses may be difficult if fish eggs were preserved in concentrated formalin. Indeed, preservation methodsmay have effects on DNA amplification as they may induce cross-linking between proteins and DNA (Chang and Loew, 1994; Akimoto *et al.*, 2002). Many studies reported the decrease of reliable PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) if eggs were formalin-fixed (O'Leary *et al.*, 1994; De Giorgi *et al.*, 1994; Diaz-Viloria *et al.*, 2005). Although, Garcia-Vasquez *et al.* (2006) showed 90% amplification reproductibility of rRNA 16S gene with formalin-fixed eggs, and Goodsir *et al.* (2007) revealed good amplification results after preservation with a 4% formalin solution during less than three weeks, before a decline in success of amplification as time passed.

In this study, the improvement of fixation and storage solutions was detailed. Then, the implementations of a PCR-RFLP method to identify formalin-fixed fish eggs, which basically could not be distinguished from morphological criteria was described. This method was applied first on cytochrome *b* gene, to distinguish fish eggs of rockling sp., cod, whiting and haddock and then on 16S rRNA to distinguish fish eggs of dab, flounder and *Trisopterus* sp. Egg abundance and relative proportions of each species were subsequently analysed geostatistcally to obtain corrected interpolated distribution maps (chapter 2) based on molecular identifications. Correction factor was included to improve the accuracy. The accuracy of the results was greatly improved and pointed out a distinction in spawning grounds locations for each studied taxa, allowing us to define region of a high conservation value for these species in the Eastern English Channel and the Southern part of the North Sea.

4.2 Materials and method

4.2.1 Data collection and sample preservation

All fish eggs samples were collected during a single IBTS (International Bottom Trawl Survey) by the CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Eggs Sampler), as described in the chapter 1. The present study is only based on the data collected during the 2008 survey (Fig. 4.1). During this survey, muscles, collected also from trawl sampling, were stored in 70% ethanol to obtain further standard references DNA sequences with reliable species identification.



Figure 4.1: Location of CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler) samples during IBTS (International Bottom Trawl Survey) 2008

Geneticists traditionally preserved samples in alcohol solution. But alcohol deteriorates the morphological aspect of eggs. As in this study, fish eggs were previously identified before under microscope according to morphological characteristics to be analysed by DNA techniques, egg samples were fixed and conserved in formalin solution (Mastail and Battaglia, 1978; modified by Bigot, 1979). Briefly, a BHA (buthylhydroxyanisol) solution was prepared by adding 8 g BHA to 500 ml monopropylen glycol and an EDTA (Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid) solution was made by adding 20 g EDTA to 500 ml distilled water. 2 L of commercial formalin (36%) was buffered to pH 7 with sodium glycerophosphate and EDTA solution was added under magnetic agitation. Then, BHA solution and 2 g ascorbic acid were added to the formalin solution and distilled water was added up to 5 L to obtain a final 14.4% formalin stock solution buffered at pH 7. The stock solution was shacked during about 20 minutes. Sea water was added to 2.4 ml of this solution allowed a better pigment conservation. After two to three week of fixation, samples were

transferred in a formalin free storage solution, containing 0.5 ml of propylene phenoxetol, 4.5 ml of propylene glycol and 95 ml of distilled water to limit DNA damaged due to formalin (Steedman, 1976).

4.2.2 Identification of fish eggs

Fish eggs were identified through binocular microscope according to morphological criteria, as described in the introduction. Many difficulties were encountered during species identification. Many species, which spawn in the Eastern Channel and the south of the North Sea, during the studied period, have the same range of egg size (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Target species (scientific names, common names), their egg diameter size and their spawning period

	Scientific name	English common name	French common name	Egg Size diameter	Spawning period
Ţ	Enchelyopus cimbrius	Fourbeard rockling	Motelle à 4 barbillons	0.66-0.98 mm	January-July
dno.	Ciliata mustella	Fivebeard rockling	Motelle à 5 barbillons	0.66-0.98 mm	January-July
5	Ciliata septentrionalis	Northern rockling	Motelle nordique	0.70-0.88 mm	January-July
7	Merlangius merlangus	Whiting	Merlan	0.97-1.32 mm	March-June
dno.	Gadus morhua	Cod	Morue	1.16-1.89 mm	January-May
5	Melanogranum aeglefinus	Haddock	Eglefin	1.20-1.70 mm	February-July
	Limanda limanda	Dab	Limande	0.66-0.92 mm	January-June
3	Platichthys flesus	Flounder	Flet	0.80-1.13 mm	January-July
dnc	Trisopterus minutus	Poor cod	Petit tacaud	0.9-1.23 mm	February-July
<u>Gr</u>	Trisopterus luscus	Pouting	Tacaud commun	0.9-1.03 mm	January- September
	Trisopterus esmarkii	Norway pout	Tacaud norvégien	1.00-1.19 mm	January-April
up 4	Pleuronectes platessa	Plaice	Plie	1.66-2.17 mm	December-May
Gro	Hippoglossoides platessoides	Long rough dab	Balai de l'Atlantique	1.38-3.50 mm	January-June

So three groups of problematic fish eggs, observed in the area, were defined: group 1 included eggs of three species of rocklings (*Enchelyopus cimbrius, Ciliata mustella* and *Ciliata septentrionalis*), group 2 included eggs of some Gadidae species: cod (*Gadus morhua*), haddock (*Melanogrammun aeglefinus*) and whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*), and group 3 including dab (*Limanda limanda*), flounder (*Platichthys flesus*) and *Trisopterus sp.* (*T. minutus, T. luscus* and *T. esmarkii*). A last group included plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*) and long rough dab (*Hippoglossoides platessoides*) was studied and, although little confusion

is possible between the two species eggs, a few sequencing analyses were performed to confirm visual identification. No confusion was possible between each group.

4.2.3 Molecular biology

DNA extraction

Three DNA extraction methods were tested: the first method was a method based on phenol/chloroform/isoamyl (PCI) alcohol extraction (Quintero et al., 1998). DNA from adult fish muscles stored in alcohol was extracted following a first method as described by Jérôme et al. (2003 a). The second method based on Chelex®100 Resin (Biorad) was tested for individual egg DNA extraction with the protocol described by Jérôme et al. (2003 b). However, the yield of DNA extraction was too low to amplify egg DNA, therefore this method was not used in our study. A third method based on magnetic bead technology (ChargeSwitch® Forensic DNA Purification Kit, Invitrogen, Carlsbad, United States) was finally used for DNA extraction from individual eggs, previously labelled by visual identification. The standard protocol of this method has been slightly modified for DNA extraction of fish eggs. The magnetic bead-based technology provides a switchable surface charge dependent on the pH from the surrounding buffer to facilitate nucleic acid purification. Firstly, eggs were crushed in 500 µl of lysis buffer added with 10 µl of proteinase K (20 mg/ml) in 1.5 ml microcentifuge tubes and incubated for one hour at 55°C. Then, 200 µl of purification buffer and 20 µl of magnetic beads were added in the microcentifuge tubes and left at room temperature for 1 minute. The tubes were then placed on a magnetic rack and after immobilization of beads; the supernatant was removed and discarded. Beads were washed two times using 500 μ l washing buffer each time. DNA was eluted by adding 100 μ l of elution buffer and recovered after 1 minute of incubation at 55°C, and stored at 4°C for subsequent analyses.

PCR amplification of reference specimens

• Group 1: Rockling species and group 2: Gadidae species

To select a fragment of the mitochondrial gene coding for the cytochrome b for egg identification, complete cytochrome b (1141 bp) sequences were obtained from muscle tissue of adult specimens of target species sampled during the IBTS research surveys. The entire gene was amplified by PCR using the external primers Fishcytb-F (ACCACCGTTGTTATTCAACTACAAGAAC) and TruccytB-R (CCGACTTCCGGATTAC

AAGACCG) (giving fragment of 1158 bp) (Sevilla *et al.*, 2007). The PCR reactions were carried out in a total volume of 50 µl: 0.5 to 2.5 µl DNA template were added to a PCR mix consisting of 0.2 mM dNTP each (Interchim), 2 mM MgCl₂, 10 µl 5X buffer, 1.25 units of GoTaq® polymerase (Promega), 0.2 µM of each primer and molecular biology grade water (Interchim) up to adjust to the final volume. Polymerase chain reactions were carried out in a MyCyclerTM thermocycler (BioRad). Conditions of cycling were as follows: a preheating step at 94°C for 7 min, 35 cycles of amplification (94°C for 45 s, 50°C for 45 s, 72°C for 60 s) and a final extension step at 72°C for 7 min (Table 4.2).

The DNA amplification was controlled on 1.5% agarose gels (Interchim), using TAE buffer (2 mM EDTA, 40 mM Tris acetate, pH 8.5). GelRedTM (Interchim) was used for band visualization via ultraviolet transillumination (Image Master VDSCL, Amersham Pharmacia Biotech). The size of the expected PCR products was estimated using the GeneRulerTM 100 bp DNA ladder plus (MBI Fermentas). For sequencing reactions, the DNA template was quantified using the MassRulerTM DNA ladder low range (MBI Fermentas) on agarose gels.

• Group 3: dab, flounder and *Trisopterus* species

The 16S rRNA fragment was amplified by PCR using two primers: 16S-F (5'CAAGCAGAGAAGACCCTATGG) (C. Lemaire, unpublished) and 16S-R-univ (5'GGTAACTCGGTTCGTTGATCGG) specially designed for this study (giving a fragment of 254 bp for dab and flounder and a fragment of 238 bp for *Trisopterus* sp.). The PCR reactions were carried out as described before for the others groups. Primers and conditions of cycling have changed. Conditions of cycling were as follows: a preheating step at 94°C for 3 min, 35 cycles of amplification (94°C for 30 s, 55°C for 30 s, 72°C for 40 s) and a final extension step at 72°C for 7 min (Table 4.2). The DNA amplification was controlled on 1.5% agarose gels, as for the previous groups.

DNA sequencing of reference specimens

The same technique was performed for all studied groups including group 4 (plaice and long rough dab). Before sequencing, double-stranded PCR products were purified by filtration through Qiagen QIA quick columns according to the manufacturer's protocol. PCR fragments were used for direct cycle sequencing with the dye terminator cycle sequencing kit (Beckman) according to the manufacturer's protocol. Sequencing analysis was performed with a Beckman Coulter CEQ 8000 DNA sequencer in both directions with the primers used for PCR amplification. The DNA sequences were edited with BioEdit software (Hall, 1999).

PCR amplification of fish eggs

• Group 1: Rockling species and group 2: Gadidae species, cod, haddock and whiting

Based on the sequences obtained from the DNA of adult fish and from those downloaded from GenBank and FishTrace (http://fishnet.jrc.it/fishtrace_int/) databases, primers were designed to amplify a 5' cytochrome *b* fragment for rockling labelled eggs (group 1: 460 base pair (bp)), for cod, haddock or whiting labelled eggs (group 2: 424 bp). Table 4.2 shows primers used for each group. Conditions of PCR reaction mixtures were as described above. Conditions of cycling for DNA amplification for all groups were as follows: a preheating step at 94°C for 3 min, 35 cycles of amplification (94°C for 30 s, 55°C for 30 s, 72°C for 40 s) and a final extension step at 72°C for 7 min as for amplification of references specimens (Table 4.2).

• Group 3: dab, flounder and *Trisopterus* species

Based on the sequences obtained from the DNA of adult fish and from those downloaded from GenBank databases, primers were designed to amplify a 5' 16S rRNA fragment for dab, flounder (254 bp) and *Trisopterus* sp. (238 bp). 16S-F (Lemaire, unpublished) and 16S-R-univ (designed for this study) were used as primers (Table 4.3). Conditions of PCR reaction mixtures and cycling were as described above for reference specimens (Table 4.2).

	Group 1 and 2 (cyt b)				Group 3 (16S r RNA)			
	Muscles		Eggs		Muscles		Eggs	
Activation of Taq polymerase	94°C	7 min	94°C	3 min	95°C	5 min	95°C	5 min
Denaturation	94°C	45 s	94°C	30 s	95°C	30 s	95°C	30 s
Hybridization $>$ 35 cycles	50°C	45 s	55°C	30 s	48°C	30 s	48°C	30 s
Extension	72°C	60 s	72°C	40 s	72°C	40 s	72°C	40 s
Stretching	72°C	7 min	72°C	7 min	72°C	7 min	72°C	7 min

Table 4.2: DNA amplification PCR program for Muscles references and eggs for each group

• Group 4: Plaice and long rough dab

Particularly for group 4, for which only sequencing analyses were performed, PCR was performed on cytochrome *b* gene using F1-Cb-SPF-Ppla (CCCCTTCTTAAAATCGCAAA CG) and R2-cb-plat428 (GCACCTCAGAACGACATTTGTCCTC) primers to amplify DNA of twelve eggs of both species: plaice and long rough dab were tested (430 bp). Then, the same method of sequencing as described above was applied to these PCR products.

RFLP analysis

Restriction maps of the obtained DNA sequences were generated using the tools on the website of Rebase, restriction enzyme database (Roberts *et al.*, 2010).

For the first and second groups, 45 DNA sequences (10 sequences from this study and 35 sequences retrieved from Fish Trace and GenBank databases) were generated. For the third group, a total of 40 16S rRNA gene sequences (31 sequences retrieved from GenBank and new sequences obtained from 2 individuals per species except for *T. esmarkii*, for which only one individual was sampled along this study) were generated using the FastPCR software (Kalendar *et al.*, 2009).

Restriction enzymes were selected, based on their ability to generate characteristic restriction profiles for each species with band sizes easily distinguishable on agarose gels. A total of 10 μ l of PCR products was digested with two units of enzyme in the buffer recommended by the manufacturer (Ozyme) in a final total volume of 20 μ l at 37°C for 3 h for groups 1 and 2 and 4 h for the group 3. The reaction was stopped by heating at 65°C during 20 min. DNA restriction fragments were separated on 1.5% agarose gels as described above. The DNA fragments with sizes below than 50 bp generated during the restriction digestion were not used for the identification because the established conditions of the agarose gels did not allow to visualize them. For the group 4, no RFLP analyses were performed and only sequencing were done to confirm visual identification. Table 4.3 summarises primers and restriction enzymes used for each group.

		PCR				
	Fragment	forward primer	reverse primer	Restriction enzyme		
Group 1 Rockling	5' fragment cytochrome <i>b</i> gene	Fishcyt b-F: ACCACCGTTGTTATTC AACTACAAGAAC	R2-cb-plat428: GAGGACAAATGTCGTT CTGAGGTGC	StuI AGGCCT		
Group 2 Gadidae	5' fragment cytochrome b gene F-cb-SPF-GAD: CCAGCCTTCGGAAAA CCCATCC		R2-cb-plat428: GAGGACAAATGTCGTT CTGAGGTGC	HpyCH4IV ACGT		
Group 3	16 S rRNA fragment gene	16S-F: CAAGCAGAGAAGACC CTATGG	16S-R-univ CCGATCAACGAACCGA GTTACC	AciI CCGC		
Group 4	5' fragment cytochrome <i>b</i> gene	F1-Cb-SPF-Ppla: CCCCTTCTTAAAATC GCAAACG	R2-cb-plat428: GCACCTCAGAACGACA TTTGTCCTC			

Table 4.3: Primers sequences for PCR and enzyme for RFLP analysis for each group

4.2.3 Geostatistical analyses and interpolated map

Geostatistical analyses (detailed in chapter 2) were applied to egg abundance data obtained from microscope identification for each species and egg relative abundance data of each species in each sample, obtained from molecular identification. The relative occurrence maps of each species were multiplied to abundance maps of the considered group obtained by visual identification in order to produce the distribution maps corrected of the spawning ground in the entire studied area for each species.

4.3 Results

Three methods were tested for DNA extraction from formalin eggs. Phenol/chloroform/isoamyl alcohol (PCI) extraction (Quintero *et al.*, 1998; Jérôme *et al.*, 2003 a), a Chelex® based method (Jérôme *et al.*, 2003 b) and magnetic bead-based technology (ChargeSwitch® Forensic DNA Purification Kit). Among the tested methods, the last method was the easiest and quickest method for DNA extraction from single fish egg, and showed extraction-purification yield good enough to PCR-amplify DNA. Therefore, this method was chosen for the egg DNA extraction with slight improvements as described in the materiel and methods section.

Cytochrome *b* gene was used for group 1 and 2 but yielded too weak amplification (20%) for eggs from group 3 so 16S rRNA gene was used, given higher amplification rate (50%). Complete cytochrome *b* and 16S rRNA fragment sequences were obtained from reference samples (adult specimens) (ANNEX I). Alignment of those sequences and of sequences retrieved from FishTrace and GenBank databases indicated that the 5' fragment of the cytochrome *b* and 16S rRNA genes were polymorphic enough between each species of each groups to discriminate between the different species through specific cut sites of restriction enzyme. The enzymes used for the restriction reaction have a simple recognition sequence. The DNA fragments generated after the digestion were compatible with the expected size on the basis of the restriction maps (Fig. 4.2).



Figure 4.2: Expected size of DNA fragments after digestion by restriction enzymes StuI, HpyCH4IV or AciI

Group 1 (rocklings restriction enzyme: StuI): *Enchelyopus cimbrius* (Ec) 460 bp, *Ciliata mustela* (Cm) 335-125 bp, *Ciliata septentrionalis* (Cs) 189-146-125 bp. Group 2 (Gadidae restriction enzyme: HpyCH4IV): *Merlangius merlangus* (Mm) 213-211 bp, *Gadus morhua* (Gm) 424 bp, *Melanogrammus aeglefinus* (Ma) 330-58-36 bp. Group 3 (restriction enzyme: Acil): *Limanda limanda* (Ll) 173-59 bp, *Platichthys flesus* (Pf) 173 bp, *Trisopterus minutus* (Tm), *Trisopterus esmarkii* (Te), *Trisopterus luscus* (Tl) 112 bp

Amplification of the 16S rRNA gene with the two primers used in this study produced a fragment of 254 bp for dab and flounder and a fragment of 238 bp for pout species due to a 16-nucleotide gap region. The digestive products of predicted size for *Limanda limanda* (114, 81 and 59 bp), *Platichthys flesus* (173 and 81 bp) and *Trisopterus sp* (126 and 112 bp) with AciI in RFLP analysis were the same as those anticipated from the sequence analysis. Effectively, the analysis of the 9 sequences obtained from reference samples (adult specimens) (data not shown) and from the 31 sequences retrieved from GenBank database (11 sequences from dab, 14 sequences of flounder and 6 sequences of pout species) indicated that the 5' fragment of the 16S rRNA gene was polymorphic enough to discriminate between dab, flounder and pout after digestion with AciI. The three *Trisopterus* species cannot be distinguish with AciI on the studied 16S rRNA gene fragment, they all gave the same restriction profile with this enzyme except for 3 *Trisopterus minutus* GenBank sequences, the corresponding individuals were sampled in the Mediterranean. But, regarding our study on fish eggs sampled in the Eastern Channel and Southern North Sea, the same profile has been observed for all the pout species. Since in term of frequency, abundance and commercial interest, the three pout species are not very important species, we have only focalised on the distinction of dab, flounder and the *Trisopterus* genus, the two former being more important either in abundance or commercially.

4.3.1 Validation of molecular analyses

Generally, amplification failures were randomly distributed over the study area (Fig. 4.3). There was not a specific area of failure. The analysis was done for each group separately.



Figure 4.3: Localisation of amplification failure for all groups combined

• Group 1: Rockling species

Among the 221 tested eggs (without stages differentiation), 80% of positive amplification was obtained for rocklings eggs. The amplifications failed represented 18 sites on 83 analysed. Sites were evenly dispersed over the study area but quite a few originating from the Eastern English Channel failed (Figure 4.4).



Figure 4.4: Location of stations and PCR failure sites for group 1: Rockling species (+) stations analysed and (Δ) amplification failed

The two species (*Ciliata mustela* and *Enchelyopus cimbrius*) were expected in the study area as adults are regularly found there. However our results revealed that *Ciliata septentrionalis* was unexpectedly also spawning in the Eastern Channel.

• Group 2: Cod, haddock and whiting

Among the 183 tested eggs (without stages differentiation), 86% of positive amplification was obtained for Gadidae eggs. Some DNA egg extracts have given weak or no amplification by PCR (Figure 4.5). The amplifications failed represented 9 sites on 45 analysed that were dispersed over the study area except for four sites that were clustered together.



Figure 4.5: Localisation of analysed stations and PCR failure sites for group 2: cod, haddock and whiting (+) stations analysed and (Δ) amplification failed Eggs covered 36 stations. Errors of identification concerned 7 sites so 20% of the analysed stations. These locations corresponded to areas where the distribution of cod and whiting overlapped; these locations seem to be spread randomly so there is not, in this study, a specific error area (Figure 4.6).



Figure 4.6: Localisation of error identification for group 2: cod in red circles (left) and whiting in blue circles (right)

Indeed, 105 eggs identified as cod following morphological criteria were confirmed on 107 eggs analysed by molecular analyses, the two misidentified eggs were in fact whiting eggs. This corresponds to 98% of good identification (Table 4.4). Among the 76 whiting presorting eggs analysed by molecular analyses, 54 were correctly identified by visual method and 22 were in fact cod eggs. This corresponds to 71% of good identification.

Table 4 4: Correct identification for each species of group 2: cod, haddock and whiting

	Number of eggs identified under microscope	Number of eggs identified by molecular biology	% of cod identified by molecular biology	% of whiting identified by molecular biology	% of haddock identified by molecular biology
Cod	107	127	98%	2%	0%
Whiting	76	56	29%	71%	0%
Haddock	0	0	0%	0%	100%

• Group 3: Dab, flounder and *Trisopterus* species

Samples were chosen to have a good coverage of the study area but for pratical reasons, we selected for molecular identifications (1 sampling station every 6 stations and only 10 eggs maximum per station). Among the 353, earlier developmental stage (stage 1, without embryo) eggs extracted, 164 were successfully amplified, corresponding to 46% of positive amplification. Ten (out of 38) sites on the study area were not analysed due to DNA from egg extracts giving weak or no amplifications by PCR. Figure 4.7 shows the localisation of failure of PCR and localisation of analysed stations. All stations analysed were evenly spread across
the study area, with exception of the Belgian coast where no samples of sufficient quality could be analysed.



Figure 4 7: Localisation of analysed stations and PCR failure sites for group 3: dab, flounder and Trisopterus species (+) stations analysed and (Δ) amplification failed

In total, we discovered 28 identification errors out of the 164 eggs analysed (17%), spread across 11 sites (39% of the analysed stations) (Fig. 3). Of the 107 eggs identified as dab following morphological criteria, 99 eggs were confirmed by molecular analyses (92.5% correct identification, Table 4.5). Of the 47 visually identified flounder eggs, 30 were correctly identified by molecular analyses, while five were in fact *Trisopterus* sp. and 12 were dab eggs (Only 64% correctly identified). Of the ten *Trisopterus* sp. eggs analysed by molecular analyses, seven were correctly identified by visual method and three were in fact flounder eggs (70% correct identification).



Figure 4 8: Error rate and localisation of error of identification for dab in red circles (left), flounder in blue circles (middle) and trisopterus species in green circle (right), (X) samples analyses with no identification error

	Number of eggs identified under microscope	Number of eggs identified by molecular biology	% of dab identified by molecular biology	% of flounder identified by molecular biology	% of <i>Trisopterus</i> identified by molecular biology
Dab	107	111	93%	7%	0%
Flounder	47	41	25%	64%	11%
Trisopterus	10	12	0%	30%	70%

Table 4.5: Correct identification for each species of group 3: dab, flounder and Trisopterus

For both groups (2 and 3), a relative error analysis was performed for each group, per stations analysed for each species. Table 4.6 shows the mean, minimum, maximum, median and standard deviation on the whole of sampling.

Table 4.6: Analysis of relative error for each species and per stations analysed: mean, minimum (min) and maximum (max), median and standard deviation (std) on the whole of sampling for group 2 (Gadidae species) and group 3 (dab, flounder and *Trisopterus* species)

		Group 2		Group 3					
	Cod	Whiting	Haddock	Dab	Flounder	Trisopterus spp.			
Mean	0.002	0.067	0	0.04	0.37	0.04			
Min-Max	[0-0.06]	[0-0.87]	-	[0-0.33]	[0-1]	[0-1]			
Median (std)	0 (0.01)	0 (0.21)	-	0 (0.11)	0.29 (0.40)	0 (0.19)			

The relative error was analysed per station for each species, which confirmed a good visual identification for dab and *Trisopterus sp.* with a mean of error of 0.04 and a median of 0. For the latter, however, these results should be viewed with caution because of the low number of eggs analysed. Flounder presented a higher error rate with a mean of 0.37 and a median of 0.29. Most of the time the error on flounder was due to confusion with dab (71%), against 29% confusion with *Trisopterus* sp. However, no confusion between dab and *Trisopterus* sp. was found.

• Group 4: Plaice and long rough dab

Among the 12 plaice and 12 long rough dab eggs tested, 100 % of positive amplification was obtained. However, there was some difficulty in sequencing analyses due to the low quantity of DNA products. Indeed, part of the DNA may be damaged by formalin and DNA extracts may not be sufficient to subsequent sequencing reaction. As a result, eleven sequences of plaice eggs were performed successfully but only 5 sequences of long rough dab were obtained. According to the resulting sequences, there is now no doubt on the identity of the eggs of these 2 species which confirmed that little confusion may occur between these two species when using the various morphological characteristics of their eggs.

4.3.2 Interpolated maps

• Group 1: Rockling species

Overall, 113 stations (1 573 rockling sp. eggs, all stages confused) were identified visually. Out of these, a subset of 221 eggs belonging to 83 stations covering the whole study area were analysed among which, 75 eggs were identified as *Ciliata mustela*, 36 eggs as *Ciliata septentrionalis* and 110 eggs as *Enchelyopus cimbrius* (Figure 4.9)



Figure 4 9: Eggs location of the three rockling species analysed by molecular analyses by PCR-RFLP: *Ciliata mustela* (CILIMUS) in green, *Ciliata septentrionalis* (CILISEP) in blue and *Enchelyopus cimbrius* (ENCHCIM) in red

Geostatistical analyses were performed on log-transformed abundance data for the rockling group as eggs cannot be identified to species level by visual method (Chapter 2). Similar analyses and interpolations were done on the relative proportion of each species eggs in samples reanalysed by molecular techniques (Fig. 4.10).



Figure 4.10: Relative occurrence distribution of each rockling species eggs identified by molecular analyses: *Ciliata mustela* (left), *Ciliata septentrionalis* (middle), *Enchelyopus cimbrius* (right)

The relative occurrence maps of the three rockling species were used as correction factors and multiplied to the rockling group abundance map obtained by visual identification in order to obtain the distribution of eggs of each separate species in the entire studied area and to represent their respective spawning grounds (Fig. 4.11).



Figure 4.11: Rockling species egg distribution *Ciliata mustela* (left), *Ciliata septentrionalis* (middle), *Enchelyopus cimbrius* (right)

The three species covered a large proportion of the study area. *Ciliata mustela* eggs were present mainly along the south-eastern coast of France, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany. *Ciliata septentrionalis* eggs were present in the south of the study area, mainly in the Channel, in the Dover strait and the Southern Bight of the North Sea away from the Dutch coasts. *Enchelyopus cimbrius* eggs were mainly offshore, in the centre of the study area and near the Dutch coast, and totally absent from the Eastern Channel. The Dutch coast seemed to be an important spawning ground for the three rockling species.

• Group 2: Cod, haddock and whiting

Overall, 262 stations (5 708 cod eggs and 25 597 whiting eggs, regardless of stages) were identified. Out of these, 36 stations covering all the studied area were analysed by molecular analyses. Figure 4.12 illustrates the station locations of each samples identified by both visual method and molecular analyses. A total of 183 eggs were analysed among which 107 eggs were identified as *Gadus morhua* and 76 eggs as *Merlangius merlangus*. No haddock eggs were found in the studied area by both methods.



Figure 4.12: Location of Gadidae eggs identified by molecular analyses: *Gadus morhua* (GADUMOR) in red and *Merlangius merlangus* (MERNMER) Gadidae in blue

Geostatistical analyses were performed on log-transformed abundance data for cod and whiting eggs (Chapter 2). Similar analyses and interpolations were done on the relative occurrence of each egg species obtained by molecular analyses (Fig. 4.13).



Figure 4.13: Relative distribution of cod and whiting eggs identified by molecular analyses, *Gadus morhua* (left), *Merlangius merlangus* (right)

The relative occurrence maps of each species were used as correction factors and multiplied to the Gadidae group abundance map obtained by visual identification in order to obtain the distribution of eggs of cod and whiting species in the entire studied area and to depict the spawning ground of each species (Fig. 4.14).



Figure 4.14: Cod and whiting egg distribution, *Gadus morhua* (left), *Merlangius merlangus* (right)

Together the two species covered a large proportion of the studied area but cod and whiting seemed to have similar spawning grounds. Indeed, both species spawned near the French, Belgian and Dutch coasts but cod spawned also offshore of the German and Danish coasts, in the centre of the study area.

• Group 3: Dab, flounder and *Trisopterus* sp.

Overall 1050 stations (around 52 000 dab early stage eggs, 4 107 flounder early stage eggs stage 1 and 212 *Trisopterus* species developed stage) were identified. A small subset of 28 stations covering all the studied area were analysed by molecular analyses. Figure 4.15 illustrates the stations locations of each samples identified by both visual method and molecular analyses. A total of 164 eggs were analysed among which 111 eggs were identified as *Limanda limanda*, 41 eggs as *Platichthys flesus* and 12 eggs as *Trisopterus* sp.



Figure 4 15: Locations of dab, flounder and Trisopterus sp. eggs identified by molecular analyses: *Limanda limanda* (LIMDLIM) in red, *Platichthys flesus* (PLATFLE) in blue and *Trisopterus sp.* (TRIS) in green

Geostatistical analyses were performed on log-transformed abundance data for dab, flounder and *Trisopterus* sp. eggs (Chapter 2). Similar analyses and interpolations were done on the relative proportion of each species eggs obtained by molecular analyses (Fig. 4.16).



Figure 4.16: Relative occurrence distribution of cod and whiting eggs identified by molecular analyses, *Limanda limanda* (left), *Platichthys flesus* (middle) and *Trisopterus* sp. (right)

The relative occurrence maps of each species were used as correction factors and multiplied to abundance map of the considered group obtained by visual identification in order to produce the distribution of eggs of dab, flounder and *Trisopterus* species in the entire studied area and to depict the spawning ground of each species (Fig. 4.17).



Figure 4.17: Dab, flounder and Trisopterus sp. egg distribution, *Limanda limanda* (left), *Platichthys flesus* (middle) and *Trisopterus* sp. (right)

Together the three species covered a large proportion of the studied area but each species seemed to have distinct spawning grounds. Molecular analyses could distinguish three distinct spawning areas. Corrected maps (Fig 6) showed that dab spawned over a large extent mainly in the centre and offshore parts of the studied area, whereas flounder seems to be more coastal near the French, Belgian and the Dutch coasts. The distribution of *Trisopterus* species group was unclear because of their very low and isolated occurrence as well as the fact that it

regroups three species with possibly different habitat affinities. Still, an aggregation of *Trisopterus* eggs was observed near the Belgian coasts and another one was observed offshore near the Dogger Bank. Corrected maps were similar to maps from visually identified (ANNEX H) confirming the relatively reliable identification by microscope. Generally, however, fish eggs distribution seemed to be more restricted in space with corrected maps than visual data maps. This was particularly the case for flounder which distribution was much more coastal than previously thought

• Group 4: Plaice and long rough dab

No confusion between plaice and long rough dab was found so there was no need to correct the distributions of those fish eggs obtained by visual identification. Interpolated map performed from visual data were considered as reliable.

4.4 Discussion

The detailed mapping of breeding grounds for exploited fish species is a prerequisite for sustainable management practices and for the protection of ecologically important marine areas. However, early research on stock structure based on morphological characteristics of eggs could have lead to inaccurate spawning maps (Fox et al., 2005 a) and influenced spawning stock biomass estimation. The problem of visual fish egg identification can easily be solved through molecular techniques. But, applications of DNA-based methods to largescale distribution mapping of marine plankton have been hampered by the low throughput, by the relatively high cost per sample and by the time and specialist skills needed (Lindeque et al., 2006). One other side molecular techniques resulting in high confidence about the timing and location of spawning of (over) exploited fish species. A good molecular validation protocol of visual identification data enables for large sizes and geographical spread of samples, while controlling a subset with molecular markers. Therefore, the application of PCR-RFLP methods as described here combined with pre-sorting by morphological identification showed that these two identification methods are complementary. Many fish have a winter spawning period and some fish have the same range of egg size such as cod, haddock and whiting, which spawn in the same time in the North Sea. Molecular analyses have been performed only on uncertain eggs and have allowed mapping of egg occurrence of a given species within a difficult group across the studied area. The molecular techniques used

in this study on formalin-fixed eggs have proven their applicability to improve the accuracy of spawning maps.

Importance of sample preservation and fragment length on amplification success

Many studies have shown the problem of DNA damaged with formalin-fixed tissues (Chang and Loew, 1994; Skage *et al.*, 2007; Sawada *et al.*, 2008). This fixation method reduces, particularly, the efficiency of extraction (Caldarelli-Stefano *et al.*, 1999). This problem has been encountered for fish eggs identification by molecular analyses (unpublished results). The formalin fixation method implies reactions in relation to amino acids, leading to formation of links between DNA and protein (Chang and Loew, 1994). These properties may impede the amplification yield (Palmer, 2009). Moreover, the use of formalin, which is been known to induce DNA fragmentation and nucleotide alterations and make specimens unsuitable for further molecular studies may explained the PCR yield variability (Chakraborty *et al.*, 2006; Palmer, 2009) even if the onboard egg fixation has been realised with less than 1% formalin. In this study, some difficulties were encountered to amplify fish egg DNA, and particularly first stage (earlier egg without embryo) egg DNA.

Amplification failure cannot be due to fixation solution because solution was done in one time, in high quantity. This may be due to the very small size of the eggs that were not easily crushed or to the very small DNA quantity available, because group 3 analyses were focused on early stages of eggs (stage 1, without embryo) conversely to group 2 analyses, which were performed on eggs regardless of their stage. Since the PCR temperature was optimised using a temperature gradient test, it is not expected to be an amplification failure factor. The variability of amplification results between eggs may be explained by the quality of DNA extracts used, they may contain inhibitors from the extraction reaction (Aranishi, 2006).

Nevertheless, in our study, eggs have been fixed during only 2 to 3 weeks in buffered formalin before their subsequent storage in a conservation solution without formalin, in order to avoid any DNA damage, which has already been proven successful.

The most widely used methods for extracting DNA from formalin-fixed eggs are based on phenol/chloroform/isoamyl alcohol (PCI) extraction (Quintero *et al.*, 1998) or Chelex® (Aranishi, 2006). However, extraction of DNA by means of PCI method is time-consuming and requires the use of potentially dangerous chemical reagents (Caldarelli-Stefano *et al.*, 1999). Alternative method, based upon magnetic bead technology was recently implemented because it allows rapid and efficient purification of DNA (in less than 15

minutes following DNA extraction) and can be used in routine analyses. Although less DNA was obtained by the magnetic bead extraction method than by PCI extraction, DNA purified by magnetic beads gave after PCR slightly stronger and cleaner bands on agarose gel than DNA extracted with the phenol/chloroform method (Caldarelli-Stefano *et al.*, 1999).

Perez *et al.* (2005) demonstrated the possibility of DNA extraction with formalin-fixed hake (*Merluccius merluccius*) and megrim (*Lepidorhombus whiffiagonis* and *Lepidorhombus boscii*) eggs using fragment size of the 16S rRNA gene with a good PCR amplification success from 85% formalin-fixed eggs. Karaiskou *et al.*, 2007 obtained 100% of PCR amplification of ethanol-preserved eggs while PCR amplification from formalin-preserved eggs was 20%. Nevertheless, Fox *et al.* (2005 a) found that only 6% of formalin-fixed cod egg DNA failed to be amplify. In the present study, amplification rate was quite good, 80% for rockling eggs, 86% for other Gadidae eggs but only of 46% for group 3 (dab, flounder and *Trisopterus* sp.).

Choice of molecular marker

For formalin fixed samples containing a low concentration of template DNA, mitochondrial DNA is often used in molecular analyses since it is more resistant to deterioration than nuclear DNA, due to its small size, circular structure and the protection offered by the cellular compartment of the mitochondrion. Moreover, near hundred mitochondrial genomes are present in egg cells each containing around ten copies of DNA (Hunter *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, the choice to find identification markers among mitochondrial DNA seems to be particularly wise in the case of biological material containing few DNA templates such as fish eggs.

The most commonly used mitochondrial markers for species identifications and Forensic Informative Nucleotide Sequencing (FINS) purposes are the genes coding for cytochrome *b* and for 16S rRNA. They were often used for differentiation of fish eggs (Aoyama *et al.*, 2001; Karaiskou *et al.*, 2007) due to their high nucleotidic substitution rate that enable identification. In particular, the rRNA 16S gene possesses DNA regions easy to line up and variables regions useful for phylogenetic studies (Di Finizio *et al.*, 2007).

The sampled eggs analysed by the PCR-RFLP method did not show variation in the restriction profile, although the possible existence of variations in the recognition sites cannot be dismissed. However, if species are phylogenetically close, the mitochondrial DNA may show a higher mutation rate than nuclear DNA (Farias *et al.*, 2001).

Comparative mapping of the spawning grounds

Rockling species eggs cannot be distinguished morphologically and adult samples had to be taken to obtain references for PCR-RFLP analyses. *Ciliata mustela* and *Enchelyopus cimbrius* were expected in the study area but *C. septentrionalis* was not. Indeed, an adult of northern rockling (*C. septentrionalis*) was misidentified during the 2008 IBTS sea survey and was confused with one of the two commonly found rocklings. The sequencing reaction evidenced the misidentification of this individual which served as reference for this additional species after the re-identification of the frozen adult. Consequently, the PCR-RFLP on cytochrome *b* gene applied to rockling eggs enabled the identification of three rockling species present in the Channel and Southern North Sea. Rocklings species are known to spawn mostly from January to September in the English Channel and North Sea with a peak in April and May.

During January and February, cod, haddock and whiting can spawn simultaneously in the study area. Eggs of Gadus morhua and Merlangius merlangus were identified by morphological identification but no Melanogrammus aeglefinus egg was found; this was confirmed by PCR-RFLP on cyt b gene. Whiting spawn from January in the Southern North Sea to July in the Northern part (Russell, 1976; Svetnovidov, 1986) while Munk and Nielsen (Munk and Nielsen, 2005) reported that whiting spawning took place from March to June. Whiting eggs were found south of the Dogger Bank and to the east of the Shetland Isles but were absent from the central North Sea (Fox et al., 2005 b). Daan (Daan, 1978) identified the main spawning areas of cod around the Southern flank of the Dogger Bank and a smaller patch in the German Bight (Fox et al., 2008). Moreover, Harding and Nichols (Harding and Nichols, 1987) identified cod eggs off the western edge of the Dogger Bank. Spawning of cod begins in the south-east of the Dogger Bank (Fox et al., 2008). A survey in spring 2004 applying DNA techniques for species identification (Fox et al., 2008) showed hot spots of cod egg production around the southern and eastern edges of the Dogger Bank, and egg abundance at some locations in the southern North Sea was much lower than in earlier years (Daan, 1978).

The same PCR-RFLP on cytochrome *b* gene was tested for the group 3 (dab, flounder and *Trisopterus* sp.) but had not given good amplification of egg DNA (20%). However, PCR-RFLP on rRNA 16S gene can identify *Limanda limanda*, *Platichthys flesus* and *Trisopterus* sp. eggs. But three species of *Trisopterus* are likely to be present in the study area (*Trisopterus minutus*, *T. luscus* and *T. esmarkii*) so another study is necessary to distinguish these three *Trisopterus* species with other restriction enzymes. This study shows that dab and flounder have two distinct spawning areas. Our results are concordant with earlier studies documenting the spawning grounds of dab by Van der Land, (1991) and Rijnsdorp et al, (1992). Dab spawning occurs throughout the south-eastern North Sea, along the southern edge of the Dogger Bank and northeast of Flamborough Head (Harding and Nichols, 1987). These patterns were confirmed by the present results and were also in agreement with data from Ehrenbaum (1905-1909) and Bohl (1957). We can conclude that dab has a strong spawning site fidelity (cf Chapter 3). Flounder is located mainly inshore, near Dutch coasts but also near German and Danish coasts. Moreover, Van der Land (1991) had found that most flounder eggs were observed in the area west and northwest of the Dutch west coast, the eastern English Channel and the area northwest of Helgoland. It appears that the flounder is a species with a well-defined spawning period and spawning area. (Van der Land, 1991). Following Quéro and Vayne (1997), Trisopterus luscus and T. minutus would be located inshore, in the Channel but mainly near the French Atlantic coasts, between the Gironde Estuary and North of the Loire River, as well as along the Vendée coast. The southern distribution border of Trisopterus esmarkii lies around the Dogger Bank (Hessen et al., 2005). However, the low densities observed in our survey inhibit us to draw any conclusions on the distribution of Trisopterus spawning grounds.

No confusion is possible between plaice and long rough dab, it was confirmed by sequencing the 5' fragment of cyt b gene. Spawning distribution of these two species were presented in chapter 2. Long rough dab was localised in the North of the study area (exception a patch observed in 2006, near Norfolk), whereas plaice eggs were spread over the study area with a higher concentration offshore of Dutch and Danish coasts, in the centre of the study area.

Conclusion

Other methods may be used which was ever used in any field: PCR-multiplex (Henegariu *et al.*, 1997) could be performed with 2 primers set to distinguish specifically each species or a RFLP with 2 restriction enzymes to distinguish the three *Trisopterus* species in the same time as dab and flounder. Like in the present study, PCR-multiplex followed by a RFLP can be used with Acil to differentiate eggs of dab, flounder and *Trisopterus* sp., then in a second step, EcoP15I may be used tp distinguish *Trisopterus esmarkii* (65 bp) from *Trisopterus minutus* and *Trisopterus luscus* (not cutted) and BsaJI may be used to further distinguish *T. luscus* (112-142 bp) from *T minutus* (112 bp). Finally, quantitative PCR may be used in order to identify and quantify each species present in a given sample in just one step

which would result in a large gain of time. Then, a new study on identification of these formalin-fixed eggs by *in situ* hybridisation technique is in progress at Ifremer laboratory (Nantes), in the aim to allow to analyse each species of the samples in the same time and further to analyse the same sample by ZooScan (Chapter 5).

This study should be pursued over time to verify the stability of the distribution of spawning grounds. Given the cost involved with molecular analysis, because it necessitates egg per egg analysis, only a sub-set of collected samples should be validated while visual identification should be fine-tuned with molecular results. Both methods are complementary. Molecular analyses could also be performed on eggs with uncertain identification. In the same way, we are studying the feasibility of an image analysis-based method using an integrated system (ZooScan) which allows automatic counting, measurement and thus identification of fish eggs (Chapter 5).

Ichthyoplankton surveys are a powerful tool to monitor spawning areas when taxonomic identification is reliable enough to validate visual observations and densities (Fox *et al.*, 2005). The application of molecular analyses on fish eggs greatly increases the accuracy of spawning maps in 2008 and ultimately, will enhance the understanding on fish population spatial dynamics. Such knowledge is necessary to implement spatially explicit, ecologically sound, protection scheme. Indeed, the delineation and size of MPAs, which size and location may be defined by the habitat needed for spawning or larval settlement, will be easier and beneficial effects on populations could be monitored rapidly (Fuiman and Werner, 2002). Managers could as such decide to close off a given area or season to fishing in order to protect spawning and nursery grounds and with the aim of maintaining sustainable fisheries.

CHAPTER 5

Automated large scale quantification and identification of planktonic fish eggs by integrated numerical image analysis.

This chapter is based on an article in preparation, which presents fish eggs identification by an integrated system of numerical images analysis: ZooScan. This device allows to enumerate, count and size zooplanktonic organisms.

(4) Antajan, E., Lelièvre S. and Vaz, S. Comparison of traditional microscopy and digitalised images analysis to identify and delineate pelagic fish egg spatial distribution. Accepted in Journal of Plankton Research.

One of the problems concerning fish egg distribution studies is related to the weak resolution of the sampling from a space and temporal point of view due to the workload that the examination of a too high number of samples would imply. Recently, the development of a new laboratory imaging system, the ZooScan, capable of obtaining relatively good resolution images enables automated zooplankton identification using supervised learning algorithms. This new approach was applied on formalin-fixed fish egg samples collected by the CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Eggs Sampler) during the 2008 and 2009 winter IBTS (International Bottom Trawl Survey) surveys in the Eastern English Channel and the Southern North Sea. Fish egg spatial distribution of seven species based on microscope and ZooScan identifications were compared. Abundance and distribution maps of winter spawning areas of plaice, long rough dab, cod and whiting were similar for both methods. Low identification accuracy on small size eggs was due to microscope misidentification of standards used for ZooScan learning (dab and flounder). The potential input of such tool to quickly acquire valuable data on identification, enumeration, size frequency distribution of fish eggs and map spawning areas is of great interest for understanding and forecasting fisheries recruitment evolution and will support ecosystem-based management.

5.1. Introduction

One of the main problems confronting study of spawning grounds is low sampling resolution, both spatial and temporal. Although it is widely recognized that small scale sampling would be relevant to increase the accuracy of spawning ground map, the work involved in fish egg sample analysis has made it impossible to sample at very high resolution in most programs. To some extent, the lack of sampling capability can be resolved using a Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler (CUFES, cf chapter 1; Checkley *et al.* 1997; Zwolinski *et al.*, 2006; Petitgas *et al.* 2009), but the analysis of such amount of samples by traditional microscope observations is still a very time consuming task.

In such a context, the development of new technologies that can provide rapid, unbiased, and quantitative data about zooplankton is likely to significantly advance our knowledge (Benfield *et al.* 2007). Image analysis has been considered a potential alternative to traditional manual treatment of plankton samples (Jeffries *et al.*, 1984; Rolke and Lenz, 1984; Gorsky *et al.*, 1989; Steidinger *et al.*, 1990; Tang *et al.*, 1998). In recent years, the steady increase in the computers' power, the development of faster and more accurate digital acquisition hardware and the progress made in machine-learning techniques used to analyse such data enable us today to improve image analysis.

However, recent advances in digital plankton image processing and pattern recognition have made automated or semi-automated coarse taxonomic level identification possible (Benfield et al. 2007). Silhouette photography was one of the first methods used to record the contents of a plankton sample in a form of contact print on photographic emulsion (Ortner et al., 1979). Then, in the mid-1980s, several in situ 2D imaging systems have been developed (Wiebe and Benfield, 2003). So, an Optical Plankton Counter (OPC) was constructed by Herman (1988), then the Video Plankton Recorder (VPR) developed by Davis et al. (1992) were precursors of *in situ* plankton-imaging instruments. It was the first plankton sampling device to automatically identify and count phytoplankton and zooplankton taxa in situ and quantitatively map their abundance and distribution patterns with high resolution in real time (Davis et al., 1992). Then, Lenz et al. (1995) developed the Ichthyoplankton Recorder to be used on a routine basis for fish larval surveys and zooplankton monitoring programmes. Moreover, the Flow Cytometer And Microscope (Flow-Cam; Sieracki et al. 1998) detects particles and micro-organisms from a stream of water siphoned directly from the ocean. The images are necessarily of limited resolution, making their identification a rather difficult challenge (Blaschko et al., 2005). However, other methods exist, the Shadowed Image

Particle Profiling Evaluation Recorder (SIPPER, Samson *et al.* 2001; Remsen *et al.* 2004), or the real-time detection and classification of objects in flowing water called REFLICS (Realtime Flow Imaging and Classification System, Iwamoto *et al.*, 1998). The recently developed, ZooScan integrated system produces measures of zooplankton abundance, biomass and size spectra for a variety of ecological studies (Grosjean *et al.* 2004; Schultes and Lopes 2009; Gorsky *et al.* 2010). The ZooScan was designed and implemented by Oceanographical Laboratory of Villefarnche sur Mer (France) and breveted by CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique).

In this study, the ZooScan device was used on formalin-fixed fish eggs samples collected by the CUFES during winter International Bottom Trawl Surveys (IBTS) of 2008 and 2009 in the Eastern Channel and the Southern North Sea. Distribution of eggs of eight fish species (dab, flounder, rocklings, whiting, cod, sole, plaice and long-rough dab) identified with the ZooScan were compared to distribution of eggs identified by traditional microscopy method. The potential input of such tool to quickly acquire valuable data on identification, enumeration, and size frequency distribution of fish eggs and map spawning areas is discussed.

5.2 Materiel and Method

5.2.1 Data collection and conservation

Data were collected during the French January-February IBTS (International Bottom Trawl Survey) sea surveys 2008 and 2009 (Figure 5.1). Fish eggs were collected by the CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sample). A full description of the CUFES has been provided elsewhere (Checkley *et al.*, 1997; ICES, 2007 c) and in chapter 1. The samples were taken every 30 min periods (which corresponds to approximately 21 m³ of seawater pumped), 24/24h along the vessel route, for a total of 1,050 samples in 2008 and 1,021 samples in 2009. Egg samples were preserved using the formalin solution described in chapter 4. This solution improves the preservation of chromatophores and prevents yolk burst into the perivitellin space that are key features for egg identification.



Figure 5.1: Spatial location of CUFES samples collected every 30 min periods along the RV *Thalassa* route during French January-February IBTS 2008 (\bigcirc) and 2009 (+)

5.2.2 Fish egg identification

Eggs were identified to species level under binocular microscope according morphological criteria, described in chapter 1 such as egg size (measured by a micrometer), the presence of an oil globule, and the pigmentation of the embryo in function of the stage development (Russell, 1976; Munk and Nielsen, 2005).

5.2.3 Sample digitisation with the ZooScan system

CUFES samples (350 samples from IBTS 2008 and 1 021 samples from IBTS 2009) were digitised using a ZooScan imaging system (Hydroptic-V2 model) together with dedicated image processing softwares ZooProcess and Plankton Identifier (Gorsky *et al.*, 2010).

Prior to digitisation of formalin fixed-samples, they were rinsed with tap water and subdivided, when necessary, using a Motoda splitter (Motoda, 1959). Samples were poured into the scanning cell $(11 \times 24 \text{ cm})$ and organisms were manually separated to minimize overlapping. Samples were scanned into a 2400 dpi, 16 bit grey digital image for archiving and then converted to an 8 bit image for processing. The final image was segmented at a default level of 243, thus keeping 243 grey levels for characterizing organisms. Objects having an equivalent circular diameter larger than 0.3 mm were enumerated and 51 attributes (e.g., size, shape and grey-levels) were extracted from every object (Annex J). A vignette of each object was extracted and associated measurements were saved in a text file called a PID

file (Plankton Identifier file) for further identification process. After digitalisation, sample was recovered and reconditioned to be archived.

5.2.3 Building and evaluating the classifier for automated identification

Automated identification of fish eggs was made using supervised learning algorithms available in the Plankton Identifier free software (Gasparini, 2007). All supervised learning methods need a subset of objects already identified by an expert (learning set) to produce a classification model (classifier). Fisrtly, fish eggs from IBTS 2008 samples were identified and staged to species level under microscope and used to make a collection of fish eggs. These standards of eggs were scanned to obtain a learning set, i.e., a set of vignettes of sorted fish eggs together with their attributes. Two development stages were identified: stage A (early stages 1 and 2), which corresponds to an egg without embryo and stage B (advanced stages, 3 and above), which corresponds to an egg with an embryo more or less developed. By default the classifier classifies all vignettes, including detritus, damaged eggs or other organisms (e.g., copepods, chaetognathes) that could have been collected with the CUFES. As we wanted to focus on fish eggs we created classes for damaged eggs per species and pooled detritus and other organisms in one class named 'detritus', in order to minimize bias during analysis. Only species observed with high enough abundance and occurrence frequency were taken into account for building the learning set. The supervised learning method chosen to build the classifier was the Random Forest algorithm (Breiman, 2001) as it is known to give best results on zooplankton samples (Gorsky et al., 2010). The performance of the classifier was evaluated on an independent test set whose vignettes were not used at any time during the learning process.

5.2.4 Factorial analyses and classification

A Principal Component Analysis (PCA) followed by a Hierarchical Cluster Analysis (HCA) was performed on the learning set under the Tanagra software (Rakotomalala, 2005). Our objectives were to i) analyse linear interactions between the 51 ZooScan attributes, ii) identify clusters (subgroups of object in the learning set) and iii) characterise clusters with the ZooScan attributes and the identification classes that are highly representative of each cluster. The combination of PCA and cluster analysis is a common way to explore relationships among a large number of variables and to identify homogenous subgroups of instance in a population (Lebart *et al.*, 2000). PCA describes the total inertia (or variability) of a

multidimensional set of data, in a sample of fewer dimensions (or factors) that is the best summary of the information contained in the data. We computed the PCA using the 51 ZooScan attributes as continuous active variables and the identification classes as categorical supplementary (or illustrative) variable.

The HCA was then performed based on the factorial coordinates supplied by the two first components of the PCA and on the identification classes of the learning set used as preclusters to handle the very large dataset and to create the dendrogram from these pre-clusters. The type of HCA used here is an agglomerative clustering (based on Ward's criterion), i.e. a procedure that successively groups the closest objects into clusters, which then are grouped into larger clusters of higher rank (Legendre and Legendre, 1998).

5.2.5 Geostatistical analyses and interpolated map

Geostatistics were described in chapter 2. The geostatistical analyses were made using GenStat software (VSN International) on microscopic and ZooScan data obtained on each species for 2008 and 2009. The number of eggs counted in each sample was converted into number of eggs for a standard reference volume of 20 m³ (close to that filtered in 30min). To compare the obtained maps, the relative error between microscopic and ZooScan identifications was calculated on each samples as follow:

$$zonalrelativeerror = \frac{|N_{\mu} - N_z|}{N_{\mu \max}}$$
 (2)

where, N_{μ} and N_z correspond to the number of eggs per 20 m³ according to microscope and ZooScan observations respectively. The absolute error was divided by the maximum abundance observed by microscope ($N_{\mu max}$) in order to rescale the error as a function of the maximum permissible error, being the maximum difference that may occur between visual and zooscan identifications and to highlight areas where this error has the most impact on the evaluated abundance.

5.2.6 Confusion risks

Because of the overlapping size range, confusion risks exist between two species groups. The first one included dab, flounder and rockling species. The second group was common sole, cod and whiting. However, with the support of microscope identification able to detect the presence of oil globule, no confusion was possible for rockling and common sole with other species. So, confusion risks analyses were carried out only between dab-flounder

and cod-whiting. Size class analysis was performed for each species and interpolated maps were done to visualise the distribution of fish eggs included in overlapping size ranges where species confusion may occur to observe if there was a specific area of confusion risk for each group.

5.3 Results

5.3.1 Fish eggs identified under microscope

Table 5.1 lists the 16 fish species whose eggs were identified under microscope in 2008 and 2009 French IBTS with their relative abundance and frequency of occurrence. As it was difficult to accurately discriminate (using visual criteria) between the different rockling eggs (three species were identified by molecular analysis in the area, Lelièvre *et al.* 2010), they were pooled for mapping and making standard for ZooScan. The studied species belong to nine families, Pleuronectidae and Gadidae being the most represented. Unexpectedly, dab (*Limanda limanda*) and whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*) had the highest relative abundance and frequency of occurrence, whereas their spawning period is known to take place from March to June in the North Sea (Munk and Nielsen, 2005). In addition to dab and whiting, the following species were abundant enough to make standard for ZooScan analysis: plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*), flounder (*Platichthys flesus*), cod (*Gadus morhua*), rocklings (*Enchelyopus cimbrius, Ciliata mustela and C. septentrionalis*), and long rough dab (*Hippoglossoides platessoides*). Rockling eggs species cannot be distinguished accurately using visual criteria (three species were identified by molecular analysis in the area, chapter 4) so they were pooled for mapping and to make standard for ZooScan.

Table 5.1: Fish species whose eggs were identified under microscope during the 2008 and 2009 French IBTS. For each species, relative abundance (R_{ab}) and frequency of occurrence (F_{oc}) are indicated. *: eggs found in sufficient numbers for geostatistical interpolation and to sort standards for ZooScan analyses.

			IBTS 2008		IBTS 2009				
Name	Common name	Family	R_{ab}	F_{oc}	R_{ab}	F_{oc}	Spawning period (Munk & Nielsen, 2005)		
Limanda limanda*	Dab	Pleuronectidae	0.61	0.51	0.66	0.76	March - July		
Merlangius merlangus*	whiting	Gadidae	0.20	0.42	0.17	0.54	March - July		
Pleuronectes platessa*	Plaice	Pleuronectidae	0.07	0.43	0.07	0.72	December - May		
Platichthys flesus*	Flounder	Pleuronectidae	0.05	0.26	0.03	0.21	January - August		
Gadus morhua*	cod	Gadidae	0.04	0.44	0.06	0.61	January - June October - December		
Lotidae spp.*	Rocklings	Lotidae	0.01	0.27	0.00	0.21	January - September		
Solea solea *	Common sole	Soleidae	0.01	0.14	0.00	0.05	April - September		
Hippoglossoides platessoides*	Long rough dab	Pleuronectidae	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.05	January - June		
Trisopterus spp.	Bib, Poor cod & Norway pout	Gadidae	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	January - September October - December		
Sprattus sprattus	Sprat	Clupeidae	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	January - July		
Callionymus spp.	Dragonet	Callionymidae	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.00	April - September		
Scophtalmus rhombus	Brill	Scophthalmidae	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.01	March - September		
Buglossidium luteum	Solenette	Soleidae	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	April - September		
Clupea Harengus	Herring	Clupeidae	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0 March - May 3 September - January		
Engraulis encrasicolus	European anchovy	Engraulidae	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	June - September		
Dicentrarchus labrax	European seabass	Moronidae	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	May - June		

5.3.2 Classifier performance

Learning and test sets were composed respectively of 3636 and 2767 vignettes distributed into 24 classes (figure 5.2). The number of eggs into each class of the learning set was balanced, when possible, in order to avoid overlearning of one class to another. For most of the species 300 to 400 eggs were used, except for the long rough dab for which a bit less than 200 eggs were collected in 2008.



Figure 5.2: Number of vignettes per class in the learning (black bars) and test (white bars) sets used for building and evaluating the classifier. Early stages (stA); advanced stages (stB); damaged eggs (d) for dab and flounder were pooled together.

Best classifier performance on the test set was obtained when pooling the development stages A and B into one class in the learning set (figure 5.3). So in a first step fish eggs were identified per species without any distinction of development stages, and in a second step development stages were determined for each species separately. For the latter a classifier allowing distinction between stage A and B was built for each species, their performance is shown in figure 5.4.



Figure 5.3: Percentage of recall (true positive) per fish egg species on the test set with (white bars) or without (black bars) distinction between development stages in the learning set.



Figure 5.4: Percentage of recall (true positive) for the development stages A (young stages) and B (advanced stages) on the species specific test sets using the species specific learning sets.

Confusion matrix

The confusion matrix (Table 5.2) gives an overview of performance obtained to correctly classify fish eggs from the independent test set without distinction of development stages (first step). A confusion matrix is a contingency table crossing true (visually validated) and predicted (assigned by the classifier) identification of objects. The horizontal sum corresponds to the actual distribution among the different classes in the test file. The vertical

sum corresponds to the predicted distribution according to the model of classification. Bold values along the major diagonal represent the correct predictions made by the model, and the values off the diagonal represent the confusion between the different classes.

Fish eggs of plaice, sole, cod and whiting have a recall (rate of true positives) higher than 90% and a contamination (rate of false positive) lower than 15%. For the fish eggs of long rough dab the recall was of 86% due to the misidentification of few eggs into plaice eggs. The main confusion was observed between eggs of dab, flounder and rocklings with high contaminations (>30%) and low recalls (<80%). Damaged eggs were either well recognized or assigned into the species class to which they belonged (long rough dab, plaice, common sole). Otherwise they presented the same confusions as the species class to which they belonged (dad, flounder and rocklings). As expected fish eggs were distinguished from the detritus class with a very good accuracy (99%).

Table 5.2: Confusion matrix on the test set without distinction between stages A and B using a classifier built with the Random Forest algorithm for fish eggs identification of eight species spawning in winter in the eastern Channel and southern North Sea. (d: damaged eggs).

	Detritus	Dab & Flounder_d	Dab	Flounder	Rockling_d	Rockling	Whiting_d	Whiting	Cod_d	Cod	Sole_d	Sole	Plaice_d	Plaice	Long rough dab_d	Long rough dab	Total in test set	Recall	Contamination
Detritus	546	1	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	552	0.99	0.01
Dab & Flounder_d	6	84	3	10	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	108	0.78	0.24
Dab	0	2	199	39	0	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	257	0.77	0.34
Flounder	0	4	81	163	0	11	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	263	0.62	0.31
Rockling_d	0	14	0	0	4	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	0.16	0.43
Rockling	0	2	17	15	0	86	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	120	0.72	0.31
Whiting_d	0	4	0	0	0	0	34	3	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	47	0.72	0.24
Whiting	0	0	0	8	0	0	4	457	0	8	3	5	0	0	0	0	485	0.94	0.09
Cod_d	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	5	0.20	0.00
Cod	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	106	0	4	0	2	0	0	114	0.93	0.15
Sole_d	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	18	9	0	0	0	0	30	0.60	0.36
Sole	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	33	0	4	2	430	0	0	0	0	472	0.91	0.04
Plaice_d	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	0	0	7	0.57	0.50
Plaice	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	220	0	0	224	0.98	0.05
Long rough dab_d	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	2	9	0.78	0.00
Long rough dab	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	6	0	42	49	0.86	0.05
Total in prediction set	552	111	300	237	7	124	45	500	1	124	28	448	8	231	7	44	2767	0.87	0.13

5.3.3 Factorial analysis and clustering on the learning set

The first two factorial axes of the PCA performed on the learning set explained about 65% of the total variability (inertia) in the data (figure 5.5). The positions of the 51 ZooScan attributes were shown as arrows along the factorial axes in the circle of correlation (figure 5.5a), and the centroids of the identification classes (detritus and fish eggs) were simply projected into this factorial plane without participating in its computation (figure 5.4b). The

first factor (42.83% of the total inertia) was mainly defined by the opposition between parameters describing the circularity (circ., circexc., roundness...) and grey level variability (Stdev., CV, Range) of objects on the positive side (r > 0.8) and parameters describing objects having low grey level (Mean, Mode, Median, Min, Histcum 1 and 2...) on the negative side (r < -0.8). So the first factor clearly opposed the detritus to the fish eggs classes. The second factor (21.63% of the total inertia) was mainly defined by parameters of dimension (Perim., Major, Feret, Skelarea, Convexperim, Convexarea...) and allowed the distribution of fish eggs along the factorial axis according to their size. Thus, the big eggs of long rough dab and plaice are opposed to the smaller eggs of dab, flounder and rocklings along the second factor. The descriptors of the learning set objects used in the clustering were their factorial coordinates on the first two axes obtained in the PCA. As the additional amount of variability explained by the factorial axes decreased markedly after the first two factors, only the latter were used to identify clusters in the learning set through a HAC (figure 5.5b).

Five clusters were identified. The first one corresponded to the detritus group. The second cluster, grouped together the small eggs of flounder, dab and rocklings with their corresponding damaged eggs. The third cluster, grouped together the eggs of cod, sole and whiting with the damaged eggs of sole and whiting. The forth cluster corresponded to the eggs of plaice. The fifth cluster grouped together eggs of long rough dab and the damaged eggs of plaice and cod.

Factor 2 - 21.81% of inertia (eigenvalue: 11.12)



Figure 5.5: A representation in the first factorial plane of the Principal Component Analysis of (**A**) the 51 ZooScan attributes of the learning set in their circle of correlation and, (**B**) the identification class centroids (open circle). The four cluster centroids identified by the Hierarchical Ascendante Clustering were also projected in this plane (black circle). Arrows indicate the attributes of size (black), grey-levels (grey), shape (bold) and texture (hatched); see Appendix 1 for abbreviations.

5.3.4 Interpolated maps

We compared distribution mapping of fish eggs for each species (all stages combined) identified under microscope or with the ZooScan in 2008 (Fig. 5.7) and 2009 (Fig. 5.8). In 2008 (350 samples), the maps of microscope data corresponded to the subset of samples that were analysed with the ZooScan. Relative error maps were done comparing the difference between microscope and ZooScan data sets (Table 5.3). Distribution mapping of the development stages of species were also compared and are presented in annex K.

The distribution pattern of total egg abundance (regardless of stages) was similar comparing the maps based on microscope and ZooScan counting. Highest abundances were found in the eastern part of the North Sea, from French waters to the German Bight, in the English Channel, in front of the three French estuaries of Canche, Authie and Somme for both years and in the Dogger Bank in 2008. The relative error between microscope and ZooScan counting reached an average of $1\pm1\%$ in 2009 but $2\pm3\%$ in 2008.

As suspected from the confusion matrix, distribution mapping of dab, flounder and rockling eggs, showed different patterns according to the method of identification The relative error for the latter was high, $12\pm2\%$ and $20\pm40\%$, respectively. Abundance of dab eggs were lower with the ZooScan compared to microscope identifications, whereas for flounder and rockling eggs it was the opposite for both years. The relative error of rockling eggs was on average of 5% and 20% in 2008 and 2009 (Table 5.1). The relative error was higher for development stage 1 in 2008 (average 59%) conversely to 2009 for which error on development stage 2 was higher (average 71%).



Figure 5.6: Fish eggs distribution of log-transformed data of each species from IBTS 2008, identified under microscope (left) and by ZooScan (middle), with their relative error map (right)



Figure 5.6 (continued)



Figure 5.7: Fish eggs distribution of log-transformed data of each species from IBTS 2009, identified under microscope (left) and by ZooScan (middle), with their relative error map (right)



Figure 5.7 (continued)

		IBT 200	8	IBTS 2009					
	All stage	Stage 1	Stage 2 and over	All stage	Stage 1	Stage 2 and over			
All species	0.02 (0.03)	0.05 (0.04)	0.02 (0.03)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)			
Dab	0.04 (0.06)	0.06 (0.05)	0.04 (0.06)	0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.04)			
Founder	0.03 (0.04)	0.07 (0.09)	0.02 (0.03)	0.12 (0.2)	0.14 (0.23)	0.09 (0.16)			
Rocklings	0.05 (0.07)	0.59 (0.78)	0.01 (0.02)	0.2 (0.4)	0.32 (0.50)	0.71 (1.47)			
Whiting	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)	0.00 (0.01)	0.02 (0.03)	0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.04)			
Cod	0.04 (0.04)	0.04 (0.03)	0.03 (0.04)	0.03 (0.04)	0.01 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)			
Common sole	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.02)	0.00 (0.02)	0.68 (1.81)	1.04 (2.24)	0.82 (2.73)			
Plaice	0.04 (0.05)	0.06 (0.06)	0.04 (0.05)	0.07 (0.06)	0.01 (0.03)	0.07 (0.05)			
Long rough dab	0.02 (0.04)	0.04 (0.07)	0.01 (0.04)	0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)			

Table 5.3: Relative error (mean and standard deviation) calculated on each samples

Similar egg distribution patterns were observed between microscope and ZooScan identification methods for cod and whiting with a relative error rate < 4% on average. Moreover, the distribution of development stages A and B of cod and whiting eggs according to ZooScan identifications corresponded well to that obtained with microscope observations. According to microscope identifications, sole eggs were observed in low abundances and distributed only in the Southern Bight of the North Sea, whereas the ZooScan results showed a distribution extended to the English Channel and the North Sea. In 2008, common sole presented the same pattern of egg distribution between ZooScan and microscope with less than 2% error on average, even for the two development stages. However, abundance of common sole eggs was much higher with the ZooScan compared to the microscope identification in 2009 and the distribution extended to the English Channel and the North Sea. The ZooScan results showed a distribution extended to the English Channel and the North Sea. As shown by the confusion matrix (Table 5.2), confusion existed between common sole eggs and whiting and clearly appeared in 2009.

Microscope and ZooScan identifications produced similar distribution patterns for plaice and long rough dab eggs. Both methods showed that long rough dab eggs were generally found in the north east of the study area whereas plaice eggs had a larger distribution in the North Sea and were also observed in the English Channel. The relative error was of 4 and 7% on average for plaice in 2008 and 2009, respectively and of 2% for long rough dab for both years. The distribution of development stages of eggs for these two species showed as well similar patterns between microscope and ZooScan identifications.

5.3.5 Confusion risks between each species

Size classes' analysis revealed that dab and flounder eggs may be confused in the range of 0.81-0.97 mm and that cod and whiting eggs may be confused in the range of 1.11-1.50 mm (Table 5.4). So fish egg distribution belonging to these size classes were mapped for both group of species (Figure 5.8).

Table 5.4: Size classes of each species after Munk and Nielsen, 2005 and measured by ZooScan on the standards used to build the learning set (ESD, Equivalent Spherical Diameter)

Species	Size diameter (after Munk and Nielsen, 2005)	Size diameter measured by ZooScan (ESD)				
Dab	0.66-0.98 mm	0.81-0.97 mm				
Flounder	0.82-1.13 mm	0.78-1.19 mm				
Rockling sp.	Ec, Cm: 0.66-0.98 mm Cs: 0.70-0.88 mm	0.68-1.01 mm				
Whiting	0.97-1.32 mm	0.91-1.50 mm				
Cod	1.16-1.89 mm	1.11-1.74 mm				
Common sole	0.95-1.58 mm	1.09-1.62 mm				
Plaice	1.66-2.17 mm	1.66-2.21 mm				
Long rough dab	1.38-3.50 mm	1.40-2.39 mm				



Figure 5.8: Localisation of confusion risks between dab and flounder eggs (0.81-0.97mm; left) and cod and whiting eggs based on size overlapping (1.11-1.50 mm; right)

Confusion risks on fish egg distribution for dab-flounder and cod-whiting groups covered most of the egg distribution of each species. Therefore no specific confusion risk areas could be highlighted by this analysis.

5.4 Discussion

The 16 fish species whose pelagic eggs were identified under microscope, from winter IBTS surveys in 2008 and 2009, can be divided into winter-spawning and spring-spawning species. Plaice, flounder, cod and long rough dab are winter-spawning species having highest spawning activity in February (Van der Land, 1991). Eggs of dab and whiting were the most abundant and rocklings eggs were common as well, even though they are spring-spawning species having highest spawning activity in March-April. Past studies have already reported that these species may start to produce high egg abundances already in January (Desbrosses, 1943; Van der Land, 1991). The spawning period for the common sole normally starts in March with a peak in April-May, but since 2008 we observed some sole eggs in winter surveys half way between the English and Belgian coasts. The other species identified under microscope were rare and their maximum spawning activity occurs normally later in spring. As we wanted to evaluate the ZooScan capacity to identify the main winter spawning areas in the eastern English Channel and the southern North Sea we decided to build the learning set only with the winter-spawning species and those with high abundance and frequency. This may have induced minor contaminations leading to lower recognition performance when applying our classifier on the dataset. Indeed all types of object that are encountered in a sample can only be identified according to one of the categories available in the learning set (detritus group and eight fish species). But we assumed that the contamination by the other species was not significant due to their weak occurrence in the studied area in winter.

The ZooScan system for plankton samples digitisation and dedicated softwares used in this study permitted a rather rapid analysis of the large number of samples collected underway by CUFES and to produce interpolated maps of the spawning grounds with high spatial resolution. CUFES samples were scanned one year later after microscope identification and few eggs may have been lost between each step of identification process (sieving, microscope sorting, and sample recovery). Moreover, ZooScan maps produced in this study did not include the damaged egg classes. Conserning this last class, the ZooScan being a nondestructive technique, is not incause of the generation of damaged eggs. However, some fish eggs may be damaged due to CUFES sampling which actively pump, concentrate and seive them out of the sea water. Damaged egg classe mostly include eggs with a blow which were set aside because they could be mistaken or could no longer be identified by the ZooScan.

Damaged eggs may also have induced some differences of abundance between both enumeration methods, as they were taxonomically identified and taken into account in microscope data. However, the similarity between maps of egg distribution (all species) obtained from microscope and ZooScan counting confirmed the validity of the ZooScan approach to have a quick estimate of egg abundance, distribution, and size spectra.

A difficulty in automated plankton recognition and classification systems is the selection of the number of classes (Fernandes *et al.*, 2009). We demonstrated that merging the development stages of fish eggs in only one class per species permitted to maximize the number of vignettes available per species and to improve the performance of good recognition of each species. In a second automatic identification step, two developmental stages (early and advanced) were determined for each species separately using dedicated learning sets, which minimized contamination risks. In the same line of thought, we chose to gather objects that were not eggs in only one class of detritus in the learning set. This allows limiting the number of vignettes to be sorted, since a class needs a minimum of 200 - 300 vignettes to be sufficiently represented in the learning set (Gorsky *et al.*, 2010). Detritus (which also included other zooplankton taxa) were then very well distinguished from eggs, mainly on the basis of circularity parameters as shown by the PCA analysis.

The factorial analysis and clustering on the learning set showed that fish eggs can be easily distinguished into small (dab-flounder-rocklings group), medium (whiting-cod-sole group) and large (long rough dab and plaice groups) eggs based one size parameters and texture parameters. The supervised learning method used in this study, the Random Forest algorithm, improved slightly the distinction between species, and permitted to get good recognition of long rough dab, plaice, whiting and cod eggs. For these species maps of abundance distribution patterns were comparable with both identification methods with a reasonable spatial relative error (<10%). The supervised learning method did not allow distinguishing species inside the dab-flounder-rockling group of small eggs, giving low recalls (<80%) and high contaminations (>30%).

It was demonstrated by Culverhouse *et al.* (2003) that in general, neither man nor machine can be expected to give highly accurate or repeatable labelling of specimens. Dab and flounder eggs, as well as cod and whiting eggs are difficult to distinguish under microscope, especially for the early stages (Taylor *et al.*, 2002). In order to validate microscope identification of the standards used for building the learning set, molecular analyses were performed (Lelièvre *et al.*, 2010; chapter 4). If 92.5% of standard dab eggs were correctly identified, only 63.8% of standard flounder eggs were, the remaining eggs (36.2%) being dab eggs. Similarly, 98% of standard cod eggs were correctly identified but only 71% of standard whiting eggs were, the remaining (29%) being of cod eggs. Then,
distribution mapping of dab and cod eggs based on microscope identifications correctly illustrated spatial patterns but underestimated abundances in spawning areas, whereas abundances were overestimated for flounder and whiting eggs. This standard quality problem had serious consequences on ZooScan identification accuracy and consecutive mapping of spawning grounds as the classifier was built including these misidentifications. A possible solution to ensure the identification quality of fishe egg in standards would be to obtain eggs directly from fish spawns under esperimental and aquaculture conditions.

Identification of rockling and common sole eggs did not lead to confusion under microscope because of the presence of an or many oil globule. Unfortunately, according to the position of eggs on the scanning cell, the globule is not always visible, which makes this important egg feature not useful for image analysis. This explained why worst ZooScan identification results were obtained with these two species that were confused with other species of similar size class.

In future work effect of the fixation solution on standard eggs over time remains to be tested. Indeed, formalin solution may changed size diameter of eggs (Hislop and Bell, 1987). The fixative used in this study had less than 1% formalin (cf. chapter 4) which should reduce any shrinkage effect. However, formalin may also increase the opacity of eggs over time. We observed that eggs from IBTS 2008 used to build standards were more opaque and yellowish in colour than eggs from 2009.

In order to improve ZooScan identification performances on fish eggs, several tracks can be followed. First, the learning set needs to be balanced (each taxa shoud be represented by the same number of objects in the leaning set) for those species that are under-represented (long rough dab, rocklings, cod and common sole) to avoid over-learning of other species. Secondly, the PCA analysis showed that among the 51 parameters some were highly correlated and redundant, resulting in an over fitted classifier, more sensitive to noise in the data. Although the use of partly redundant variables should not affect classification performances with algorithms like random forest, reducing the number of variables may lead to a reduction in the calculation time. Applying a method of selection of variables, such as stepwise linear discriminant ana lysis procedures (Klecka, 1980), on the learning set would probably help identify the redundant variables in the case of recognition of fish species eggs. Finally, comparison between ZooScan and traditional methods of counting showed that ZooScan allowed to size and count eggs to give a reproducible estimation of proportional abundance of different species (or size class) eggs. A correction factor obtained by either visual or molecular analyses on a spatially representative subset of samples of each species

may be applied on each group in order to obtain eggs distribution maps per species, in a similar manner to that applied in chapter 4.

Beside some taxonomic problems, the ZooScan can rapidly give useful size spectra and biomass estimate of eggs for ecological oriented studies, and can thus be considered as a good complementary approach to traditional microscope identification. The ZooScan is of great interest to envisage higher sampling resolution of spawning grounds in order to improve our knowledge of pelagic fish egg distribution and to support ecosystem-based management.

Moreover, ZooScan can be used in ecosystemic survey by the study of the zooplankton associated with eggs samples. Indeed, the abundance and distribution of phytoplankton and mesozooplankton can be analysed by ZooScan. A master study is in progress in which, six zooplankton assemblages were characterized and their distribution linked with hydrological parameters (nutrients, temperature, salinity...) and phytoplankton assemblage distributions. The data generated will enable to develop plankton indicators, essential variables in studies such as modelling habitat suitability.

CHAPTER 6 Habitat modelling of spawning areas

This chapter is based on a submitted article (4), which presents habitat modelling of fish spawning areas. It was carried out using observed density of early developmental stage eggs only and associated physical conditions such as temperature, salinity, bedstress, chlorophyll a concentration and bottom sediment type. This enabled to quantify the importance of the environment on the use of these habitats.

(5) Lelièvre, S., Vaz, S. and Loots, C. Recurrent spawning grounds and spawning habitat modelling of dab (*Limanda Limanda*), plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*), cod (*Gadus morhua*) and whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*), in the North Sea between 2006-2009. Submitted to ICES Journal of Marine Science.

6.1. Introduction

Fish habitat is defined as a complex set of responses of a given fish species to biotic and abiotic factors, essential to the realization of biological cycle of a species (Benaka, 1999). In the particular case of exploited species, sustainable management of the resource needs to know the nature and quality of all critical habitats. The preservation and compliance with these spawning areas constitute the sine qua non condition for the proper quantity of the population of fish species present in the North Sea. The spatial distribution of fish eggs is known to be influenced by environmental parameters (Bellier *et al.*, 2007) and to be related to frontal areas (Munk *et al.*, 2002; Munk *et al.*, 2009). In such case, the configuration of spawning habitat affects recruitment and therefore the future structure of the adult population.

In this study, CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler) was used to collect pelagic fish eggs (chapter 1) and can be coupled with continuous environmental monitoring equipment (Checkley *et al.*, 2000). Then, preferential spawning habitats were modelled by differents techniques. Modelling habitat techniques (Guisan *et al.*, 2006; Austin, 2007) allow to predict potential distribution of species by relating response data to environmental variables. A large number of modelling techniques exist (Guisan *et al.*, 2006; Planque *et al.*, 2007; Planque *et al.*, 2011) enabling to predict species distribution, including statistical

regression modelling such as Generalised Linear Model (GLM, McGullach and Nelder, 1989) or Generalised Additive Model (GAM, Hastie et Tibshirani, 1990) that delineate the average preferential habitat and Quantile Regression (RQ, Koenker, 2005) that predicts potential or optimal habitat (Guisan and Zimmerman, 2000 et Guisan *et al.*, 2006). The Quantiles Regressions are used to model the upper envelope of the distribution of the response variable, by exploring how maximum abundances evolve according to environmental variables, and to estimate the limiting effects of the latter. They can produce maps of potential distribution reflecting the optimal habitat of a species (Cade *et al.*, 1999; Eastwood *et al.*, 2003). Once able to predict the affinity of a species to different type of habitats and provided that the spatial distribution of these habitats is known, one may predict this species average preferential distribution.

The aim of this study was to perform habitat modelling by generalised linear models (GLM) and quantile regression (RQ) using sea surface temperature, sea surface salinity, bedstress, chlorophyll a concentration and bottom sediment types as proxy to explore the relative importance of the environment on eggs distribution and predict the location of these spawning grounds.

These modelling methods were then successfully used to define preferential spawning habitats of these species and to explore the relative importance of the environment on eggs distribution of each species. This study revealed that eggs were localised in shallow to intermediate depth, with low temperature and relatively high salinity. Environmental parameters seem to strongly influence the presence of fish eggs while abundance level may also be influenced by other factors.

6.2 Material and method

6.2.1 Data collection

All egg samples were collected during annually IBTS (International Bottom Trawl Survey) during the first quarter (January-February) by the CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Eggs Sampler) from years 2006 up to 2009. IBTS and CUFES were presented in chapter 1. Eggs were fixed in a 0.9% buffered formalin seawater solution (Mastail and Battaglia, 1978) presented in chapter 3. Fish eggs were identified to species level by morphological criteria (egg size, oil globule, pigmentation).

In a first step, only morphologically determined fish eggs of developmental stage 1 (eggs which were just spawned) were used. In a second step, data corrected from molecular

analyses of IBTS 2008 (chapter 4) applied to all samples of the survey, were used to perform habitat modelling on just that, but validated, year.

6.2.2 Environmental datasets

Six environmental variables were used for the habitats modelling. Three environmental variables were recorded *in situ*, during the IBTS. Sea surface temperature (°C) and sea surface salinity were measured continuously using a sub-surface (3-5 m) thermosalinometer. Surface chlorophyll *a* (μ g/L) was measured using a fluorometer recording the fluorescence emitted by the pigment of cells.

Water depth (m) was measured *in situ* using an acoustic probe. Water height below the vessel was measured without taking into account tidal coefficients.

The map of sediments of the English Channel and North Sea, modified by Carpentier *et al.* (2009) after "Seafloor sediment of the North Sea" from the MARGIS project, used in this study resulted from the combination of data originating from several sources (Channel: Larsonneur *et al.*, 1982; French Dover Strait: Augris *et al.*, 1995; North Sea: Duphorn *et al* 1970; German Bight: Figge, 1981; Dogger Bank: British Geological Survey (BGS), 1977-1993; Oyster Ground: BGS, 1977-1993; Dutch Continental Shelf: Cameron *et al.*, 1986; Scottish Coast: BGS, 1977-1993; Denmark: Danmarks og Grønlands Geologiske Undersøgelse (GEUS)/Danish Geological Survey, 1992). Sediments were finally reclassified into five categories: mud, fine sand, coarse sand, gravel and pebbles, to take into account the difference of resolution between the maps.

Bedstress (N.m⁻²) was already described in Chapter 1 and is a measure of the friction of water on the seabed as a result of tidal currents which is expected to have an impact on egg dispersion and transport. It was estimated using a 2D hydrodynamic model originally developed at the Proudman Oceanographic Laboratories (Aldridge and Davies, 1993). It was used to predict the depth-mean M2 tidal current (in metres per second). Bedstress was then calculated using a quadratic expression, with stress dependent on the predicted maximum ellipse current and an appropriate bed friction coefficient, in this case with an assumed value of 0.0025. Bedstress was provided as a regular grid of 1/8° of longitude by 1/12° of latitude (approximately 8 km spatial resolution, WGS 1984 datum). The grid of points was then interpolated using ArcMap's Spatial Analyst extension to create a continuous raster layer of 1 km² resolution. Predicted presence probabilities or densities were expressed as a function of the significant explanatory variables to illustrate the species response along one given environmental gradient, all other variables remaining constant at their mean value (Elith *et al.*, 2005; Vaz *et al.*, 2008).

6.2.3 Spawning habitat modelling: Predictive models of species distribution

Generalised linear models (GLM) and regression quantiles (RQ) were used to model the spawning habitat of species based on eggs distribution. The response variable of interest (presence/absence or abundance of eggs) was used to relate in a linear way the eggs distribution to the six environmental variables such as sea surface temperature, sea surface salinity, chlorophyll *a* concentration, depth, bedstress shear and sediments types, for which linear and second order polynomial forms were used. Habitat modelling was performed using R 2.2.1 software (R Development Core Team, 2005).

Generalised Linear Model (GLM)

GLMs belong to the family of linear regressions and allow for modelling the mean of non-necessarily normally distributed response variables. This method consists of generating a model that summarises the relationship between a species presence or abundance and available and supposedly explanatory environmental variables. They allow the modelling of variables whose distribution and variance function are respectively neither Gaussian nor consistent (Guisan and Zimmermann, 2000) and are widely used in fisheries ecology (Venables and Dichmont, 2004).

Presence-absence data (where non null abundances were recoded as 1) were modelled separately from positive log-transformed abundances only to deal with the issue of zero-inflated data distribution (Stefánsson, 1996; Barry and Welsh, 2002). Presence-absence data were modelled through a binomial model using a logit link whereas non null log-transformed abundances were modelled using a Gaussian model with an identity link (McCullagh and Nelder, 1989). This approach permits to distinguish between environmental variables that influence the presence/absence of fish eggs and those that influence their level of abundance.

For each class of model (either binomial or Gaussian), selection of the significant environmental variables was made in a stepwise manner, starting from the full model containing all the variables. Several models were tested to determine the number of environmental parameters, which influenced the spatial distribution of each species. The deviance is the difference between observed values and predicted value. The smaller deviance estimates the best model. The Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC; Akaike, 1974; Sakamoto et *al.*, 1986) is a measure of the likelihood between the fitted values of the model and the observed values, penalised by the number of explanatory variables in the model (equation 1.2). Therefore, model selection based on the AIC was performed as a compromise between the adjustment of the model and its parsimony and resulted in the determination of a final optimised model.

The coefficients of regression for each of the variables retained at the end of the stepwise selection were applied to the average maps of environmental variables using the raster calculator of Arc Map, resulting in two maps for each species, one of probabilities of presence resulting from the binomial model and the other of log-transformed abundances coming from the Gaussian model. These two maps were combined into a delta model, where probabilities of presence were multiplied to log-transformed abundances (Stefanson, 1996; Le Pape *et al.*, 2003) to obtain a map of preferential habitat distribution.

Quantile regression modelling of marine fish eggs habitats (QR)

In quantile regression (QR), any part of the data distribution may be modelled, rather than the mean, and the study of the upper-bound of response data (between 0.75 and 0.95 quantiles) as a function of environmental factor results in the potential or optimal habitat being modelled rather than the average preferential habitat. This may be related to the concept of the limiting factors, which defines how the environment imposes upper limits to the distribution of populations through interactions with essential life history traits, such as growth, survival and reproduction (Hiddink, 2005).

Model selection with QR modelling is made complicated by the large number of candidate models that can be estimated over a range of quantiles (Cade *et al.* 1999). Model selection was done by initially fitting the model to all available continuous variables (second order polynomials). Then, starting from the initial full model, terms were removed by a process of backward elimination extended to QR modelling, with the aim of arriving at a model where all terms remained significant (p-value < 0.05) on at least one of the visited quantiles (Vaz *et al.*, 2008). Model building and inference was achieved using the available routines in R package "quantreg".

Evaluation strips

Predicted presence probabilities or densities were expressed as a function of the significant explanatory variables to illustrate the species response along one given environmental gradient, all other variables remaining constant at their mean value (Elith *et al*, 2005; Vaz *et al*, 2008). This method allows for visualising the responses fitted between species occurrence/abundance and environment and enables to assess these relationships for ecological realism.

6.2.4 Mapping model of uncertainty

The error of prediction was calculated for each selected model as the difference between observed and predicted abundance relative to the maximum of observed abundance. For QR predictions, the difference was considered erroneous only if predicted values were inferior to observed values. These errors of prediction were mapped for each species and each type of model in order to study how they vary in space. Maps of prediction error were built as continuous raster layers with a resolution of 0.08 decimal degrees using the Spatial Analyst extension of ArcMap.

6.2.5 Model evaluation

Models selected were evaluated internally, based on the dataset used for building these models, where observed and predicted values of eggs abundance were compared using the adjusted coefficient of determination and three statistical tests.

The adjusted coefficient of determination of the model (R_a^2) measures the proportion of variance explained by the model in the abundance and/or probability of presence. It was calculated according to the following formulas:

$$R_a^2 = 1 - (1 - R^2) \times \left(\frac{total \quad d.f.}{residual \quad d.f.}\right)$$

where *total d.f.* is the total degrees of freedom, *residual d.f.* is the degrees of freedom of the selected model and R^2 is the coefficient of variation calculated as follow:

$$R^{2} = \frac{\sum (\hat{Y}_{i} - \overline{Y})^{2}}{\sum (Y_{i} - \overline{Y})^{2}}$$

where \hat{Y}_i is the predicted value, Y_i is the observed value and \overline{Y} is the mean of the observed values.

Three types of statistical tests were used: a Spearman-rank correlation test, a Wilcoxon test and a correct classification test, comparing observed and predicted abundances for each species were applied to these bootstrapped datasets. All these tests are non-parametric and were chosen because of the non-normal distribution of the data. The Spearman correlation test allows for detecting any significant correlation between observations and predictions. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test (for GLM) is a non-parametric test used for paired samples and allows for comparing the mean of observed and predicted abundances (Wilcoxon, 1945). This latter test is not suited for RQ predictions since they are, by construction, much higher than the observed values. Another validation test was used for RQ model, the correct classification test that is defined as the proportions of observed values that fall below those predicted (Eastwood et al, 2003). This test shows that model prediction are within the correct range of values. As such, if quantile 90% is used, 90% of the predicted values should be above the observed values. These tests were performed onto datasets calculated using bootstrapping. From the original dataset, 1000 datasets, with the same number of data as the original dataset, were generated by resampling with replacement allowing for confidence intervals around the test value to be calculated. In the case of the correct classification test, the chosen quantile should be within the resulting interval.

6.3 Results

6.3.1.Maps of physical datasets

All of the physical parameters were mapped in 2006-2009, for each year. Only the maps of the mean of the four years were presented, here (Figure 6.1).

Water temperature patterns in the North Sea vary with the time of year, with temperature being warmer in the northern part in the winter as a result of large amounts of Atlantic waters brought by the Gulf Stream. Waters in the winter tend to be well mixed (from surface to bottom) because water-cooled at the surface sinks and mixes with the underlying water. In the summer, this pattern is reversed with the northern part being colder, and waters less mixed. However, due to the relatively small depth range and frequent strong winds and storm events, there is generally little stratification in the southern North Sea (Nielsen and St John, 2001). In the central part of the North Sea, surface temperatures fluctuate annually between 3°C (minimum in January) and 18°C (maximum in August). During the French IBTS, highest temperatures were observed close to the Scottish coast, whilst colder

temperatures occurred along the German and Danish coasts. During the survey, temperatures ranged from 4.0 to 9.0°C.



Figure 6 1: Average map of winter parameters used in habitat modelling: sea surface temperature (°C, bottom left), sea surface salinity (ppm, bottom middle), chlorophyll a concentration (μ g/L, bottom right), depth (m, down left), bedstress (N.m-², down middle) and sediment types (down right)

Mean salinity in the study area was 34.9, decreasing to 30.2, along the Belgium, the Dutch and the Danish coasts. Fresh water flowing into the North Sea from river estuaries (Meuse, Rhine, Escaut, Elbe) is responsible for such low salinities. A little decrease in salinity could be observed offshore of the Thames Estuary. The chlorophyll *a* concentration is low but visible near the Belgium and the Dutch coasts. Higher concentration of chlorophyll *a* (0.18 μ g/L) was observed on the Dogger Bank. The study area is relatively shallow with mean depth ranging from about 30 m in the Southeast to about 200 m in the Northwest. The Dogger Bank is a large (300 by 100 km) shallow (15-36 m) sand bank that rises 20 to 30 m above the surrounding sea floor and that is located about 100 km off the eastern English coast. Bottom substrates in the study area are predominantly fine sand, and also mud. A number of sand banks cross the North Sea. Coarse sand, gravels and pebbles are mainly found in the eastern

and north (gravels and pebbles) are also found in the Dover Strait. Bedstress is strongest in the southern part of the study area, between the French, Belgium and English coasts.

Although the assumption of normal distribution is not required for the independent variables, bedstress, chlorophyll *a* concentration and depth were log-transformed while salinity were transformed using $(\exp(x)/10^{15})$ to improve the linearity of their relationship to the egg density before performing habitat modelling.

6.3.2 Spawning habitat modelling: Predictive models of species distribution

Habitat models were computed for all species observed during the four IBTS sea survey on the average environmental variable. Then, habitat models were computed on corrected data for molecular biology on IBTS 2008 from chapter 4 to predict fish eggs distribution with more accuracy for dab, flounder, whiting, cod and the three separate rockling species.

Models selected

GLM and RQ were used to relate the eggs distribution of each species to the six environmental variables. Relevance of the environmental variables was assessed using the Akaike Information Criterion (Table 6.1 and 6.2).

Each variable was determined as significant in either its linear or polynomial form in every models. Except for whiting, binomial models were more complex than Gaussian models. Temperature, chlorophyll *a* and depth were selected in their quadratic forms in every binomial model. RQ models, reflecting the limiting effect of the environment on the species response, were more parsimonious. Sediment types were retained in all models for every species.

Table 6.1: F	ormulae of th	e selected b	inomial and	Gaussian	models	for data	covering	the
2006-2009 p	eriod. Stress:	bedstress; te	mp: temperat	ture; sal:	salinity;	chloro: c	hlorophyll	<i>a</i> ;
sed: sediment types. "2" stands for the quadratic form of the variable.								

		Final model					
Dab	GLM b	stress + sal + depth + depth2 + temp + temp2 + chloro + chloro2 + sed					
	GLM p	stress + stress2 + sal2 + depth2 + temp + chloro + sed					
Flounder	GLM b	stress + stress2 + sal + sal2 + depth + depth2 + temp + temp2 + chloro + chloro2 + sed					
	GLM p	Stress + stress2 + sal + sal2 + depth2 + temp2 + chloro2 + sed					
Whiting	GLM b	stress + stress2 + sal + depth + depth2 + temp + temp2 + chloro + chloro2 + sed					
	GLM p	stress + stress2 + sal + sal2 + depth + temp + temp2 + chloro + chloro2 + sed					
C 1	GLM b	stress + sal + depth + depth2 + temp + temp2 + chloro + chloro2 + sed					
Cou	GLM p	Stress + stress2 + sal + depth + depth2 + temp + chloro + sed					
Common	GLM b	stress + stress2 + sal + sal2 + depth + depth2 + temp + chloro + chloro2 + sed					
sole	GLM p	sal + temp2 + chloro + chloro2					
Distan	GLM b	stress2 + sal + sal2 + depth + depth2 + temp + temp2 + chloro + chloro2 + sed					
riaice	GLM p	stress + stress2 + sal + depth + depth2 + temp + chloro + chloro2 + sed					
Long rough dab	GLM b	stress + stress2 + sal2 + depth + depth2 + temp + temp2 + chloro + chloro2 + sed					
	GLM p	stress + stress2 + sal + depth2 + temp + temp2 + chloro + chloro2					

Table 6.2: The formulae of the RQ selected model for data covering the 2006-2009 period. Stress: bedstress; temp: temperature; sal: salinity; chloro: chlorophyll *a*; sed: sediment types. "2" stands for the quadratic form of the variable.

		Final model
Dab	RQ 85	depth + depth2 + temp + temp2 + chloro + chloro2 + sed
Flounder	RQ 85	stress + stress2 + sal + depth + depth2 + temp + temp2 + chloro + chloro2 + sed
Whiting	RQ 95	stress + stress2 + sal + depth + depth2 + temp + temp2 + chloro + sed
Cod	RQ 90	stress + stress2 + sal + depth + depth2 + temp + temp2 + chloro + chloro2 + sed
Common sole	RQ 90	depth + temp + temp2 + sed
Plaice	RQ 85	stress + stress2 + sal + depth + depth2 + temp + temp2 + chloro + chloro2 + sed
Long rough dab	RQ 90	stress + stress2 + temp + chloro + chloro2 + sed

The species response curves illustrated by the evaluation strips are presented here for dab for illustrative purpose (Fig. 6.2) but all species curves are available in the ANNEX L Sediment types were significant for most models and species. Probability of presence of each species were higher on gravels whereas abundance levels were higher on fine sand or mud for flat fish and coarse sand for gadidae. Probability of presence of dab, flounder, plaice and cod eggs were higher in area of low bedstress and temperature, except for sole, which prefers high temperature. For all species, presence probability increased with either high or intermediate levels of salinity except for five-bearded rockling and northern rockling. Intermediate depth constituted an optimum while intermediate chlorophyll *a* concentration seemed detrimental to these species egg presence probability.

Higher density levels of all species were characterisitic of low or intermediate levels of temperature, depth or chlorophyll *a* concentration. On the contrary intermediate to high levels of bedstress were related to higher densities of eggs. Finally, most species but dab had higher egg density in areas with higher salinity.

Generally, high temperature and low salinities were detrimental to both egg presence probability and density level. By contrast, the effect of bedstress was negative on presence probability and positive on density levels. Finally the effect of depth and chlorophyll *a* concentration was more variable depending if presence probability or density levels were considered.



Figure 6 2: Predicted presence-absence and densities (($\log_{10}((number eggs / 20 m3)+1$) of dab as function of the significant explanatory variables: $\log_{10}(stress (N.m-2)+1)$, $\log_{10}(depth (m)+1)$ and $\log_{10}(chlorophyll a concentration (µg/l)+1)$, temperature (°C) and exp (salinity(ppm))/10¹⁵). The effect of each sediment type on the species response is given by five lines or curves: X = Gravel, + = Coarse sand, \blacklozenge = pebbles, Δ = Fin sand and O = mud.

The analyses obtained from corrected data of IBTS 2008 (molecular analyses) gave similar models as for the whole period treated on morphological identification only. Generally, the same variables were selected in the models resulting from both datasets (Tables 6.3 and 6.4). The species response modelled on that unique year did not closely that modelled over the whole available period, reflecting both the effect of the molecular correction of the identification as well as the more limited range of environmental conditioned observed during that single year.

For the three rockling species, habitats modelling were performed only on 2008 data based on species molecular identifications (ANNEX M 2). Bedstress seemed to be significant for the three rockling species, mainly to predict the presence/absence of four-bearded rockling and five-bearded rockling whereas it was also relevant to predict the abundance of northern rockling. However, bedstress was not selected in four-bearded rockling RQ model. As for previous models, sediments types were selected in both GLM and RQ models but with variable affinities depending on the species and the type of response.

Table 6.3: The formulae of the selected binomial and Gaussian models for corrected data from molecular analyses of IBTS 2008. Stress: bedstress; temp: temperature; sal: salinity; chloro: chlorophyll *a*; sed: sediment types. A "2" means the polynomial form of the variable.

		Final model					
Dab	GLM b	Stress + stress2 + depth + depth2 + temp + temp2 + chloro + chloro2 + sed					
	GLM p	Stress + sal + sal2 + chloro + chloro2 + sed					
Floundan	GLM b	Stress + sal + sal2 + depth + depth2 + temp + temp2 + chloro + chloro2 + sed					
Flounder	GLM p	Stress2 + depth + depth2 + temp + temp2 + chloro + chloro2 + sed					
Whiting	GLM b	Stress + stress2 + depth + depth2 + temp + temp2 + chloro2 + sed					
	GLM p	Stress2 + sal2 + depth2 + temp+ temp2 + chloro + chloro2 + sed					
	GLM b	Stress + stress2 + depth + depth2 + temp + temp2 + chloro2 + sed					
Cou	GLM p	Stress + sal + sal2 + depth + temp + chloro + chloro2					
Four-bearded rockling	GLM b	Stress + stress2 + depth2 + temp + temp2 + chloro2 + sed					
	GLM p	sal + sal2 + depth + temp + + chloro + chloro2					
Five-bearded	GLM b	Stress + stress2 + sal + depth + temp + temp2 + chloro + chloro2 + sed					
rockling	GLM p	Stress + sal + depth + temp + chloro + chloro2 + sed					
Northern	GLM b	Stress + sal2 + depth + depth2 + temp + chloro + chloro2 + sed					
rockling	GLM p	Stress + stress2 + sal2 + depth2 + temp2 + chloro					

		Final model			
Dab	RQ 90	Stress + stress2 + sal + sal2 + depth + depth2 + temp + chloro + chloro2 + sed			
Flounder	RQ 80	Stress + sal + sal2 + depth + depth2 + chloro + chloro2 + sed			
Whiting	RQ 80	Stress + stress2 + sal + depth + depth2 + temp + chloro + chloro2 + sed			
Cod	RQ 95	Stress + stress2 + sal + depth + depth2 + temp + chloro + chloro2 + sed			
Four-bearded rockling	RQ 75	temp + temp2 + chloro + chloro2 + sed			
Five-bearded rockling	RQ 75	Stress + stress2 + sal + depth + depth2 + temp + chloro + sed			
Northern rockling	RQ 90	Stress + stress2 + sal + depth + temp			

Table 6.4: The formulae of the RQ selected model for corrected data from molecular analyses of IBTS 2008. Stress: bedstress; temp: temperature; sal: salinity; chloro: chlorophyll *a*; sed: sediment types. A "2" means the polynomial form of the variable.

Selected models were applied on environmental maps illustrating average conditions from 2006 to 2009. For GLM, this resulted in a map of probability of presence from binomial models and a map of log-transformed abundance from Gaussian models. These two maps were multiplied to produce the distribution map of the delta model and its associated error was mapped. Results of modelling (GLM and RQ) were presented here for dab only for illustrative purpose (Fig. 6.3) and the other species may be found in annex M.



Figure 6 3: Maps of winter spawning habitat of dab (GLM and RQ). Maps of presence probabilities predicted by the binomial model (left), log-transformed non-null densities predicted by the Gaussian model (middle-left) and non-null densities predicted by the delta model (middle-right) and optimal levels by RQ model

For each species, binomial models were able to depict the areas of presence, except along the Dutch Coasts, areas of high probability of presence were usually wider than areas where the presence of eggs was effectively detected (recurrent and occasional areas, Chapter 3). For dab, plaice and cod, some areas, defined as unfavourable areas from observed distributions, were also predicted with a high probability of presence. On the other hand, Gaussian models did not reproduce the distribution of high abundance areas of dab, cod and whiting. For these species, some areas along the Danish coast and in the Southern Bight were predicted with high abundance whereas low abundance was effectively observed. For plaice, the model performed better and accurately predicted the area of high abundance in the south-eastern part of the North Sea in the German Bight area.

Although the Gaussian model had a poor spatial predictive power on its own, when combined to the binomial model, the resulting distribution map predicted by the delta model was very coherent with the observed distribution (Fig. 7). Observed and predicted distributions were more similar for plaice than for the three other species. For dab, the model was unable to correctly predict the relevance of the Dogger Bank whereas for cod, it predicted a more coastal distribution than that actually observed.

However, in the model based on corrected data from molecular analyses (IBTS 2008), binomial model predict a much larger probability of egg presence on the Dogger Bank for flounder and whiting than that observed from the original 2006-2009 data.

Habitat models developed over the longer time series seemed to have difficulties to depict areas of high abundance of some species such as dab and whiting on the Dogger Bank. Moreover, these models predicted potentially high abundance of dab, flounder, cod and whiting offshore Norwich that were not observed over the studied period.

Both models (binomial and Gaussian) were combined into a delta model. Generally, both models, GLM and RQ were fairly similar for all species except for common sole, long rough dab and northern rockling, because of low occurrence of these species that weakened the reliability of these models. Indeed, RQ model of common sole predicts abundance of eggs on the Dogger Bank but sole eggs were never observed on the Dogger Bank during the studied period (ANNEX H). Moreover, RQ model of northern rockling predicted potentially low abundance of eggs near the Danish coasts, that were not visible in 2008 corrected data (Chapter 4, Fig. 4.11). This result highlights the behaviour of upper RQ modelling which reflect the maximum species response as a result of the main limiting factors. This may result in much higher abundance levels being predicted than those observed and may evidence new potentially suitable areas although they were never observed in use.

Generally, observed (Annex H and chapter 4 Figures 4.11, 4.14 and 4.17) and predicted distributions (GLM and RQ, ANNEX M) were similar for all species, highlighting the ability of the regression methods to reproduce the observed patterns in function of the environment.

Dab was found to spawn in shallow depths, average temperature and salinity, with low concentration of chlorophyll *a* and bedstress. Dab and cod eggs distribution was observed off the Belgian, Dutch, German and Danish coasts and on the Dogger Bank. This pattern was also confirmed by the models developed with molecularly corrected data in 2008. Cod spawning habitats were mainly observed in shallow to intermediate water depth, and average temperature and salinity. Plaice spawning habitats were predicted offshore in the centre of the study area. However, whiting was more inshore, in high bedstress conditions near the French coast and along the Belgian and Dutch coasts. Flounder was also found along these coasts but may be also observed in estuarine conditions, with lower salinity levels. Long rough dab were observed in shallow depth with intermediate salinity, temperature and chlorophyll *a* levels, in the north of the study area in low bedstress conditions. Common sole eggs were observed in the Channel and in the south of the study area, inshore, along the French and Belgian coasts in high bedstress areas.

However, for dab, the models fitted to the morphologically determined data (2006-2009) was unable to fully restitute the relevance of the Dogger Bank while it is clearly visible on models performed on molecularly corrected data (2008) as a result of the better species determination. Conversely, whiting and flounder models developed on corrected data (2008) were able to predict an aggregation of eggs on the Dogger Bank which was observed in the 2008 data (Chapter 4, Fig. 4.14 and 4.17 respectively) but was effectively observed over the four years (ANNEX H).

6.3.3 Mapping of model uncertainty

For each species and each selected model, the relative error between observed and predicted distribution were computed (Table 6.5) and mapped showing location of prediction errors (Fig. 6.4 and ANNEX M). Generally, maps of the error of modelling showed high values in areas of high abundance and conversely low values in areas of low abundance. GLM errors were higher in areas of high predicted and observed abundance while RQ errors were more localised reflecting the model optimism by construction. GLM errors were higher and more widely distributed for dab and plaice than for cod and whiting reflecting the relatively higher egg abundance of these two flatfish at that time of the year. The mean of error was between 0 and 0.18 with a mean value of 0.09 for GLM models and of 0.02 for RQ models.

Error maps showed localisation of prediction errors and highlighted the Dogger Bank in the instance of flounder and whiting.



Figure 6 4: Maps of the relative error of the habitat model of dab: GLM error (left) and RQ error (right)

6.3.4 Adjustment quality of selected models

The fiting quality of selected models performed on the four years are given in table 6.5. The adjusted coefficient of determination (R_a^2) may be interpreted as a percentage of explained variation was computed and showed that it was highly variable among species. For each model, the percentage of explained variation (R_a^2) for GLMs model was highly variable among species going from 13% to 26% and reflecting both the explanatory power of the model and the large amount of noise in the data. It was higher for dab, common sole and plaice (more than 20%) than for flounder, cod and whiting (less than 20%). The percentage of variance explained was higher for QR model, except for plaice, which adjusted R² were similar for both models. Generally, the adjusted R² was low reflecting both the model explanatory power and the amount of noise in the data. However, the adjusted R² of RQ for whiting and sole were higher. But, the adjusted R² of long rough dab RQ model showed that the model variance exceeded the adjusted data variance, probably as a result of very low occurrence of this species in the data.

Table 6.5: Assessment of the adjustment of delta GLM and RQ models. For each species, the adjusted coefficient of determination (\mathbf{R}_a^2), the Spearman correlation (mean values and confidence interval in brackets) and its associated p-value, Wilcoxon test and its associated p-value, the correct classification test (mean values and confidence interval in brackets) and the percentage of the relative error of the model (mean values and standard deviation in brackets) are indicated.

Species	Model	Adj R ²	Spearman corr coefficier	Wilcoxon test		Correct classification	Model error	
	type		Mean value (CI)	p-value	Value	p-value	Mean value (CI)	Mean (sd)
Dah	GLM	0.25	0.52 (0.50 - 0.54)	p < 0.05	3 147 339	p < 0.05		0.11 (0.11)
Dau	RQ 85	0.30	0.44 (0.42 - 0.46)	p < 0.05			85.15 (84.32 - 85.98)	0.01 (0.06)
Distan	GLM	0.22	0.57 (0.55 - 0.59)	p < 0.05	2 694 438	p < 0.05		0.08 (0.10)
Plaice	RQ 95	0.20	0.49 (0.48 - 0.51)	p < 0.05			95.03 (94.45 - 95.45)	0 (0.03)
	GLM	0.13	0.43 (0.41 - 0.45)	p < 0.05		p < 0.05		0.08 (0.09)
Flounder	RQ 85	0.22	0.41 (0.39 - 0.43)	p < 0.05			85.16 (84.33 - 86.03)	0.01 (0.07)
Cod	GLM	0.13	0.41 (0.39 - 0.43)	p < 0.05	2 807 118	p < 0.05		0.05 (0.06)
Coa	RQ 85	0.25	0.37 (0.35 - 0.39)	p < 0.05			85.25 (84.41 - 86.06)	0.01 (0.05)
XX/1-*4*	GLM	0.16	0.34 (0.32 - 0.37)	p < 0.05	2 546 751	p < 0.05		0.06 (0.08)
whiting	RQ 85	0.57	0.32 (0.30 - 0.34)	p < 0.05			84.83 (84.02 - 85.64)	0.01 (0.06)
Sole	GLM	0.26	0.36 (0.34 - 0.37)	p < 0.05		NS		0.01 (0.05)
	RQ 90	0.70	0.27 (0.25 - 0.29)	p < 0.05			90.14 (89.44 - 90.81)	0.01 (0.05
Am.	GLM	0.15	0.38 (0.36 - 0.39)	p < 0.05		p < 0.05		0.03 (0.07)
Plaice	RQ 90	1.48	0.32 (0.30 - 0.34)	p < 0.05			90.24 (89.55 - 90.84)	0.01 (0.05)

CI: confidence interval

For all species, the Spearman correlation test between observed and predicted values was significant and ranged from 0.34 to 0.57 for GLM and from 0.27 to 0.49 for RQ models. Again, it was higher for dab and plaice than for cod and whiting. The Wilcoxon test was significant the p-values of the Wilcoxon test were lower than 0.05 for all species, meaning that there was a difference of mean between observed and predicted abundance and that the resulting models were unable to fully reproduce the observed average abundance levels. Indeed, because of the difficulties of Gaussian models to accurately predict abundance of eggs, delta model results in high difference between absolute levels of observed and predicted densities. Finally, RQ model passed the correct-classification test showing that the models delineated well the upper bound envelope of the data distribution and correctly described the limiting effect of the modelled habitat.

Table 6.6: Assessment of the adjustment of delta GLM and RQ models. For each species, the adjusted coefficient of determination (\mathbf{R}_a^2) , the Spearman correlation (mean values and confidence interval in brackets) and its associated p-value, Wilcoxon associated p-value, the correct classification test (mean values and confidence interval in brackets) and the percentage of the relative error of the model (mean values and standard deviation in brackets) are indicated.

Species	Model	Adj R ²	Spearman correlation coefficient	Wilcoxon test	Correct classification	Model error –Mean value (Sd)	
	type		Mean value (CI) p-value	p-value	Mean value (CI)		
Deb	GLM	0.48	$0.71 \ (0.68 - 0.74) < 0.05$	NS		0.17 (0.12)	
Dau	RQ 90	0.28	$0.66 \ (0.63 - 0.70) < 0.05$		88.85 (87.10 - 90.81)	0 (0.03)	
Floundan	GLM	0.43	0.64 (0.60 - 0.68) < 0.05	NS		0.18 (0.12)	
riounder	RQ 80	0.31	$0.60 \ (0.57 - 0.65) < 0.05$		79.08 (76.45 - 81.45)	0.02 (0.06)	
Whiting	GLM	0.43	$0.66 \ (0.62 - 0.70) < 0.05$	NS		0.10 (0.09)	
	RQ 80	0.41	$0.63 \ (0.59 - 0.67) < 0.05$		80.61 (78.39 - 83.23)	0.02 (0.06)	
<u> </u>	GLM	0.40	$0.69 \ (0.65 - 0.73) < 0.05$	NS		0.14 (0.11)	
Cou	RQ 95	0.20	$0.58\ (0.54 - 0.62) < 0.05$		93.85 (92.58 - 95.32)	0 (0.02)	
Four-bearded rockling	GLM	0.18	$0.49\ (0.45 - 0.59) < 0.05$	***		0.1 (0.12)	
	RQ 75	0.65	$0.43 \ (0.38 - 0.48) < 0.05$		73.85 (71.46 - 76.29)	0.04 (0.13)	
Five-bearded rockling	GLM	0.39	$0.59 \ (0.55 - 0.63) < 0.05$	NS		0.07 (0.1)	
	RQ 75	0.65	0.55 (0.50 - 0.61) < 0.05		73.86 (70.97 - 76.12)	0.02 (0.07)	
Northern rockling	GLM	0.47	0.58 (0.55 - 0.62) < 0.05	NS		0.05 (0.09)	
	RQ 90	0.63	$0.58\ (0.53 - 0.63) < 0.05$		90.49 (88.71 - 92.42)	0.01 (0.05)	

CI: confidence interval

Table 6.6 showed evaluation results from models developped on corrected data from molecular analyses (2008). For each model, the adjusted R² was computed. The percentage variance explained was quite high for all models. This time, it was higher for GLM model than RQ, for dab, flounder and cod and similar for both models for whiting. Still, the percentage variance explained was higher for RQ model for the three rockling species. Model passed the Spearman correlation test, revealing a high and significant correlation between observed and predicted abundance value. Thus, prediction and observation were coherent. For all the species, the p-values of the Wilcoxon test revealed that there was no significant difference between observed and predicted abundance, with the exception of four-bearded rockling for which the detected difference was certainly due to the low occurrence of this species. Finally, RQ model passed the correct-classification test showing that the models

delineated well the upper bound envelope of the data distribution and correctly described the limiting effect of the modelled habitat.

6.4 Discussion

The delineation of recurrent and occasional spawning grounds does not elucidate the factors explaining their location (Chapter 3). Frontal zones, for example, were shown to be important areas for spawning in the North Sea (Munk *et al.*, 2002; Munk *et al.*, 2009). In the present study, environmental conditions have been found to have an effect on the spatio-temporal distribution of spawning grounds. Relevance of the environmental variables determined from habitat modelling varied across species, which reflected that different species have different habitat requirements.

This study has facilitated the modelling of spawning grounds to investigate and quantify the relative importance of the environment on eggs presence-absence on one hand, and on eggs abundance on the other, through GLM and QR models. Relevance of the environmental variables determined from habitat modelling varied across species, which reflected that different species have different habitat requirements. In this sense, "potential habitat", where the environmental conditions are suitable, were described, in opposition to "realised habitat", which is the part of the potential habitat where the species actually occurs (Chapter 2).

All the available environmental parameters in this study were retained in the selected models. This indicated that these parameters were good proxies of the factor at play in determining the spawning habitat of each species. GLM required a two steps procedure to obtain the final prediction and each submodel (presence-absence or abundance) yielded complementary information. In the two types of models, the significant variables were not always the same. Studying them separately highlighted which variables conditioned presence and which constituted the best conditions associated to high abundances.

Depth was often found to be an important factor and indeed, spawning grounds were often found in shallow depths. Dab spawns in coastal waters from 20 to 40 m deep (Van der Land, 1991; Rijnsdorp *et al.*, 1992; Carpentier *et al.*, 2005) and less than 50 m, on the Dogger Bank and in the centre of the North Sea. Similarly, high concentration of plaice eggs were found in shallow areas, less than 50 m (Harding *et al.*, 1978).

Salinity was not always found to be a very constraining factor for some species. Although little is known about salinity influence on spawning habitat except that Riley and Parnell, (1984) reported that cod spawned in waters of salinity 34-35. Mean salinity in the study area was 34.9, decreasing to 30.2, along the Belgium, the Netherlands and the Danish coasts. Fresh water flowing into the North Sea from river estuaries (Meuse, Rhine, Escaut, Elbe) is responsible for such low salinities. A small decrease in salinity could also be observed offshore of the Thames Estuary. Therefore these coastal areas may not be suitable for cod spawning.

Moreover, we found that fish eggs distributions appeared to be particularly linked with chlorophyll *a* concentration, in particular for dab eggs distribution for which, the spatial distribution closely followed that of chlorophyll *a* concentration. However the concentration of chlorophyll *a* concentration in winter was low with a mean of 0.51 for the four years. Chlorophyll *a* concentration was higher along the Belgium and Dutch coasts as well as over the Dogger Bank and is a good proxy for primary production which might reflect the availability of food to benthic fauna (constituting both the potential prey of bentho-demersal fish) as well as the seascape of the spawning grounds.

Temperature was found to be significant in almost all the models developed here, regardless of species. Temperature may influence the incubation time and egg survival (Bunn *et al.*, 2000; Van der Land, 1991). During the French IBTS, highest temperatures were observed close to the Scottish coast (9°C), whilst colder temperatures (4°C) occurred along the German and Danish coasts. Whereas plaice eggs have a survival range between 2 and 8°C (Harding *et al.*, 1978), whiting prefer temperatures between 6 and 9°C (Loots *et al.*, in press a). Indeed, plaice eggs mortality was higher in 1988 and 1989 than in 1987, coinciding with higher temperature (Van der Land; 1991).

Plaice and dab spawning adults seemed to prefer areas with weak to intermediate bedstress (Loots *et al.*, 2010 a; Martin *et al.*, 2010). In our study area, bedstress was stronger in the southern part in the Dover Strait and adjacent areas and was found to be determinant in many habitat models. Sediment types were also significant in almost all models which was surprising since sediment types distribution in the North Sea is mainly dominated by fine sand. Although many species do not feed during spawning (Rijnsdorp, 1989; Fuiman and Werner, 2002), seascape provided by substrates and associated benthic fauna may still remain important for the choice of spawning location of bentho-demersal species.

Predicted distributions (GLM and QR) of the spawning grounds from selected models generally agreed with observed distributions. The three rockling species were identified only in 2008 through molecular biology (chapter 4), so habitat modelling were performed only on data of that year. Five-bearded rockling eggs were mainly present inshore of the French and

Belgian coasts, in shallow depth water, average salinity and temperature. Indeed, Fivebearded rockling is present in intertidal area, less than 20 m (Gibson, 1999). However, northern rockling may be present in deeper water depth (Claridge and Gardner, 1977) and eggs were mainly presents in the Channel and inshore of the English coasts, with high temperature and salinity. Both species seemed to prefer high bedstress levels, conversely to the four-bearded rockling eggs which were present near the Dutch coasts with high inshore aggregation, characterise by low bedstress, shallow waters and average temperature and salinity levels.

Error maps helped delimiting areas where the models were more or less accurate. The imprecision of models can be due to sampling design or environmental changes. Model quality varied with the species considered. Often, the models were found to be quite accurate in areas of absence or low occurrence but not so much in area of large abundance where large inter-annual fluctuation may occur. Moreover, some areas appeared as potential but only with QR models. That corresponds to potentially useful habitat which may not be be occupied by spawning populations at that time of the year or which may no longer be used by by the actual depleted populations.

In this case, models reproducing the local mean failed to reproduce the extreme abundance levels observed. This explains why large error rate was more widespread for dab and plaice, which were the two most abundant species observed and for which the variations were the most important. In spite of this, the variation explained by the delta model was higher for plaice and dab than for cod and whiting, revealing that flatfishes seem to be more influenced by environmental parameters than gadidae. Relevance of the environmental variables determined from habitat modelling reflects that these species have different habitat requirements.

In the present study, accuracy of the predictions was insured mainly by the binomial model. This highlighted that the observed patterns of presence-absence of fish eggs was more influenced by environmental conditions than the pattern of local abundance. This highlighted the ability of regression methods to reproduce the observed patterns of presence of fish eggs in function of the environment. However, Gaussian models were not as reliable in predicting abundance levels implying that they may be affected by other factors than the sole environment. Indeed, whereas environmental conditions may be used to predict probability of presence of the eggs, local abundance of eggs might be influenced by other factors (Planque *et al.*, 2011). This discrepancy between the two types of response has already been observed by Loots *et al.* (2010 a, b and in press) for spawning adults distribution.

Nevertheless, QR modelling, has the advantage of enabling to model the upper bounds of species-environment relationships and thus to estimate the limiting effects of a species' habitat. Habitat maps subsequently constructed in GIS tend to describe potential rather than actual patterns of species distributions. It is particularly useful here as it may compensate for imperfect sampling time in respect to the peak of spawning period of many species. By merging several years of observation at slightly different time of the spawning period, the QR models may better reflect the overall potential spawning areas. This method is also more ecologically relevant as the retained explanatory parameters were less numerous than in GLMs and could be interpreted as limiting factors. GLMs, however, yielded more realistic prediction than RQ, which tend to over-estimate the species abundance.

Models obtained from corrected data from molecular analyses (2008) were better adjusted than habitat models for the four years (2006-2009). So, it seemed possible to performed relatively reliable habitat modelling on only one year of data although the variety of environmental conditions and spawning distribution encompassed was more limited. Although this would limit in turn the predictive power of the model, the reduced amount of noise in the data resulted in relatively better measure of fit than in models covering several years.

Hence, local abundance of eggs might be influenced by other factors (Planque *et al.*, in press relative to intrinsic characteristics of the population such as density or demographic structure (Loots *et al.*, 2010 a; Loots *et al* in press) or the state of the adult populations (Bellier *et al.*, 2007). Habitat modelling can be improved or completed to include other biotic (size population) or abiotic (geographical position) factors or interactions between parameters. Therefore, future studies on modelling the spawning grounds from the eggs distribution should account such type of factors. Such models may not only be used to characterise and delineate the spawning habitats but may also serve to evaluate different type of scenarios (Planque *et al.*, 2011). Such scenarios may cover climatic changes, spawning stock biomass evolution, habitat loss or degradation due to human activities effects on the extent and quality of spawning grounds (Rochette *et al.*, 2010).

Le but de l'étude était de caractériser les frayères hivernales en Manche Orientale et dans la partie sud de la mer du Nord. Pour cela, trois méthodes d'identification des œufs ont été comparées afin de produire des cartographies fiables de la distribution spatiale des œufs de poissons. Les zones de frayères identifiées ici, ont été comparées sur les quatre années d'étude (2006-2009) afin d'observer les zones de frayères récurrentes. De plus, la distribution spatiale des œufs de poissons a été modélisée en fonction de facteurs environnementaux comme la profondeur, la température, la salinité, la concentration en chlorophylle *a*, la tension de cisaillement et le type sédimentaire, afin de déterminer l'habitat de ponte préférentiel. Dans ce chapitre, nous ferons la synthèse des connaissances acquises lors de cette étude et des avancées notables réalisées dans l'identification des œufs pélagiques et la distribution spatiale des œufs de poissons. Enfin, nous discuterons des possibilités de gestion de stock et de protection des frayères qu'offre cette étude.

7.1. Les habitats de pontes des poissons

7.1.1 Les frayères : un habitat structuré dans l'espace et prévisible dans le temps

Le caractère agrégatif des individus est un facteur qui participe à la structuration spatiale de l'habitat de ponte. En effet, la distribution spatiale des œufs de poissons montre que l'habitat de ponte est structuré dans l'espace avec des zones où les œufs sont très abondants tous les ans (habitat récurrent) ou plus ou moins abondants selon les années (habitat occasionnel) et d'autres zones où les œufs sont absents: habitat non favorable (Bellier *et al.*, 2007) ou évité (Certain *et al.*, 2007). De plus, le choix de la zone de ponte est fait pour maximiser l'aptitude à se reproduire et optimiser le succès reproducteur, Planque *et al.* (2004) parlent ainsi d'habitat de « succès ».

Les frayères de chaque espèce observée dans cette étude semblent être bien définies dans le temps et dans l'espace. En effet, les populations semblent être attachées à leur site de reproduction (Loots, 2009), ce qui tend à faire persister dans le temps la distribution spatiale de l'habitat de ponte. Ainsi, la stabilité de la distribution spatiale de l'habitat de ponte suggère un mécanisme de « homing », permettant (Papi, 1992 ;Thorrold *et al.*, 2001) aux individus de revenir au niveau des zones favorables. Cette capacité des adultes reproducteurs à revenir sur les mêmes zones d'une année sur l'autre est également un moyen de limiter l'effet des variations temporaires des conditions environnementales de manière à ce que les individus ne modifient pas systématiquement leur distribution au moindre changement.

Ce maintien d'une localité géographique particulière, en dépit des changements des conditions du milieu, est un fait inscrit dans la mémoire des populations (Van der Lingen *et al.*, 2005) qui manifestent des adaptations comportementales à court terme ou à long terme qui peuvent conduire à des phénomènes de migration vers d'autre localités ou de sédentarité. En effet, le célèbre exemple de la population atlanto-scandinave du hareng après le déclin dramatique des années 60, illustre bien ces phénomènes dont une synthèse est donnée par Huse *et al.* (2002).

Cependant, des activités telles que la pêche, le dragage et le rejet des polluants peuvent avoir des conséquences importantes pour la structure des habitats benthiques et les stocks de poissons peuvent être affectés directement par des produits chimiques dangereux, des déchets ou indirectement par un apport excessif de nutriments. Concernant l'extraction de granulat, et surtout dans le cas de pontes d'œufs benthiques, les informations de la distribution des zones de pontes sont utilisées afin de déterminer les zones où l'activité peut être exercée sans avoir d'impact sur la reproduction des poissons (Coull, 1998).

De façon à prendre en compte la diversité et l'importance commerciale potentielle des zones de pontes, l'analyse des zones récurrentes a été réalisée de façon multi-spécifique, en prenant en compte toutes les espèces observées d'une part et uniquement les espèces commerciales d'autre part. Ainsi, les cartographies de récurrence des frayères de chaque espèce sont recodées en 0, pour les zones rares, non favorables et occasionnelles et en 1 pour les zones récurrentes et sommées. Le résultat (Fig. 7.1) présente ainsi les zones récurrentes de ponte toutes espèces confondues ou uniquement pour les espèces d'intérêt commercial, à savoir, la plie, le balai, la sole, le merlan, la morue et le flet.

Cette analyse fait ressortir les mêmes zones de récurrence pour toutes les espèces observées que pour les espèces commerciales uniquement, à savoir, le centre de la zone d'étude, au sud-est du Dogger Bank et principalement près des côtes hollandaises, correspondant aux principales zones de nourriceries. De part le caractère récurrent de la ponte dans cette zone, il semblerait intéressant de gérer et protéger cette zone.



Figure 7.1 : Analyse multi-spécifique des frayères récurrentes pour toutes les espèces observées (droite) et pour les espèces commerciales uniquement (gauche).

7.1.2 Un habitat influencé par l'état de la population

Pour des populations à l'équilibre ou pseudo-équilibre, il est probable qu'à court terme, l'état de la population entraîne une variation de la distribution des adultes reproducteurs et donc de la distribution des œufs de poissons. Cependant, l'exploitation par la pêche a tendance à favoriser les individus qui sont capables de se reproduire très rapidement (Rijnsdorp, 1989; Rijnsdorp *et al.*, 2005; Jorgensen *et al.*, 2007), il n'en demeure pas moins que les jeunes individus se reproduisent généralement un peu plus tard dans la saison et sur une période plus courte que les individus plus âgés (Rijnsdorp, 1989). De plus, leur plus petite taille fait qu'ils ont une capacité énergétique plus faible à allouer à la reproduction, ils pondent une quantité d'œufs moins importante et de moins bonne qualité. Les jeunes individus sont également plus sensibles à la mortalité par la prédation et aux variations climatiques que les individus les plus âgés (Bundy et Fanning, 2005), ce qui entraîne des variations de leur abondance totale, d'une année sur l'autre, qui sont relativement importantes. De plus, de part la surexploitation des stocks, on observe une diminution de l'abondance des adultes reproducteurs et donc une baisse de l'abondance des œufs de poissons entraînant une baisse du recrutement et ainsi de suite.

En effet, le recrutement est une variable cruciale pour la persistance des populations (Chambers et Trippel, 1997), les premiers stades de vie des espèces de ces populations jouent un rôle clé, non seulement dans le succès du recrutement (Parrish *et al.*, 1983) mais à tous niveaux d'organisation écologique : organisme, population, communauté et écosystème.

7.1.3 Un habitat influencé par l'environnement

Les premiers stades de vie des poissons sont fortement liés aux paramètres environnementaux, influencés par les variations du climat qui peuvent avoir un impact sur la température de l'eau, la stratification de la colonne d'eau, la formation de fronts et d'upwelling. De plus, Loots (2009) a démontré que c'est principalement l'environnement qui détermine la présence des espèces. Cependant, malgré la stabilité des conditions environnementales, des changements à long terme peuvent tout de même affecter la configuration spatiale de la distribution des œufs de poissons et la qualité de l'habitat de ponte.

Loots (2009) a testé divers scénarios de changements environnementaux : augmentation de la température de 3°C, augmentation de 30% du vent et augmentation de 20% de la radiation solaire, afin d'évaluer l'impact de ces changements sur la distribution des œufs de poissons. Suite à ces forçages, le sud de la mer du Nord reste la partie majoritairement favorable à la reproduction de la plie, mais ces zones favorables sont plus réduites. Ceci contredit cependant une étude de Perry (Perry *et al.*, 2005), qui avait démontré que les populations avaient tendance à migrer vers des latitudes plus élevées du fait d'une augmentation de la température.

Actuellement, les grands changements climatiques et leurs répercussions sur la planète constituent les préoccupations majeures des chercheurs. Si le réchauffement climatique se produit de façon brutale, cela contribuera soit à l'extinction de certaines espèces soit à une sélection naturelle de certaines espèces vis à vis d'autres qui vont s'éteindre. Si le changement se fait de façon progressive, il pourra y avoir une adaptation physiologique des espèces. En effet, les poissons présentent des stratégies d'adaptation aux conditions de l'environnement qui permettent des distributions similaires des oeufs entre les années. Ainsi, les interactions entre les organismes et leur environnement sont à l'origine des processus d'évolution par sélection naturelle dont la variabilité génétique est l'élément de base de ces processus et qui assure l'adaptation de la population à son environnement (Cury, 1994 ; Le Page et Cury, 1997). De plus, Bertrand *et al.* (2004) montrent qu'au cours de l'évènement El Niño 1997/98, entraînant un réchauffement climatique sur la côte Atlantique marocaine, l'anchois a été capable d'exploiter une petite échelle spatio-temporelle comme refuge ce qui a permis à une partie de la population de survivre et de rétablir l'état normal de la population, après l'évènement.

Cependant, l'environnement agit plus sur la survie des œufs et larves et le développement embryonnaire et larvaire que sur la reproduction, d'où son influence primordiale sur le recrutement et la variabilité du stock reproducteur. L'habitat de ponte des poissons pélagiques varie également fortement avec le changement climatique (Murphy, 1977).

En effet, la température a un rôle important dans le déclenchement de la ponte et sur le développement embryonnaire et larvaire (Blaxter et Hunter, 1982; Motos *et al.*, 1996; Carrera et Porteiro, 2003). Le facteur température semble plus influent dans la détermination des habitats de ponte que les autres facteurs hydrologiques du milieu. Ainsi, les facteurs environnementaux ne peuvent, à eux seuls, constituer un élément déterminant de la ponte et de la répartition de l'ichtyoplancton. Ainsi, Perry (Perry *et al.*, 2005) démontre une dérive latitudinale des individus du aux changements de température qui ont un impact sur la pêcheries, la distribution des espèces et les interactions entre les communautés.

Selon Fréon et Misund (1999), le poisson réagit plus à un gradient qu'à une valeur absolue du paramètre considéré. En effet, le réchauffement de 1997 (El Niňo 1997/98) a contribué à un élargissement des gammes de température et de salinité sur la présence des oeufs et larves au cours de la saison froide. Ainsi, la gamme de préférence n'est pas fixe et reflète le changement de comportement en fonction des conditions environnementales instantanées. Dans les régions de la Californie et du courant de Humboldt, on constate l'absence de modèle commun de ponte dans l'espace des espèces de sardine, d'anchois et de chinchard, les différentes zones de ponte sont caractérisées chacune par deux ou trois masses d'eaux différentes. Ceci corrobore l'éventualité d'une adaptation des espèces aux différents types d'eau dominant au moment de la ponte.

Notre analyse de modélisation d'habitat a été réalisée de façon multi-spécifique, en prenant en compte toutes les espèces observées d'une part et uniquement les espèces commerciales d'autre part. Les modèles RQ tendent à décrire les schémas potentiels de distribution des espèces plutôt que ceux effectivement observés. Les cartes décrivant la distribution optimale des espèces sont moins sujettes à sous-estimer la réponse de ces espèces à l'environnement et ont par conséquent certains avantages pour l'application du principe de précaution dans la gestion spatialisée de la zone d'étude. Ainsi, les cartographies des modèles RQ (régression quantile) de chaque espèce ont été centrées, réduites et recalées entre 0 et 1 via la calculatrice raster du logiciel ArcMap, puis sommées. Le résultat (Fig. 7.2) donne les zones d'habitat potentiel (ou optimal) à la ponte toutes espèces confondues et, uniquement pour les espèces commerciales.

Cette analyse fait ressortir les mêmes zones d'habitat hivernaux potentiel pour toutes les espèces observées que pour les espèces commerciales uniquement, à savoir la partie est de la Manche Orientale, près du détroit du Pas de Calais mais aussi près des côtes des Pays-Bas, de l'Allemagne et du Danemark, et sur le Dogger Bank, correspondant à des zones peu profondes, de salinité et température moyennes. Il est à noter que la partie Est de la Manche Orientale correspond à la zone sélectionnée par le projet de protection du parc naturel marin des 3 estuaires et que le German Bight fait également l'objet de projets Natura 2000.



Figure 7.2: Analyse multi-spécifique : modélisation d'habitat des frayères hivernales de toutes les espèces observées (gauche) et pour les espèces commerciales uniquement (droite)

7.2. La gestion et la protection des zones de ponte

Le Comité Technique des Pêches de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'Alimentation et l'Agriculture (FAO) a signalé le problème de la surpêche dès 1946. La proportion de stocks surexploités ou épuisés a augmenté d'environ 10% au milieu des années 1970 à près de 25% au début des années 2000. Il a été estimé qu'en 2003, l'océan mondial avait perdu 90% de ses gros poissons prédateurs (Froese et Proelß, 2010).

Plus récemment, à Bruxelles (Szlezak, 2010), les scientifiques ont dressé un tableau pessimiste de l'état des ressources en poisson dans les eaux européennes, préconisant dans de nombreux cas une réduction des quantités pêchées. En effet, dans les eaux européennes de l'Atlantique, de la Mer du Nord et de la Mer Baltique, deux tiers des stocks de poisson connaissent une mortalité trop forte, et, d'après le Conseil International pour l'Exploration de la Mer (CIEM), une majorité de ces stocks est surexploitée. En Mer celtique, à l'ouest de l'Ecosse, les scientifiques restent inquiets pour la survie des cabillauds (morue) et recommandent un quota zéro. En Méditerranée, la Commission Générale des Pêches pour la Méditerranée (GFCM) rapporte que seuls 9% des stocks étudiés sont pêchés de manière

raisonnable, 68% sont surexploités et 23% sont exploités au maximum de leurs capacités. En conséquence, pour la Méditerranée, les scientifiques ne proposent au mieux qu'un maintien du statu quo, et dans la plupart des cas des réductions de la pêche. Une autre source d'inquiétude pour les scientifiques est le fait que de nombreux poissons de fond pêchés en Méditerranée n'atteignent jamais l'âge adulte, car ils sont traditionnellement pêchés à l'état juvénile sans avoir eu le temps de se reproduire. D'où l'intérêt de créer des zones de refuge où la pêche serait restreinte, dans les canyons sous-marins situés en contrebas du plateau continental par exemple, comme cela a été le cas dans le Golfe du Lion.

Au vu de la surexploitation évidente des stocks, il devient urgent d'améliorer la gestion et la protection des espèces, de la biodiversité et des habitats marins. Les tentatives de gestion antérieures n'ayant pas été fructueuses, les gestionnaires cherchent des stratégies de gestion alternatives. Le but de la gestion durable est de bien définir les objectifs à atteindre, les moyens disponibles et surtout les connaissances nécessaires. Les objectifs sont de divers types : des objectifs écologiques et de protection des habitats doivent être visés par la gestion de la pêche (quotas, effort, sélectivité) et d'autres activités humaines (installations offshore, extraction de minéraux, pollutions et eutrophisation de la bande côtière) mais aussi des objectifs sociaux concernant les professionnels de pêche tels la mise en place d'Eco label devant permettre de réconcilier rentabilité économique et gestion durable.

7.2.1 La gestion de la pêche

Le principal objectif pour la gestion durable des ressources est la réduction du risque de surpêche en réduisant la mortalité des individus (notamment les plus jeunes qui ne se sont pas encore reproduits) due à la pêche, ce qui permet au stock de se reconstituer. Les principales mesures utilisées sont la réduction de l'effort de pêche, notamment en réduisant le nombre de jour en mer, par la mise en place de TAC (captures totales autorisées) ou quotas, par l'augmentation de la taille des mailles des filets, évitant ainsi de pêcher des individus trop petits, et par l'augmentation de la taille de débarquement tout en limitant les rejets. Cependant ces mesures s'avèrent souvent inefficaces et elles ne permettent pas de réduire la capacité de pêche jusqu'à un niveau de capture durable.

Le développement de la certification MSC (Marine Stewardship Council) Eco-label (http://www.msc.org), ONG internationale depuis 1999 est un organe de certification et de programme d'éco-labellisation qui permet de récompenser les pêches durables et respectueuses de l'environnement, en prenant en compte les rejets, les effets sur l'environnement (technique de pêche non destructive, réduction de l'impact sur les fonds), la gestion des stocks (état du stock exploité et maille des filets). La certification MSC a pour objectif d'améliorer l'état des mers, la gestion durable des stocks, la protection des habitats et la pérennisation des emplois. Cette certification MSC devrait devenir systématique afin de protéger les stocks de Manche Orientale et mer du Nord avec le respect des habitats sensibles tels les frayères et les nourriceries, par des mesures de protection limitées dans le temps et l'espace qui pourraient devenir un critère d'obtention de ce label. Cependant, Jacquet et Pauly (2010) estiment que la crédibilité de ce label est douteuse. En effet, le label tend à protéger certaines pêcheries en oubliant les espèces peu commerciales, entraînant ainsi leur effondrement.

7.2.2 Protection des frayères

Au Canada, les zones de protections marines (ZPM), espaces maritimes protégés, sont considérées comme un outil important pour la gestion des stocks (Côté et Finney, 2006). En effet, plusieurs études ont démontré que les ZPM au Canada, peuvent atteindre des objectifs de conservation et de gestion des pêches par l'accroissement de la biodiversité, le rétablissement de la structure des populations et de la dynamique des stocks, ainsi que par la facilitation de l'établissement d'écosystèmes stables et productifs. Par exemple, sur la côte Atlantique du Canada, la fermeture à longueurs d'années de pêcheries sur le plateau de la Nouvelle-Ecosse a eu pour résultat l'augmentation du nombre et de la taille des individus de plusieurs espèces d'importance commerciale dans les zones fermées et les zones adjacentes (Fisher et Frank, 2002). De plus, selon Roberts *et al.* (2005), seule une protection totale et permanente contre la pêche permet de protéger les habitats et les espèces visées, de maintenir leur variabilité génétique et de prévenir un changement évolutif délétère attribuable aux effets de la pêche.

À titre d'outil pour la gestion durable des ressources, l'établissement de ZPM est censé réaliser les principaux objectifs suivants : les ZPM permettent un accroissement de la population, du stock reproducteur, de la taille des individus, tout en maintenant les caractéristiques de l'habitat. Le chalutage de fond détruisant les habitats, Kraus *et al.* (2009)

déclarent, en effet, que les ZMP sont efficaces pour la reconstitution des stocks quand il y a une réduction de l'effort de pêche.

L'utilisation d'AMP (aires marines protégées) a été bien documentée dans les régions tropicales, où les AMP ont été un choix populaire pour la protection des espèces associées aux récifs coralliens. Dans la région de l'Atlantique Nord, les AMP ont reçu une attention croissante de part leurs avantages potentiels pour la conservation de la biodiversité et ont également été de plus en plus utilisées dans la gestion et la valorisation des stocks de poissons commerciaux.

Cependant, la persistance des populations dans les réserves marines et leur capacité à reconstituer les populations des régions adjacentes, dépend de la configuration des réserves et des profils de dispersion des larves (Hilborn *et al.*, 2004). La connaissance détaillée des agrégations et des transports des larves peut, par conséquent, améliorer la conception des aires marines protégées (Christensen *et al.*, 2009) pour le bénéfice ultime de la pêche.

La morue présente une croissance rapide, une maturité tardive, une longue durée de vie, et un recrutement sporadique. Toutes ces particularités rendent la morue plus vulnérable à l'exploitation. Ainsi, des espèces moins mobiles, telles que la plie ou la sole (De Veen, 1970), sont plus susceptibles de voir une augmentation de la taille et de l'abondance de leurs individus dans une AMP d'une taille donnée par rapport à la morue qui est deux fois plus mobile (Daan *et al.*, 1994).

Une AMP peut contribuer à inverser les changements structurels dans les habitats par une réduction de la remise en suspension des sédiments du fait de perturbations anthropiques et de la libération des nutriments pouvant conduire à l'eutrophisation et à l'homogénéisation de la zone. La protection conférée par l'AMP peut ainsi conduire à une augmentation de la complexité de l'habitat et du nombre d'espèces présentes (Auster *et al.*, 1996;. Collie *et al.*, 1997).

Pour les animaux sédentaires qui vivent sur les récifs, la création de petites réserves (1-5 km²) s'est avérée suffisante pour générer des retombées pour les pêcheries locales, tandis que pour les poissons plus mobiles, les réserves sont de plus grande taille comme celle correspondant à la fermeture du Georges Bank, qui couvre une superficie totale de 17.000 km² au large de la Nouvelle-Angleterre (Murawski *et al.*, 2000 ; Beare *et al.*, 2010 ; Kaiser, 2005).

Diverses zones de protection existent avec des effets différents aussi bien positifs que négatifs, comme la plaice box, visant à protéger les juvéniles de plie, la North Sea cod box visant à protéger les frayères de morue ou encore la Shetland box visant à protéger les stocks de morue, merlan et églefin.

Dans le cas du cabillaud de la Baltique, les fermetures estivales des zones de ponte ont été mises en oeuvre, mais représentent un échec (Kraus *et al.* 2009). En effet, le modèle ISIS-Fish (Pelletier *et al.*, 2009) a été appliqué à la population du cabillaud de la Baltique et a prédit que sous des conditions environnementales défavorables, aucun des scénarios de fermeture proposés ne peut reconstituer le stock. Cependant suite à une estimation plus récente, des effets positifs ont été observés (Beare *et al.*, 2010). L'état du stock était en trop mauvais état et, sous protection, la reconstitution prend du temps.

La fermeture du Georges bank (1994) avait pour objectif la protection de la limande à queue jaune (Yellowtail founder, *Limanda ferruginea*) et d'autres espèces de Gadidae. Cette fermeture a permis une augmentation de la biomasse du stock de morue et a également touché d'autres espèces animales comme le pétoncle dont la biomasse a également augmenté. Cette zone de protection a donc eu un effet positif sur l'habitat et sur la productivité de l'écosystème de par la réduction de la mortalité due à la pêche. En effet, après 4 ans de protection, la population de pétoncles a été multipliée par 14, de plus, la biomasse et la taille des individus ont également augmenté. Le stock de morue a augmenté de 18%, celui de la limande à queue jaune de 80% et celui de l'églefin est totalement reconstitué.

La « Plaice Box » visait à protéger les juvéniles de plie. Ainsi, une fermeture de la zone à la pêche aux gros chalutiers a été décidée dans l'espoir d'augmenter la biomasse du stock reproducteur et de diminuer les rejets. Cependant le stock continue de diminuer, ce qui favorise l'apparition de doutes sur la crédibilité des AMP. Cet échec met en avant les problèmes environnementaux comme l'eutrophisation. Suite à une restriction plus sévère, une augmentation de la SSB (spawning stock biomass), de la taille des individus et une amélioration du sex ratio sont observées. Ainsi dans le cas de la protection estuarienne du lançon (The Firth of Forth sandeel fishery closure), une augmentation de la biomasse et une baisse de l'effort de pêche ont été constatées.

Certaines AMP visent à protéger les zones de frayères où les concentrations de géniteurs sont la cible privilégiée des pêcheries commerciales. La « North Sea cod box » avait été mise en place spécifiquement à cet effet et ne présente pourtant pas d'effet positif dû au fait que les dates de fermetures de la zone ne coïncident pas avec la période de ponte et ne semblent donc pas être adaptées à une protection du stock de morue. Enfin, le même type de protection saisonnière dans le Kattegat, la « Kattegat cod closure », est récente et ne présente donc pas d'évaluation à ce jour.

Les AMP sont considérées comme des outils appropriés de gestion pour la conservation de la biodiversité et des ressources marines. En outre, les AMP permettent une
augmentation des stocks exploités dans la zone. Cependant, les efforts de pêche, précédemment ciblés sur les zones fermées, se déplacent sur des zones adjacentes qui se dégradent. Il faut donc établir une zonation dans la protection avec une zone tampon, où l'effort de pêche est limité, et qui s'interpose entre la protection complète et une zone sans protection. De plus, la fermeture des frayères peut être une mesure de conservation inefficace si les individus migrent à l'extérieur des frayères (Shepherd, 1993 ; Horwood *et al.*, 1998). Enfin, une AMP doit être assez grande pour ne pas devenir un goulot d'étranglement génétique et permettre l'apport externe de matériel génétique.

Ainsi, il apparaît comme primordial de prendre en compte non seulement les frayères dans l'évaluation des zones à protéger mais aussi les migrations et nourriceries. Pour cela, en renforcement de l'avis d'experts il existe une approche de conservation appelée « planification systématique de la conservation » (Margules and Pressey, 2000). Pour mettre en place une politique assurant une exploitation durable de ces ressources marines, une gestion intégrée et responsable s'appuyant sur des systèmes et des outils informatiques doit être envisagée pour cet espace marin. MARXAN est un logiciel d'aide à la décision pour le « design » de systèmes de réserves. Il propose des solutions raisonnablement efficaces en sélectionnant une combinaison de sites avec une bonne cohérence spatiale et atteignant plusieurs objectifs de conservation de la biodiversité tout en minimisant l'impact socio-économique de la mise en place des AMPs (Ball *et al.*, 2009 ; Delavenne *et al.*, 2010). L'application de modèles bio-économiques spatialisés, tel ISIS-FISH, peut également servir à vérifier le bénéfice de la protection sur une phase du cycle de vie d'une espèce sur le reste du stock.

Dans notre étude, la partie Est de la Manche Orientale, près du détroit du Pas de Calais ressort comme étant une zone optimale pour la ponte de plusieurs espèces. Ainsi, alors même que cette étude démontre l'intérêt de protéger cette zone, une AMP est en projet avec la création du parc naturel marin à l'ouvert des trois estuaires : Somme, Authie, Canche, par l'Arrêté du 19 février 2008, qui complètera et devrait donner de la cohérence au dispositif « Natura 2000 en mer ». Ce parc permettrait ainsi une protection de la biodiversité mais aussi une protection écologique. De plus, notre étude démontre que les côtes hollandaises et allemandes constituant des zones de frayères récurrentes importantes seraient aussi intéressantes à protéger. Cette protection serait possible en élargissant la plaice box ou la cod box, avec des restrictions de pêche plus strictes, elle est partiellement prise en compte par la mise en place de sites Natura 2000 en mer (Pedersen, 2009).

7.3 Critiques et perspectives de l'étude

7.3.1 L'échantillonnage et l'identification des œufs de poissons pélagiques

Cette étude a mis en œuvre des moyens techniques rigoureux allant de l'échantillonnage à la modélisation d'habitat en passant par l'identification précise des espèces et la cartographie. Le système de pompage en continu des œufs de poissons «CUFES» (Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler) permet de préciser la distribution et la répartition des frayères d'espèces produisant des œufs pélagiques. Bien que le CUFES ait été utilisé avec succès dans d'autres zones, il n'avait jamais fait l'objet d'essai en mer du Nord. Dans notre étude, l'utilisation du CUFES pour collecter les œufs de poissons pélagiques a été validée en hiver, en Manche Orientale et dans la partie sud de la mer du Nord. En effet, l'absence de stratification de la colonne d'eau, entraîne une absence de rétention des œufs. Les œufs collectés sont pélagiques, ainsi ils flottent près de la surface, cependant, une analyse de la densité des œufs sur un gradient de salinité ou encore l'utilisation d'un filet multinet permettraient de confirmer la distribution verticale des œufs.

Afin d'obtenir des cartographies de la distribution des œufs considérées comme fiables, il faut avoir des données d'identifications sûres. Pour cela, les identifications visuelles ont été ou non confirmées par des analyses moléculaires puis comparées aux identifications obtenues par le ZooScan. Le ZooScan permet d'identifier les œufs de poissons. Cependant, la principale critique de ce système est que le fichier d'apprentissage est basé sur des standards de référence identifiés par l'expert. De part le risque de confusion entre merlan et morue, ou limande et flet, les standards de référence peuvent être erronés. De plus, le ZooScan ne semble pas détecter la présence du globule huileux des motelles sp. ou de la sole. Aussi pour remédier à ce problème, probablement lié à la prise d'image d'un côté uniquement de l'œuf sans égard pour la position des globules huileux, une double numérisation, par au-dessus et par au-dessous, devrait être envisagée. En effet, cette procédure permettrait d'obtenir, pour un même œuf, une image supérieure et inférieure permettant de capter la présence du ou des globule(s). De plus, l'élaboration des standards de certaines espèces problématiques, combinant le ZooScan et les analyses moléculaires, serait à envisager pour obtenir un fichier d'apprentissage plus fiable et encore améliorer les performances de cet outil.

La méthode de PCR-RFLP permet l'identification spécifique des œufs de poissons soit sur le gène du cytochrome *b* soit sur le gène de l'ARNr 16S. Cependant, la technique que nous avons utilisée pour différencier les œufs de limande, de flet et de tacauds ne permet pas de distinguer les œufs des trois espèces de tacaud sp. susceptibles de pondre à cette période dans la zone d'étude. S'il s'avérait nécessaire, à l'avenir, de différencier les 3 espèces de tacauds (espèces économiquement peu importantes) en même temps que de les différencier de la limande et du flet, il faudrait envisager de modifier la technique de PCR-RFLP sur le fragment d'ADN préalablement choisi en réalisant plusieurs réactions de restrictions, ou alors de chercher un nouveau marqueur moléculaire plus polymorphe.

Il peut être aussi envisagé d'utiliser la technique de PCR quantitative qui permettrait d'identifier toutes les espèces présentes dans un échantillon dans une même analyse, ce qui entraînerait donc un gain de temps considérable. Ce gain de temps pourrait être plus important en utilisant une technique permettant d'identifier spécifiquement les œufs en supprimant l'étape d'extraction et d'amplification telle que la technique des immuno-sondes. Cependant ces deux techniques, que ce soit la PCR quantitative ou l'utilisation d'immuno-sondes requièrent une longue période de mise au point.

La prise en compte des avantages et limitations de chaque étape de l'échantillonnage et de l'identification ont permis de proposer un nouveau protocole de suivi des frayères. Tout d'abord la fréquence d'échantillonnage peut être réduite afin de ne collecter qu'un échantillon sur deux au cours de la campagne. Cette plus faible intensité d'échantillonnage a été prouvée suffisante afin de restituer des distributions spatiales similaires. Les échantillons sont fixés dans une solution de formol à moins de 1% puis dans les trois semaines suivantes, transférés dans une solution sans formol permettant ainsi une identification visuelle correcte et n'endommageant pas l'ADN pour les analyses moléculaires.

Utilisation du ZooScan sur tous les échantillons obtenus

- Un premier fichier d'apprentissage est appliqué afin de distinguer les oeufs de poissons d'autres organismes, détritus ou fibres...
- Sur les œufs de poissons uniquement, un second fichier d'apprentissage est appliqué afin de distinguer les œufs par groupe d'espèces et sans distinction des stades de développement (démontré plus fiable dans l'étude).
- Au sein de chaque groupe d'espèces, un fichier d'apprentissage est appliqué afin de distinguer les stades de développement de l'œuf (stade A = sans embryon et stade B = avec embryon) avec une validation visuelle de vignettes, par un expert.

Validation visuelle et moléculaire d'un sous-échantillon représentatif

Pour les groupes susceptibles de comprendre des œufs présentant un globule huileux,
 l'identification d'un sous échantillon spatiallement représentatif peut être réalisée

sous loupe binoculaire. Les données obtenues ainsi permettent de créer un facteur de correction appliqué aux données obtenues par le ZooScan pour séparer les œufs d'espèces présentant des globules huileux des autres..

 Pour les groupes d'espèces dont l'identification visuelle pose problème : merlan/morue et limande/flet, des analyses moléculaires peuvent être effectuées sur un sous-échantillon spatiallement représentatif. Les données obtenues ainsi permettent de créer un facteur de correction appliqué aux données obtenues par le ZooScan qui permettrait de distinguer les espèces de chaque groupe problématique.

7.3.2 La récurrence et l'habitat des frayères

L'analyse de la récurrence des zones de pontes est faite sur les données de quatre campagnes (2006-2009) seulement et serait plus robuste si plus d'années étaient disponibles. De plus, le prolongement de la série temporelle disponible permettrait d'affiner les prédictions en augmentant la fourchette de conditions observées et aussi de réaliser une validation externe à partir d'un jeu de données indépendantes n'ayant pas été prises en compte dans la construction des modèles. Une plus longue série permettrait d'observer l'effet des variations climatiques sur la distribution des frayères. Enfin, la modélisation de l'habitat de ponte a été réalisée sur les données d'identification visuelle. Cependant, comme pour les identifications au ZooScan, le risque de confusion entre merlan et morue, ou limande et flet, peut résulter en des distributions erronées. La modélisation d'habitat pouvant être réalisée sur les données corrigées par des analyses moléculaires, il semble important de poursuivre ce type d'identification des œufs de poissons.

Dans notre étude, seules des variables abiotiques ont été prises en compte faisant ainsi l'hypothèse que seul l'environnement façonne la distribution des frayères, comme c'est souvent le cas dans les modèles d'habitats classiques (Guisan et Zimmermann, 2000 ; Austin, 2002 ; Austin, 2007). Pourtant, dans notre étude, seules six variables environnementales ont été utilisées : trois paramètre variables d'une année sur l'autre : la température, la salinité, la concentration en chlorophylle *a*, et trois variables persistantes : la profondeur, le type sédimentaire et la tension de cisaillement. Ainsi, d'autres variables biotiques ou abiotiques peuvent être ajoutées telles que l'état démographique de la population et l'effet mémoire dont l'importance a été démontrée dans la structuration de la distribution des géniteurs en ponte (Loots, 2009). L'étude présente n'élucide pas totalement les forçages contraignant la stratégie de ponte des espèces étudiées. Ainsi, les futures applications de la modélisation des frayères à

partir de la distribution des oeufs devrait prendre en compte ces facteurs. De tels modèles pourraient ne pas être uniquement utilisés pour caractériser et délimiter les habitats de ponte mais pourraient également servir à évaluer différents types de scénarios (Planque *et al.*, in press). De tels scénarios pourraient simuler les effets de changements climatiques, de l'évolution de la biomasse des géniteurs, de la perte ou de la dégradation des habitats due aux activités humaine sur l'étendue ou la qualité des frayères (Rochette *et al.*, 2010).

7.3.3 L'habitat de succès

Dans notre étude, la mortalité des œufs n'a pas été prise en compte. Cependant, il s'agit d'une variable très importante dans l'évaluation de la production des œufs (SSB) et dans le devenir de la ponte. Les différentes composantes de la mortalité naturelle pourraient être étudiées, telles les conditions environnementales non favorables mais aussi la mortalité par prédation et la composition du zooplancton associé. Ainsi, l'analyse des contenus stomacaux dans les analyses de réseaux trophiques permettrait d'estimer la prédation sur les œufs. L'identification simultanée des principaux taxons d'œufs et de zooplancton par le ZooScan devrait également permettre de grandes avancées dans ce domaine, ainsi que d'évaluer le nombre et la biomasse des œufs par stade et par gamme de taille. L'étude du succès de reproduction des diverses zones de pontes plutôt que de la distribution des abondances semblerait pertinente (Boulinier et Danchin, 1997). Celui-ci ne peut être déterminé au moment de la reproduction et doit être déduit d'informations sur les adultes et les jeunes individus une fois que ces derniers ont été recrutés dans la population (Planque et al., 2007). L'étude de la distribution larvaire de chaque espèce en fonction de l'hydrodynamisme ou des courants résiduels, en Manche Orientale et dans la partie sud de la mer du Nord, permettrait d'observer la dérive des œufs et leur transport depuis les frayères vers les nourriceries, principalement situées près des côtes hollandaises et danoises (Savina et al., 2010). Les modèles basés sur les individus (IBM) peuvent être utilisés pour suivre les cohortes ou les individus et les conditions environnementales dans lesquelles ils vivent au début de leur cycle de vie (Allain et al., 2003). On pourrait alors cartographier l'habitat efficace sur plusieurs années et préciser encore les zones les plus dignes d'être protégées.

Conclusion

Le but de la thèse était d'identifier et de caractériser les frayères hivernales en Manche Orientale et la partie sud de la mer du Nord. Premièrement, l'utilisation du CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler) a été comparée et validée pour un échantillonnage hivernal des œufs de poissons pélagiques en Manche Orientale et dans le sud de la mer du Nord.

L'identification des œufs de poissons est principalement basée sur des critères morphologiques. Ainsi, l'identification visuelle pose certains problèmes notamment pour les espèces ayant des diamètres de taille proches, comme la limande (*Limanda limanda*) et le flet (*Platichthys flesus*) ou encore le merlan (*Merlangus merlangius*) et la morue (*Gadus morhua*). Ainsi, dans cette étude, des méthodes alternatives ont été testées, à savoir l'identification des œufs de poissons par analyses moléculaires ou par un système intégré d'analyses d'images : Le ZooScan.

Premièrement, les solutions de fixation et de conservation ont été optimisées afin de permettre une meilleure conservation des pigments et donc une identification visuelle plus aisée. La solution de conservation, sans formol, évite une trop grande dégradation de l'ADN, permettant ainsi d'identifier les œufs par des analyses moléculaires. La technique PCR-RFLP a ainsi été adaptée à l'identification des œufs de poissons formolés. Une PCR-RFLP sur le gène mitochondrial du cytochrome b a permis de différencier les œufs de morue, de merlan et d'églefin (Melanogrammus aeglefinus) d'une part et les œufs de trois espèces de motelle (Ciliata mustella, Ciliata septentrionalis et Enchelyopus cimbrius) susceptibles de pondre dans la zone d'étude à cette période de l'année. Ciliata mustella et Enchelyopus cimbrius étaient deux espèces attendues dans la zone cependant, les œufs de Ciliata septentrionalis ont également été identifiés grâce aux analyses moléculaires. De plus, la technique PCR-RFLP a aussi été utilisée sur le gène de l'ARNr 16S pour distinguer les œufs de limande, de flet et des trois espèces de tacauds sp. (Trisopterus minutus, T. luscus, T. esmarkii) susceptibles de pondre dans la zone d'étude à cette période de l'année. Les identifications obtenues par les analyses moléculaires ont permis de corriger les cartographies des frayères obtenues à partir des données visuelles. L'identification par biologie moléculaire, de part le coût des analyses ne peut être utilisée en routine, cependant, cette étape devient nécessaire pour confirmer l'identification d'un œuf incertain.

De plus, le développement d'un nouveau système d'analyse d'images : le ZooScan capable d'obtenir des images en haute résolution a été réalisé afin d'identifier les œufs de poissons de façon automatisée via des algorithmes d'apprentissage supervisé. Le ZooScan peut ainsi identifier les œufs de morue, de merlan, de plie (*Pleuronectes platessa*) et de balai (*Hippoglossoides platessoides*) mais a rencontré les mêmes difficultés qu'un expert pour distinguer les œufs de limande et de flet. De plus, le système d'acquisition d'images ne permet pas de différencier les globules huileux des motelles et de la sole (*Solea solea*) qui sont visibles pour un expert observant ces œufs sous loupe binoculaire. Ainsi les œufs de sole commune ont été confondus avec les œufs de merlan et les œufs de motelles avec les œufs de limande et de flet. Il y a donc une vraie complémentarité entre l'identification visuelle et l'identification au ZooScan. Le ZooScan ne pourra jamais remplacer l'expert, cependant il peut compter et mesurer les œufs par groupes taxonomiques et classes de taille et ainsi donner une estimation de la biomasse présente dans l'échantillon.

Grâce à ces trois méthodes d'identification, la cartographie de la distribution des œufs de poissons observée suite à des analyses géostatistiques peut être considérée comme fiable. L'objectif de cette étude était d'observer les patterns de distribution des frayères hivernales sur quatre années d'étude (2006-2009). La distribution des frayères est hautement structurée dans l'espace. Les oeufs se concentrent en priorité dans certaines zones géographiques bien localisées tandis qu'ils sont absents des zones adjacentes. Ainsi, une analyse spatio-temporelle a permis de définir des zones de pontes récurrentes, notamment près des côtes hollandaises et au centre de la zone d'étude. La structure spatiale des frayères tend à se répéter dans le temps, cela montre un attachement géographique très fort et un schéma de distribution qui se reproduit d'une année sur l'autre. Cet attachement des populations pour leur site de reproduction est à la fois une adaptation vis à vis des conditions environnementales qui sont prévisibles dans le temps et une manière de faire face aux changements environnementaux éphémères en s'imposant une certaine inertie dans leur distribution spatiale.

L'occupation des zones est déterminée principalement par des facteurs environnementaux qui créent l'hétérogénéité du milieu. Cette hétérogénéité aboutit à l'existence de zones favorables et non favorables. Ainsi la modélisation de l'habitat de ponte permet de prédire la distribution des œufs en fonction de six variables environnementales : la température, la salinité, la concentration en chlorophylle *a*, la profondeur, le types sédimentaire et la tension de cisaillement. Deux méthodes ont été utilisées : les GLM (Generalised Linar Model) et les RQ (Regression Quantile) qui décrivent les habitats potentiels moyens et optimaux respectivement. Ces modèles ont démontré que les œufs de beaucoup d'espèces étaient principalement distribuées dans des eaux peu profondes, de salinité et température moyennes. L'environnement était donc utile pour caractériser les frayères. Néanmoins, l'importance des facteurs environnementaux dans la structuration spatiale des frayères dépend des traits de vie et des modalités de reproduction des espèces. La taille et la structure démographique de la population peuvent influencer la manière dont les zones favorables sont occupées en jouant sur la contraction et l'extension de la distribution de l'habitat de reproduction. L'importance relative de chacune de ces zones sur le succès du recrutement de chaque espèce reste cependant à déterminer.

Enfin, suite à une analyse multi-spécifique, l'importance primordiale de certaines frayères de Manche-Est et du sud-est de la mer du Nord a été révélée. Ainsi, ces zones pourraient être soumises à des restrictions ou des mesures de conservation telle les aires marines protégées (AMP) afin de protéger les habitats de ponte et donc de pérenniser la biodiversité ou la gestion durable des principaux stocks des espèces commerciales.

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Annex A

Fish eggs species description

Scientific name	Common name	Nom français	Adults pictures	Eggs pictures	Egg size diameter	Oil globule	Spawning period
Ciliata mustela	Five-bearded rockling	Motelle à 5 barbillons			0.66-0.98 mm		January-July
Enchelyopus cimbrius	Four-bearded rockling	Motelle à 4 barbillons		0.	0.66–0.98 mm	Presence of an oil globule	February-August (peak in May, Russel, 1976)
Ciliata septentrionalis	Northern rockling	Motelle nordique			0.70–0.88 mm		March-May (Munk and Nielsen, 2005) April-May
Limanda limanda	Dab	Limande		0 1	0.66-0.92 mm		Mid-January in the South (Simpson, 1971) March-June (Munk and Nieslen, 2005)
Platichtys flesus	Flounder	Flet			0.80-1.13 mm		January-July (Munk and Nielsen, 2005)
Trisopterus luscus	Pouting	Tacaud commun			0.9-1.03 mm		Mid-January- March, April (Russel, 1976) January-September (Munk and Nielsen, 2005)
Trisopterus minutus	Poor cod	Petit tacaud		No egg picture	0.9-1.23 mm		March-July (Munk and Nielsen, 2005) February-June, Russel, 1976)
Trisopterus esmarkii	Norway pout	Tacaud norvégien			1.00-1.19 mm		January-April

Scientific name	Common name	Nom français	Adults pictures	Eggs pictures	Egg size diameter	Oil globule presence	Spawning period
Gadus morhua	Cod	Morue ou cabillaud			1.16-1.89 mm		January-May
Merlangius merangusl	Whiting	Merlan			0.97-1.32 mm		January-July in the North Sea February-July, in the Channel (Russel, 1976)
Melanogrammus aeglefinus	Haddock	Eglefin		No egg picture	1.20-1.70 mm		February-June (Munk and Nielsen, 2005) January-May (peak at the end of March, early April (Russel, 1976)
Solea sole	Common sole	Sole commune	Care are		0.95-1.60 mm	Presence of many oil globules	April-June
Pleuronectes platessa	Plaice	Plie			1.66-2.17 mm		January-May (Munk and Nielsen, 2005) December-March in the south of the North sea (Simpson, 1971)
Hippoglossoides platessoides	Long rough dab or Americain plaice	Balai de l'Atlantique			1.38-3.50 mm		January-June (Munk, 1976) January-May, peak in March (Russel, 1976)

Annex B

Elimination of the effect of the boat on the number of eggs collected



B 1 CUFES flow during IBTS sea survey

In 2006, 3 periods were observed in the analysis of CUFES flow. In 2007, 2 periods were observed. The differences of the mean flow of CUFES during the survey may be due to an undetected clogging of the collector or an upstream clogging in the pumping circuit. The persistant clogging of the collector is unlikely as the CUFES protocole recommended the collector systematic cleaning at least every 48 hours. The different periods observed may probably be due to upstream clogging in the pumping circuit. However, in 2008 and 2009 CUFES flows seemed to be constant.

B 2 Comparison of CUFES flow with boat speed

There was a linear relationship between boat speed and CUFES flow, which had a direct effect on filtered volume.









B 3 Influence of boat speed on the number of eggs collected

This effect was compensated by standardisation of collected egg abundance to a standard volume of 20 m^3 (concentration or density unit) calculated from the CUFES instantaneous flow averaged over the whole sample duration. The effect of speed or clogging on the number of eggs collected was removed as highlighted by the following plot illustrating the little influence of vessel speed on the collected egg densities.



Annex C

Results from the supplementary hydrological stations conducted during the IBTS confirmed that most stations were vertically mixed with little water column stratification. The water column in the southern North Sea during winter and spring is generally well mixed due to strong tidal action (Fox *et al.*, 2005; Radach *et al.*, 1993; Lund-Hansen *et al.*, 1996) salinity gradients do occur, especially close to the coasts (Munk *et al.*, 2009). However, the CTD profiles collected during the IBTS showed that there was minimal thermal or salinity vertical stratification across the majority of the study area in January-February.



This plot show the temperature or salinity in function of depth during IBTS 2008.



No stratification of the water colum was observed during winter for the four studied years.

Annex D

Temporal variation

Two spatially restricted areas were delimited to analyse the temporal variation near Boulogne sur Mer (longitude between 1.25°E and 1.7°E and latitude between 50.30°N and 51°N) and near Ijmuiden (longitude between 3.75°E and 4.30°E and latitude between 52.10°N and 53°N). Log-transformed stage 1 eggs densities collected during IBTS 2009 were plotted against time (in hours).



D 1 Temporal variation near Boulogne sur Mer



ANOVA on stage 1 egg densities was performed for each sub-period defined. Hypothesis tested: Was there a significant difference in the eggs densities between each sub-

period near Boulogne sur Mer?

	Sq	Df	F-value	P-va	alue
All species	381.3	1	2.89	0.1013	NS
Rockling	23.18	1	3.59	0.1986	NS
Cod	149.22	1	17.76	0.05195	NS
Dab	59.93	1	8.25	0.1029	NS
Whiting	1140.65	1	77.19	0.012	*
Flounder	6.37	1	1.78	0.3136	NS
Sole	0.07	1	0.83	0.4583	NS
Plaice	0.24	1	0.61	0.5157	NS

NS: not significant, • p-value = 0.05, * p-value < 0.05

This analysis revealed that there were no significant difference in eggs densities for most species near Boulogne sur Mer, with the exception of whiting where a small difference is observed. There was a decrease in the eggs densities of whiting over the last sub-period.

D 2 Temporal variation near Ijmuiden







ANOVA on stage 1 egg densities was performed for each sub-period defined. Hypothesis tested: Was there a significant difference in the egg densities between each subperiod near Ijmuiden?

	Sq	Df	F-value	P-va	alue
All species	116.13	1	1.05	0.3201	NS
Rockling	0.03	1	0.156	0.7605	NS
Cod	4.682	1	0.0224	0.9054	NS
Dab	163.62	1	0.5297	0.5995	NS
Whiting	79.632	1	0.5974	0.5811	NS
Flounder	6.882	1	0.1195	0.7881	NS
Sole	0.084	1	0.0025	0.9681	NS

NS: not significant, \bullet p-value = 0.05, * p-value < 0.05

This analysis revealed that there were no significant difference in eggs densities for each species near Ijmuiden.

Annex E

Geostatistics

E 1 Parameters

Data	
Variable	Identity of variable analysed
Year	Year analysed
Trans	Transformation applied on variable
Spatial trend	
Trend	Percentage of variation explained by long-range spatial trend
L	Linear trend
Q	Quadratic trend
Variogram	
X _{max}	Maximum distance covered by the variogram
Step	Distance interval used to compute de variogram
Model	Model used as theoretical variogram
Model Var	Theoretical variogram fit (% variation explained)
Nugget	Nugget variance
С	Amount of spatially structured variance (Sill = $C + nugget$)
Range	Distance parameter equals range value for most models and 1/3 of
	range for the exponential model

Kriging parameters

Mesh	Interpolation	interpolation mesh size											
Radius	Search radius												
Min/Max points	Minimum	and	maximum	neighbouring	observation	used	for	the					
interpolation													

	Data		Tr	end			Vario		Kriging						
Year	Variable	Trans	L	ð	Xmax	Step	Model	Var - mod	Nugget	Sill	Range	XY Block	Radius	Min points	Max points
	All species	log(x+1)	40	51	2.1	0.4	spherical	98.6	0.838	1.276	1.299	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	13	20.8	0.6	0.1	pentaspherical	99.1	0.021	0.026	0.639	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	15	18.8	1	0.2	spherical	98	0.097	0.056	0.609	0.25	0.5	5	15
2006	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	3.2	12.6	2.5	0.5	circular	91	0.037	0.045	1.397	0.25	0.5	5	15
st1	Dab	log(x+1)	32	42.8	1.6	0.3	circular	100	0.212	0.424	1.096	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Whiting	log(x+1)	12	16.7	2	0.4	circular	71.1	0.103	0.044	1.736	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	7.6	11.9	2.4	0.4	circular	97.6	0.006	0.098	1.677	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	26	29	2.5	0.4	circular	99.4	0.012	0.168	1.904	0.25	0.5	5	15
	All species	log(x+1)	19	32.4	1.5	0.3	spherical	99.7	0.183	2.009	1.425	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	8	12.5	0.9	0.18	exponential	97.9	0.015	0.023	0.176	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	7.2	11.5	2.5	0.5	circular	98	0.086	0.068	1.500	0.25	0.5	5	15
2006	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	0.1	2.9	1.8	0.3	spherical	70.3	0.028	0.037	1.773	0.25	0.5	5	15
st2	Dab	log(x+1)	9	17.7	2.5	0.5	pentaspherical	99.9	0.271	0.293	2.280	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Whiting	log(x+1)	6.7	7.7	2	0.4	pentaspherical	85.2	0.049	0.016	3.720	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	8.5	16	2.5	0.5	exponential	100	0.139	0.456	0.724	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	13	23.4	2.5	0.5	circular	98.4	0.083	0.159	1.635	0.25	0.5	5	15
	All species	log(x+1)	19	24.6	1.9	0.3	pentaspherical	99.1	1.111	4.557	1.157	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	11	10.6	2	0.4	pentspherical	100	0.051	0.047	1.489	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	27	29.5	1.2	0.2	circular	99.7	0.058	0.119	1.016	0.25	0.5	5	15
2007	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	6.4	15.2	0.9	0.15	circular	95.9	0.000	0.034	0.863	0.25	0.5	5	15
2007 st1	Dab	log(x+1)	25	33.4	2.5	0.5	exponential	98.8	0.078	0.594	0.589	0.25	0.5	5	15
542	Whiting	log(x+1)	5.1	6.8	0.7	0.1	circular	98.8	0.011	0.073	0.685	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	7.9	11.5	3	0.6	pentaspherical	97.6	0.111	0.395	1.891	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	28	34	1.6	0.25	pentaspherical	99.4	0.000	0.224	1.704	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Common sole	log(x+1)	9.8	11.7	0.65	0.1	pentaspherical	83.4	0.000	0.000	0.667	0.25	0.5	5	15

E 2 Kriging parameters used for visual data mapping (2006 – 2009)

	All species	log(x+1)	16	24	1.5	0.3	pentaspherical	98.6	1.144	3.523	1.156 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	8.3	8.7	1.5	0.3	circular	99.8	0.025	0.031	1.043 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	10	12.9	1.2	0.2	circular	99.4	0.047	0.059	0.961 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	6.8	16.7	0.9	0.2	circular	94.7	0.000	0.024	0.836 0.25	0.5	5	15
2007	Dab	log(x+1)	23	32.3	2.3	0.4	pentaspherical	98.6	0.112	0.366	2.110 0.25	0.5	5	15
st2	Whiting	log(x+1)	3.4	5.1	0.7	0.15	pentaspherical	98.7	0.062	0.132	1.135 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	6.1	11.3	0.8	0.15	circular	99.7	0.089	0.293	0.624 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	20	31.8	1.5	0.25	pentaspherical	99.3	0.060	0.183	1.316 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Common sole	log(x+1)	no sol	le										
	All species	log(x+1)	18	29.8	1.6	0.3	pentaspherical	95.8	0.604	3.901	0.903 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	2.9	10.3	7	1.3	pure nugget	-	0.090	0.000	6.000 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	13	14.4	5	1	circular	89.7	0.167	0.044	4.281 0.25	0.5	5	15
2000	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	5.9	12.9	1	0.2	circular	98	0.001	0.017	0.809 0.25	0.5	5	15
2008 st1	Dab	log(x+1)	43	51.4	1.2	0.2	pentaspherical	99.4	0.077	0.511	1.199 0.25	0.5	5	15
501	Whiting	log(x+1)	11	35	1.2	0.2	pentaspherical	99.4	0.154	0.228	0.793 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	7.6	19.6	1.2	0.2	pentaspherical	99	0.092	0.150	0.973 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	32	40.3	3	0.5	pentaspherical	99.7	0.037	0.126	1.778 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Common sole	log(x+1)	2.7	20.5	0.65	0.14	exponential	90.3	0.046	0.038	0.245 0.25	0.5	5	15
	All species	log(x+1)	2.9	4.7	1.4	0.3	pentaspherical	97.2	2.927	1.532	1.077 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	2.9	4.1	2.2	0.35	circular	90.1	0.029	0.010	1.832 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	0.1	1.2	0.9	0.2	pentaspherical	94.7	0.073	0.054	0.393 0.25	0.5	5	15
2008	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	4	6.5	2.22	0.48	pure nugget	-	0.014	0.000	6.000 0.25	0.5	5	15
2000 st2	Dab	log(x+1)	2.3	6	1.5	0.3	circular	92.6	0.402	0.231	1.162 0.25	0.5	5	15
502	Whiting	log(x+1)	12	12.4	0.9	0.2	pentaspherical	96.2	0.148	0.107	0.463 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	6.6	7.6	4	0.8	pentaspherical	99.9	0.089	0.049	3.788 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	2.2	4.2	0.8	0.17	pentaspherical	98.7	0.124	0.093	0.993 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Common sole	log(x+1)	10	10.8	0.5	0.1	exponential	60.9	0.012	0.009	0.105 0.25	0.5	5	15
	All species	log(x+1)	18	28.4	0.8	0.15	pentaspherical	97.8	0.535	3.833	0.711 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	0.3	2.3	5	1	pure nugget	-	0.035	0.000	6.000 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	9.3	13.5	0.9	0.18	circular	97.3	0.131	0.249	0.518 0.25	0.5	5	15
2009	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	4.5	7.4	0.5	0.1	circular	91	0.002	0.005	0.401 0.25	0.5	5	15
st1	Dab	log(x+1)	37	48.5	4	0.8	circular	90.8	0.145	0.263	1.856 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Whiting	log(x+1)	22	30.1	0.8	0.15	circular	99.6	0.151	0.525	0.438 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	15	19	2.5	0.5	circular	98.3	0.091	0.175	1.689 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	18	30	1.6	0.3	pentaspherical	92.1	0.101	0.186	1.192 0.25	0.5	5	15
	Common sole	log(x+1)	3.1	3.6	5	1	pure nugget	-	0.009	0.000	6.000 0.25	0.5	5	15

	All species	log(x+1)	6.5	24.9	2.3	0.5	pentaspherical	97.7	1.521	1.694	1.236	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	0.2	2.4	1.6	0.3	circular	95.6	0.013	0.010	0.869	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	3.5	17.7	1.3	0.25	circular	99.9	0.016	0.104	0.522	0.25	0.5	5	15
2009 st2	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	2.1	2.3	1.6	0.3	pentaspherical	97.5	0.001	0.003	1.348	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Dab	log(x+1)	24	41.3	2.9	0.6	pentaspherical	98.2	0.155	0.247	1.682	0.25	0.5	5	15
502	Whiting	log(x+1)	25	37.6	0.6	0.1	circular	98.9	0.110	0.219	0.444	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	12	15.9	2.5	0.5	circular	94	0.088	0.111	1.719	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	1.9	17.2	2.2	0.4	pentaspherical	98.2	0.111	0.214	1.765	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Common sole	log(x+1)	1	0.9			pure nugget	-	0.003	0.000	6.000	0.25	0.5	5	15

E 3 Kriging parameters used for sub-sampling analysis (2006-2007)

	Data			Variog	ram				Kriging						
Year	Variable	Trans	Г	Q	Xmax	Step	Model	Var - mod	Nugget	Sill	Range	XY Block	Radius	Min points	Max points
	All species	log(x+1)	40	49.8	2	0.4	circular	99.8	0.895	1.152	1.169	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	14	25.4	0.6	0.12	circular	99.6	0.012	0.040	0.375	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	11	14.9	0.6	0.1	pentaspherical	73.9	0.107	0.051	0.606	0.25	0.5	5	15
2006	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	1.4	8.5	0.5	0.1	circular	83.6	0.038	0.015	0.416	0.25	0.5	5	15
st1_1	Dab	log(x+1)	31	41.4	1.6	0.3	spherical	99.6	0.208	0.433	1.592	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Whiting	log(x+1)	11	17.1	2	0.4	circular	90.5	0.091	0.081	1.558	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	7.1	9.9	2	0.4	circular	97.7	0.229	0.192	1.484	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	29	29.2	2.2	0.3	circular	95.4	0.097	0.079	2.039	0.25	0.5	5	15
	All species	log(x+1)	38	53	1.8	0.4	circular	98.2	0.835	1.149	1.119	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	12	18.8	0.7	0.1	pentaspherical	98.6	0.020	0.035	0.955	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	17	20.4	1	0.2	pentaspherical	93.2	0.053	0.088	0.422	0.25	0.5	5	15
2006	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	4.8	17.1	2.6	0.6	pentaspherical	98.4	0.037	0.042	2.332	0.25	0.5	5	15
st1_2	Dab	log(x+1)	31	42.4	1.25	0.2	pentaspherical	99.7	0.151	0.500	1.184	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Whiting	log(x+1)	15	23	0.5	0.08	pentaspherical	71.9	0.030	0.085	0.208	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	8.4	15	2.5	0.5	circular	96.5	0.137	0.242	1.398	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	20	27.5	2.15	0.35	circular	97	0.089	0.095	1.745	0.25	0.5	5	15

	All species	log(x+1)	41	49.5	2	0.4	pentaspherical	100	0.946	1.286	1.601	0.25	0.5	5	15
2007	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	13	17.1	3.5	0.6	circular	94.3	0.039	0.012	3.273	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	16	19.7	5	1	pentaspherical	98.1	0.133	0.072	4.580	0.25	0.5	5	15
2006	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	2.7	10.9	2.6	0.5	pentaspherical	76.6	0.047	0.029	3.300	0.25	0.5	5	15
st1_3	Dab	log(x+1)	32	43.2	2	0.4	circular	98.8	0.165	0.506	1.244	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Whiting	log(x+1)	8.7	9.9	4.5	1	spherical	64.4	0.062	0.060	1.011	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	7.2	9.7	2	0.4	pentaspherical	96.8	0.192	0.259	1.814	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	31	32.5	1.6	0.3	circular	99.6	0.080	0.072	1.212	0.25	0.5	5	15
	All species	log(x+1)	20	33.4	1	0.2	circular	99.7	0.475	1.729	0.883	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	8.8	14.1	0.5	0.1	pentaspherical	99.3	0.013	0.022	0.412	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	7.9	11	0.8	0.15	pentaspherical	99.5	0.062	0.075	0.749	0.25	0.5	5	15
2006	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	0.2	2	1.2	0.2	circular	96.2	0.012	0.066	1.060	0.25	0.5	5	15
st2_1	Dab	log(x+1)	7.2	15.8	1.25	0.25	circular	96.6	0.225	0.251	1.051	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Whiting	log(x+1)	4.1	3.8	1	0.2	pentaspherical	61.1	0.032	0.021	0.679	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	9.5	17.4	2.5	0.5	spherical	100	0.180	0.405	1.399	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	15	23.4	2.25	0.5	pentaspherical	100	0.070	0.200	2.277	0.25	0.5	5	15
	All species	log(x+1)	17	30.7	2.2	0.3	spherical	99.4	0.916	1.357	1.778	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	5.5	8	0.8	0.15	pentaspherical	99.9	0.012	0.020	0.462	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	7.7	1.8	2	0.4	circular	99.6	0.073	0.074	1.391	0.25	0.5	5	15
2006	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	1.4	3	1.8	0.35	circular	75.2	0.023	0.036	2.020	0.25	0.5	5	15
st2_2	Dab	log(x+1)	8.3	18.1	2.5	0.5	circular	96.2	0.229	0.329	1.409	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Whiting	log(x+1)	6.4	8	2	0.4	pentaspherical	99.1	0.039	0.032	2.002	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	10	21.3	2.25	0.5	pentaspherical	98.8	0.188	0.264	1.980	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	13	22.4	2.25	0.5	circular	99.3	0.095	0.143	1.824	0.25	0.5	5	15
	All species	log(x+1)	19	31.2	2.3	0.45	pentaspherical	98	0.872	1.351	1.526	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	8.6	14	2.25	0.5	pentaspherical	87	0.029	0.014	1.785	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	5.2	9.1	2.1	0.4	circular	84.8	0.107	0.047	1.766	0.25	0.5	5	15
2006 st2_3	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	0	2.8	2.5	0.5	circular	97.3	0.032	0.023	1.412	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Dab	log(x+1)	15	23	14.5	0.4	circular	93.9	0.226	0.249	1.058	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Whiting	log(x+1)	8.8	9.5	4.5	0.9	circular	96	0.050	0.010	2.359	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	5.4	10.3	2.5	0.5	pentaspherical	98	0.178	0.360	1.919	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	12	22.2	2.5	0.5	circular	99.3	0.069	0.163	2.077	0.25	0.5	5	15

	All species	log(x+1)	19	25.9	1.5	0.3	pentaspherical	99.6	1.137	4.127	1.179	0.25	0.5	5	15
2007	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	13	13.1	2.25	0.25	pentaspherical	98.8	0.053	0.056	2.184	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	25	28.6	1.25	0.2	spherical	99.6	0.047	0.125	1.127	0.25	0.5	5	15
2007	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	4.5	11.7	0.8	0.15	spherical	90.4	0.000	0.029	0.819	0.25	0.5	5	15
st1_1	Dab	log(x+1)	18	25.5	2.5	0.5	pentaspherical	98.7	0.172	0.539	2.003	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Whiting	log(x+1)	1	8.3	1.75	0.25	pentaspherical	97.6	0.042	0.116	0.687	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	11	17.6	4	0.8	circular	98.4	0.309	0.241	2.885	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	29	33.8	1.75	0.3	pentaspherical	96.8	0.046	0.174	1.386	0.25	0.5	5	15
	All species	log(x+1)	21	25.4	1.5	0.3	pentaspherical	99	1.487	3.843	1.096	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	11	11.1	1.2	0.2	circular	98	0.050	0.043	0.775	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	31	32.5	1.25	0.25	circular	94.9	0.064	0.112	1.082	0.25	0.5	5	15
2007	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	7.3	17	2	0.4	pentaspherical	93	0.003	0.031	1.894	0.25	0.5	5	15
st1_2	Dab	log(x+1)	27	36.8	2.5	0.5	pentaspherical	99	0.180	0.434	2.052	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Whiting	log(x+1)	11	12.5	0.8	0.15	circular	97.8	0.080	0.156	0.619	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	7.3	11.5	4	0.8	circular	94.9	0.405	0.205	3.463	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	31	36.7	2.5	0.5	pentaspherical	98.7	0.049	0.205	1.818	0.25	0.5	5	15
	All species	log(x+1)	15	20.9	2	0.3	circular	98.8	0.940	5.379	0.870	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	7	6.6	1.3	0.25	circular	65.1	0.050	0.045	1.020	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	25	25.9	1.2	0.2	circular	99.6	0.048	0.127	0.832	0.25	0.5	5	15
2007	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	6.7	14.5	3	0.6	spherical	98	0.006	0.032	1.380	0.25	0.5	5	15
st1_3	Dab	log(x+1)	29	37.3	3.5	0.6	pentaspherical	97	0.272	0.358	2.282	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Whiting	log(x+1)	3.8	6	1	0.2	circular	99.8	0.071	0.215	0.689	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	11	11.9	1.2	0.25	circular	98	0.092	0.430	0.771	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	24	29.4	1.5	0.3	circular	99.9	0.048	0.210	0.931	0.25	0.5	5	15
2007 st2_1	All species	log(x+1)	16	24.3	3	0.6	pentapsherical	96.9	2.180	2.945	2.211	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	5.9	7.2	1.75	0.35	circular	99.8	0.020	0.040	1.213	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	14	15.9	1.25	0.25	circular	96.5	0.046	0.053	0.779	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	19	27	2.5	0.5	pentapsherical	99.1	0.123	0.355	2.244	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Dab	log(x+1)	1.1	7.1	1.5	0.3	circular	99.6	0.070	0.096	1.038	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Whiting	log(x+1)	11	16	4	0.6	pentapsherical	99.7	0.225	0.239	3.479	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	19	30.1	2.25	0.5	pentapsherical	99.1	0.093	0.171	2.157	0.25	0.5	5	15

	All species	log(x+1)	16	22.4	1.5	0.3	pentaspherical	98.3	1.797	3.325	1.334	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	9.6	9.6	1.5	0.25	circular	96.2	0.029	0.022	1.284	0.25	0.5	5	15
2007	Cod	log(x+1)	6.5	9.5	2	0.35	pentaspherical	94.1	0.050	0.050	1.711	0.25	0.5	5	15
2007 st1 2	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	23	31.7	2	0.4	pentaspherical	99.9	0.076	0.399	1.933	0.25	0.5	5	15
501_2	Dab	log(x+1)	6.1	5.2	0.8	0.15	circular	96.2	0.054	0.131	0.689	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Whiting	log(x+1)	7.1	11.9	0.8	0.15	spherical	98.5	0.059	0.353	0.852	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	21	31.5	2.5	0.5	pentaspherical	97.1	0.094	0.165	1.670	0.25	0.5	5	15
	All species	log(x+1)	16	23.1	1.25	0.25	circular	99.6	0.679	3.619	0.749	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	8.5	8	2	0.4	pentaspherical	92	0.023	0.036	1.252	0.25	0.5	5	15
2007	Cod	log(x+1)	9.7	12.3	1	0.2	circular	96.5	0.047	0.079	0.841	0.25	0.5	5	15
2007 st1_3	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	26	35.2	2.6	0.5	pentaspherical	95.4	0.112	0.351	1.931	0.25	0.5	5	15
st1_5	Dab	log(x+1)	3.4	5.2	0.55	0.1	circular	92.2	0.029	0.132	0.517	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Whiting	log(x+1)	2.1	7.1	1.25	0.25	pentaspherical	99.9	0.046	0.344	0.732	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	19	31.8	1.5	0.3	pentaspherical	98.9	0.049	0.199	1.250	0.25	0.5	5	15

E 4 Kriging parameters used for ZooScan data mapping (2008 – 2009)

	Data		Tr	Trend Variogram										Kriging				
Year	Variable	Trans	L	Q	Xmax	Step	Model	Var - mod	Nugget	Sill	Range	XY Block	Radius	Min points	Max points			
	All species	log(x+1)	6.5	14.8	1.7	0.35	exponential	97.3	2.300	12.000	0.274	0.25	0.5	5	15			
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	6.1	18.6	2.5	0.5	pentaspherical	99.9	0.216	0.397	1.675	0.25	0.5	5	15			
	Cod	log(x+1)	5.4	8.5	1.2	0.2	pentaspherical	87.2	0.081	0.134	0.890	0.25	0.5	5	15			
2008	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	5	10.9	1.7	0.3	circular	98.6	0.005	0.030	1.351	0.25	0.5	5	15			
2000 - 2005can stA	Dab	log(x+1)	5.9	12.9	1.7	0.3	pentaspherical	96.9	0.339	0.464	1.556	0.25	0.5	5	15			
zooscun_sur	Whiting	log(x+1)	11	19.8	0.5	0.1	circular	94.8	0.212	0.413	0.545	0.25	0.5	5	15			
	Flounder	log(x+1)	6.3	15.6	1.6	0.3	circular	99.4	0.141	0.412	0.531	0.25	0.5	5	15			
	Plaice	log(x+1)	7.6	12.8	1.7	0.35	circular	95.8	0.066	0.202	1.351	0.25	0.5	5	15			
	Common sole	log(x+1)	7.2	11	0.7	0.15	circular	93.4	0.024	0.011	0.413	0.25	0.5	5	15			

	All species	log(x+1)	4.9	13.4	1.9	0.35	circular	91.6	0.000	5.311	1.422	0.25	0.5	5	15
2008 _ zooscan_stB	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	4.6	16.5	2	0.4	pentaspherical	93.1	0.059	0.244	0.937	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	4.1	6.4	0.5	0.1	circular	92.9	0.055	0.102	0.466	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	3	7.5	1.6	0.3	circular	87	0.008	0.017	1.268	0.25	0.5	5	15
2008 _ 2008 can_stR	Dab	log(x+1)	4.4	10.7	2	0.4	pentaspherical	96.5	0.191	0.224	0.191	0.25	0.5	5	15
zooscan_scD	Whiting	log(x+1)	12	20.1	0.6	0.1	circular	93.3	0.152	0.177	0.485	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	4.4	13.8	1.4	0.3	circular	96.8	0.144	0.349	0.611	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	4.2	8.7	1.7	0.35	circular	98.1	0.068	0.153	1.501	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Common sole	log(x+1)	0.1	5.8	2.3	0.5	circular	95.9	0.008	0.016	1.452	0.25	0.5	5	15
	All species	log(x+1)	14	21.9	1	0.2	circular	95.5	0.838	2.899	0.527	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	20	23.2	0.69	0.12	pentaspherical	99.8	0.053	0.055	0.722	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	5.8	6.6	0.5	0.1	circular	95.5	0.077	0.136	0.398	0.25	0.5	5	15
2008 Vigual	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	9.2	19.5	0.9	0.15	circular	93.5	0.002	0.024	0.762	0.25	0.5	5	15
2008 Visuel (1/3)_st1 2008 Visuel (1/3)_st2	Dab	log(x+1)	13	25.5	1	0.2	circular	97.3	0.063	0.477	0.553	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Whiting	log(x+1)	22	26.8	0.8	0.15	circular	95.3	0.182	0.247	0.598	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	17	19.5	0.7	0.12	circular	95.5	0.067	0.135	0.513	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	28	34.4	2.2	0.45	circular	93.8	0.063	0.118	1.290	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Common sole	log(x+1)	17	20.6	0.65	0.13	circular	30.9	0.071	0.016	0.383	0.25	0.5	5	15
	All species	log(x+1)	11	20.1	1.7	0.35	circular	95.4	2.597	4.932	0.650	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	6.7	9.1	0.65	0.12	circular	37.8	0.069	0.019	0.621	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	1.8	3.5	1.6	0.35	circular	94.2	0.185	0.140	0.636	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	8.2	17.8	2.2	0.45	spherical	100	0.007	0.036	1.292	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Dab	log(x+1)	9.3	20	2.5	0.5	circular	97.8	0.472	1.225	0.963	0.25	0.5	5	15
(Whiting	log(x+1)	25	31.5	0.7	0.15	circular	71.1	0.567	0.316	0.637	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	11	16.4	0.7	0.14	circular	91.9	0.251	0.069	0.634	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	1.3	19.7	3.5	0.7	pentaspherical	100	0.256	0.395	2.237	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Common sole	log(x+1)	13	16.2	0.7	0.14	pure nugget	-	0.090	0.000	6.000	0.25	0.5	5	15
	All species	log(x+1)	31	33.6	2.1	0.4	exponential	98.8	0.000	5.808	0.343	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	31	37.5	1.8	0.3	pentaspherical	99.5	0.069	0.189	1.701	0.25	0.5	5	15
2009 _ I zooscan_stA	Cod	log(x+1)	18	20.2	1.2	0.4	spherical	99.8	0.058	0.128	0.684	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	7.3	8.4	5	1	circular	98.9	0.016	0.007	3.165	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Dab	log(x+1)	15	19	2.2	0.4	circular	99.7	0.077	0.143	1.790	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Whiting	log(x+1)	24	32	0.8	0.15	circular	97.2	0.047	0.155	0.572	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	40	43.2	2.1	0.4	exponential	99.4	0.022	0.372	0.483	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	14	21.2	1.3	0.25	spherical	99.6	0.028	0.111	0.791	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Common sole	log(x+1)	17	25.9	0.8	0.15	circular	97.1	0.049	0.221	0.487	0.25	0.5	5	15

- • •															
2009 _ zooscan_stB	All species	log(x+1)	20	25.4	2.5	0.5	exponential	98.1	0.000	5.922	0.411	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Rockling sp.	log(x+1)	20	27.8	2	0.35	exponential	99.7	0.001	0.196	0.461	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Cod	log(x+1)	9.6	12.3	2.8	0.55	exponential	94.4	0.030	0.118	0.544	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Long rough dab	log(x+1)	0.3	0.9	1	0.2	circular	100	0.003	0.002	0.654	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Dab	log(x+1)	19	25.8	1	0.2	spherical	99.7	0.032	0.115	0.881	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Whiting	log(x+1)	16	25.2	1	0.2	spherical	99.7	0.044	0.137	0.560	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Flounder	log(x+1)	27	32.8	2	0.4	exponential	98.9	0.017	0.307	0.459	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Plaice	log(x+1)	4.3	11.7	1.5	0.3	exponential	99.3	0.000	0.153	0.308	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Common sole	log(x+1)	15	25.3	0.6	0.125	circular	99.2	0.047	0.196	0.504	0.25	0.5	5	15

E 5 Kriging parameters used for molecular data mapping (2008)

	Data		Tr	end			Variog		Kriging						
Year	Variable	Trans	Г	Q	Xmax	Step	Model	Var - mod	Nugget	Sill	Range	XY Block	Radius	Min points	Max points
	Enchelyopus Cimbrius	relative data	66.9	75.5	1.5	0.3	pentaspherical	93.4	1.69	0.048	0.02	0.2	0.6	3	10
Group 1 Se	Ciliata Septentrionalis	relative data	31.4	41.2	0.95	0.18	pure nugget	-	0	0.04	6	0.2	0.6	3	10
	Ciliata Mustela	relative data	39.7	47.4	0.95	0.18	circular	84.3	0.03	0.071	0.63	0.2	0.6	3	10
Crown 2	Cod	relative data	20.1	16.7	5	1	pure nugget	-	0	0.138	6	0.3	0.9	3	6
Group 2	Whiting	relative data	20.1	16.7	5	1	pure nugget	-	0		6	0.3	0.9	3	6
	Dab	relative data	11	8.3	1.2	0.2	pentaspherical	51.2	0.354	0.860	1.297	0.4	1.2	2	8
Group 3	Flounder	relative data	40	32	1.13	0.24	circular	85.1	0.000	0.037	0.636	0.4	1.2	2	8
	Trisopterus sp.	relative data	5	1.6	2.9	0.64	spherical	85.1	0.013	0.113	1.701	0.4	1.2	2	8

	Data		Tre	end			Kriging								
Year	Variable	Trans	L	ð	Xmax	Step	Model	Var - mod	Nugget	Sill	Range	XY Block	Radius	Min points	Max points
	Temp		70	77.5	1.6	0.3	exponential	99.9	0.026	0.229	0.449	0.25	0.5	5	15
2006	Chloro		9.6	22.4	2.5	0.5	pentaspherical	96.5	0.108	0.088	2.656	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Salinité		18	44.9	2.8	0.425	circular	94.1	0.109	0.179	2.184	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Temp		78	32.1	2	0.4	pentaspherical	99.1	0.033	0.245	1.133	0.25	0.5	5	15
2007	Chloro		1	5	2.1	0.3	circular	99.2	0.000	0.001	1.704	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Salinité		23	53	0.7	0.15	circular	97.3	0.050	0.409	0.510	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Тетр		68	77.8	2	0.4	circular	93.2	0.091	0.284	0.631	0.25	0.5	5	15
2008	Chloro		10	?	0.6	0.1	pentaspherical	98.7	0.000	0.000	0.543	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Salinité		18	43.1	3.2	0.6	circular	99.2	0.315	0.554	2.606	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Temp		66	70.1	1	0.2	circular	98.8	0.000	0.635	0.635	0.25	0.5	5	15
2009	Chloro		7.7	11.3	1.65	0.3	pentaspherical	99.7	0.000	0.000	1.480	0.25	0.5	5	15
	Salinité		9.2	30.1	3	0.5	circular	99.9	0.003	0.223	1.609	0.25	0.5	5	15

E 6 Kriging parameters used for environmental parameters (2006-2009)

Annex F Fish eggs distribution in function of boat trajectory

A difference in boat trajectory was observed between the years of sea survey. So, an analysis was needed to observe the influence of the trajectory of the boat on several campaigns (IBTS 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009).

1rst step: Simulated property distribution

First a simulated property field was generated and the effect of the sampling scheme on the interpolation quality was studied

Figure 1: Ideal sampling trajectory: A) simulated property distribution, B) sampling design and resulting interpolated property





But in reality, the trajectory of the boat is much less regular, so a more realistic but imperfect trajectory was used.

Figure 2: Realistic sampling trajectory: A) simulated property distribution and sampling design, B) resulting interpolated property





Although the resulting interpolated map is imperfect, it seems quite similar to the original simulated data, confirming that geostatistics and CUFES like sampling may still be able to depict a simulated property distribution.

2nd step: Boat trajectory analyses during IBTS 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009.

This vessel trajectory of each IBTS sea survey were comparable but slightly different each year. As a result there was a risk that the trajectories may generate artefact patterns due to unsampled area variation.



Sampling design performed using the CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish egg Sampler) during the first quarter of the IBTS (International Bottom Trawl Survey) for each year between 2006 and 2009. (IBTS 2006 + left, IBTS 2007 ○ middle left, IBTS 2008 X middle right and IBTS 2009 ▲ right)

The objective of this analysis was to investigate the kriging parameters effect and to obtain optimised parameters for identical interpolation each year, in order to eliminate the effect of the vessel trajectory. The stage 1 egg distribution map of plaice, during IBTS 2009 was taken as base data and was resampled with IBTS trajectories 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009.

Kriging parameters were investigated on the following ranges

- Variation of kriging block size (0.1; 0.2; 0.25; 0.3; 0.5),
- Variation of the search radius (0.4; 0.5; 0.6; 0.7)
- Variation of the numbers of neighbours (2-8; 5-15)

Kriging parameters selected were block size = 0.25, search radius = 0.5 and numbers of neighbours between 5 and 15. So, the patterns of plaice stage legg distribution were similar for the four years (2006-2009) and to the original map.

With these kriging parameters, the boat trajectory has reduced effect on fish egg distribution.





Plaice eggs stage 1 of IBTS 2009 applied on each trajectory: IBTS 2006 (left), IBTS 2007 (middle-left), IBTS 2008 (middle-right) and IBTS 2009 (right).

However, we must not ignore that a more regular sampling scheme repeated each year would be valuable for the analysis of inter-annual changes and recurrence of spawning areas.

Annex G Fish eggs distribution with sub-sampling

An analysis was performed to investigate the sampling resolution. A comparison between continuous sampling and three sub-sampling was realised. This analysis was done for each species and per developmental stage for IBTS 2006 and 2007, but only the results of fish eggs stage 1 of 2006 were presented here.



Each sub-sampling covered all the study area





Similar patterns were observed between sub-sets and were similar to those of the whole sampling. Little differences can be observed for species with lower occurrence frequencies such as Americain plaice and rockling species.

Annex H

Annex H 1 Fish eggs distribution, stage 1 (early stage) per IBTS sea survey between 2006-2009

Spatial distribution of fish eggs, stage 1. Maps were computed from the abundance (log-transformed) for each year between 2006 and 2009









Annexe I Target fragments sequencing for each species of each groups with primers sequences and

restriction enzyme corresponding

Group 1: Rockling Species Forward primer: Fishcytb-F: ACCACCGTTGTTATTCAACTACAAGAAC Reverse primer: R2-cb-plat428: GAGGACAAATGTCGTTCTGAGGTGC Enzym StuI: AGGCCT

Ciliata septentrionalis, cytochrome b gene

Enchelyopus cimbrius, cytochrome b gene

Ciliata mustela, cytochrome b gene

Group 2: Gadidae species: cod, haddock and whiting

Forward primer: F-cb-SPF-GAD: CCAGCCTTCGGAAAACCCATCC Reverse primer: R2-cb-plat428: GAGGACAAATGTCGTTCTGAGGTGC Enzyme HpyCH4IV: ACGT

Gadus morhua, cytochrome b gene
Melanogrammus aeglefinus, cytochrome b gene

Merlangius merlangus, cytochrome b gene

Group 3: dab, flounder and trisopterus species Forward primer: 16S-F: CAAGCAGAGAAGACCCTATGG Reverse primer: 16S-R-univ: CCGATCAACGAACCGAGTTACC Enzyme: Acil CCGC

Trisopterus luscus, 16S GTCAGAATTTCTGTTACTTGGAGTAGAGGCTCTGAGTGTTAGGGATTGTATCCCCGGTCCACATGGGGGGTTGTGTTTTACC<mark>CCGC</mark>GGTCGCCCCAACC AAAGACACTTCAGTAAGTATCAGTAAGTTTTTACTATTATTGCAGGATGTTAAACGTGATTTACTTTAGGTCTAAAGCTCCATAGGGTCTTCTCTG

Trisopterus minustus, 16S GTCAGAATTTCTGTTACTTGGAGTTAGAGGCTCTGAGTATTAGGGATTATATCCCCGGTCTACATGGGGGGTTGTGTTTTACCC<mark>CCGC</mark>GGTCGCCCCAACC AAAAACACTTCAGTAAATATCAGTAAGTTTTTACTATTATTGTAGCATGTTAAACGTGATTTACTTTAGGTTTAAAGCTCCATAGGGTCTTCTCTGCTA GA

Limanda limanda, 16S GTCAGAATTTCTGCTGGTTAGAGCTGTTGCTCTGGCTTGCGGGGGAGAAGAAGTAACTT<mark>CCGC</mark>GTGTGCTCCCCTTCCACGTGGGGGGTTTTGTATNCCCCA TGGTCGCCCCAACCGAAGACATCAAGGCAGGTTCCACTTAGTTCAGGCCCTTAGCGGGGGGTTATTTGACAT<mark>CCGC</mark>CACCTGTGTGTCTAAAGCTCCAT AGGGTCTTCTCTGCTAAGA

Platichtys flesus, 16S GTCAGAATTTCTGCTTGTTAGAGCTGTTGCTCTGGCTTGCGGGGAGAAGAAGTAACTTAGGGGGTGTGCTCCCTTTCCACGTGGGGGGTTTTGTATNCCCCA TGGTCGCCCCAACCGAAGACATCAAGGCAGGTTCCATTTAGTTCAGGCCCTTAGCTGGGGGGTATNTGACAT<mark>CCGC</mark>CACCTGTGTGTCTAAAGCTCCAT AGGGTCTTCTCTGCTAGA

Group 4: plaice and Americain plaice

Forward primer: F1-Cb-SPF-Ppla: CCCCTTCTTAAAATCGCAAACG Reverse primer: R2-cb-plat428: GAGGACAAATGTCGTTCTGAGGTGC

Hippoglossoides platessoides, cytochrome b gene

Pleuronectes platessa, cytochrome b gene

Annex J List of ZooScan attributes measured on each object in the data

section of the pid files

Angle	Angle between the primary axis and a line parallel to the x-axis of the image
BX	X coordinate of the top left point of the smallest rectangle enclosing the object
BY	Y coordinate of the top left point of the smallest rectangle enclosing the object
Width	Width of the smallest rectangle enclosing the object
Height	Height of the smallest rectangle enclosing the object
Х	X position of the centre of gravity of the object
Y	Y position of the centre of gravity of the object
XM	X position of the centre of gravity of the grey level in the object
YM	Y position of the centre of gravity of the grey level in the object
XMg5	X position of the centre of gravity of the object, using a gamma value of 51
YMg5	Y position of the centre of gravity of the object, using a gamma value of 51
Xstart	X coordinate of the top left point of the image
Ystart	Y coordinate of the top left point of the image

Size attributes

Area	Surface area of the object in square pixels
Area_exc	Surface area of the object excluding holes
Perim	The length of the outside boundary of the object
PerimAreaexc	Perimetre to surface area excluding holes ratio (= Perim / Areaexc)
Major	Primary axis of the best fitting ellipse to the object
Minor	Secondary axis of the best fitting ellipse to the object
Feret	Maximum Feret diameter, i.e. the longest distance between any two points along the
	object boundary
FeretAreaexc	Feret to surface area excluding holes ratio (= Feret/Areaexc)
PerimFeret	Perim to Feret diameter ratio (= Perim / Feret)
PerimMaj	Perim to major axis ratio (= Perim / Major)
Fractal	Fractal dimension of object boundary (Berube and Jebrak, 1999)
Skelarea	Surface area of skeleton in square pixels. In a binary image the skeleton is obtained by
	repeatedly removing pixels from the edges of objects until they are reduced to the width
	of a single pixel
ESD	Equivalent Spherical Diameter = $2 * SQR(Area / Pi)$
Convperim	Length of the perimeter of the convex hull of the object
Convarea	Surface area of the polygon delimited by the convex hull of the object
Arearatio	Convex area to surface area ratio

Grey level attributes

IntDen	Integrated density; sum of the grey values of the pixels in the object = (Area*Mean)
Min	Minimum grey value within the object $(0 = black)$
Max	Maximum grey value within the object $(255 = white)$
Mean	Average grey value within the object; sum of the grey values of all the pixels in the object
	divided by the number of pixels
Mean_exc	Average grey value excluding holes within the object = (IntDen /Area_exc)
Median	Median grey value within the object

258	
Mode	Modal (most frequently occurring) grey value within the object
StdDev	Standard deviation of the grey values used to generate the mean grey value
CV	Coefficient of variation of the grey values = $(100 * (StdDev / Mean))$
Range	Range grey value within the object = $(Max - Min)$
SR	Standard deviation to range ratio = (100 * (StdDev/ (Max-Min))
MeanPos	Average grey value position = $(Max - Mean) / Range$
Skew	Skewness of the histogram of grey level values. It is a measure of lack of symmetry $(0 = normal distribution)$
Kurt	Kurtosis of the histogram of grey level values. It is a measure of whether the data are peaked (positive values) or flat (negative values) relative to a normal distribution
Histcum1	Grey level value at 25% of the normalized cumulative histogram of grey levels
Histcum2	Grey level value at 50% of the normalized cumulative histogram of grey levels
Histcum3	Grey level value at 75% of the normalized cumulative histogram of grey levels
Slope	Slope of the grey level normalized cumulative histogram

Shape attributes

Circ	Circularity = (4 * Pi * Area) / Perim ² ; a value of 1 indicates a perfect circle, a value
	approaching 0 indicates an increasingly elongated polygon
Circexc	Circularity = (4 * Pi * Area_exc) / Perim ²
Elongation	Ellipse elongation = (Major / Minor)
Symetrieh	Symmetry of the object in relation to the horizontal axis
Symetriev	Symmetry of the object in relation to the vertical axis
Symetriehc	Symmetry of the object in relation to the horizontal axis after thresholding at the grey
	level Histcum1 value
Symetrievc	Symmetry of the object in relation to the vertical axis after thresholding at grey level
	Histcum1 value
Convexity	= Convperim / Perim
Roundness	= Area / Convperim ²

Texture attributes

% area	Percentage of object's surface area that is comprised of holes, defined as the background grey level
Nb1	Number of remaining objects in the image after thresholding on level Histcum1
Nb2	Number of remaining objects in the image after thresholding on level Histcum2
Nb3	Number of remaining objects in the image after thresholding on level Histcum3
Fcons	Measure of contrast based on the texture feature descriptor (Amadasun and King, 1989)
ThickR	Thickness Ratio; relation between the maximum thickness of an object and the average thickness of the object excluding the maximum
CentroidsD	Distance between object centroid and grey level centroid in the object
CDexc	$= (CentroidsD)^2 / Area_exc$
CDist	Distance between object centroid and grey level centroid, after having enhanced using Gama function at level five, in the object

Annex K

K 1 Mapping of ZooScan data - IBTS 2008 - Earlier developmental stage







K 2 Mapping of ZooScan data - IBTS 2008 - Advanced developmental stage



-2° -1° 0° 1° 2° 3° 4° 5° 6° 7° 8° 9°

Microscope ZooScan Relative error 57 56 55 54 All species 53° 52 0.02 - 0.0 0.1 - 0.19 0.2 - 0.39 0.4 - 0.59 51 ah: 3.37 ligh: 3.3 50 0.6 - 0.79 N: 0 Low: 0 0.8 - 1 57 56 55° 54° Dab 53° 52 0.02 - 0.05 0.1 - 0.19 0.2 - 0.39 51 High: 2.85 High: 2.85 0.4 - 0.59 0.6 - 0.79 50 Low: 0 Low: 0 0.8 - 1 57 56 55 54 Flounder 53° 0.02 . 0 52 0.1 - 0.19 0.2 - 0.39 51 High: 2.47 High: 2.47 0.4 - 0.59 0.6 - 0.79 50 0 N: 0 0.8 57 56 55° Rockling 54° species 53° 0.01 0.02 - 0.0 52 0.1 - 0.19 0.2 - 0.39 0.4 - 0.59 51 High: 1.91 High: 1.91 0.6 - 0.79 50

Low: 0

-2° -1° 0° 1° 2° 3° 4° 5° 6° 7° 8° 9°

0.8 - 1

-2° -1° 0° 1° 2° 3°

4° 5° 6° 7° 8°

Low: 0

-2° -1° 0° 1° 2° 3° 4° 5° 6° 7° 8° 9°

K 3 Mapping of ZooScan data - IBTS 2009 - Earlier developmental stage



K 4 Mapping of ZooScan data - IBTS 2009 - Advanced developmental stage





Annex L

Evaluation strips

Predicted presence-absence and densities (($\log_{10}((\text{number eggs} / 20 \text{ m}^3)+1$) of each species as function of the significant explanatory variables: $\log_{10}(\text{stress} (\text{N.m}^{-2})+1)$, $\log_{10}(\text{depth} (\text{m})+1)$ and $\log_{10}(\text{chlorophyll } a \text{ concentration } (\mu g/l)+1$), temperature (°C) and exp (salinity (ppm))/10¹⁵). The effect of each sediment type on the species response is given by five lines or curves: X = Gravel, + = Coarse sand, \blacklozenge = pebbles, Δ = Fin sand and O = mud. Dab







Dab on corrected data by molecular analyses

1.8

10

1.0

0.8

0.06

0.4 0.5 0.6

0.08

2.0







0.5 0.6

0.4

0.3



Flounder on corrected data by molecular analyses







Cod













Whiting on corrected data by molecular analyses





Plaice











Ciliata mustela – Fivebeard rockling on corrected data by molecular analyses





Ciliata septentrionalis - Northern rockling on corrected data by molecular analyses



Enchelyopus cimbrius – Fourbeard rockling on corrected data by molecular analyses

M 1 Habitat modelling of data 2006-2009





M 2 Habitat modelling of data corrected by molecular analyses of IBTS 2008



GLM model

-2" -1

7" 8" 9"



Annex N

N 1 Articles

Martin, C.S., Vaz, S., Koubbi, P., Meaden, G.J., Engelhard, G.H., Lauria, V., Gardel, L., Coppin, F., Delavenne, J., Dupuis, L., Ernande, B., Foveau, A., **Lelièvre, S**., Morin, J., Warembourg, C., Carpentier, A. (2010). A digital atlas helps to link the ontogenic shifts in fish spatial distribution to the environment of the eastern English Channel. Dab as a case study. Cybium, 34: 59-71.

Lelièvre, S., Verrez-Bagnis, V., Jérôme, M. and Vaz, S. (2010) Identification of formalin fish eggs in the Eastern Channel and Southern North Sea by molecular analyses. Journal of Plankton research, 32: 1527-1539 (doi:10.1093/plankt/fbq067).

Lelièvre, S., Vaz, S. and Fox, C. The effectiveness of the Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler (CUFES) compared with standard vertical plankton hauls for sampling the eggs of demersal species in the southern North Sea. Submitted to Fisheries Oceanography.

Lelièvre, S., Jérôme, M., Maes, G., Vaz, S., Sachidhanandam, C. and Verrez-Bagnis, V. Molecular validation and comparative mapping of morphologically identified eggs of dab (*Limanda Limanda*), flounder, (*Platichtys flesus*) and *Trisopterus* sp from the Eastern English Channel and southern North Sea. Submitted to Marine Ecology Progress Series

Antajan, E., Lelièvre, S. and Vaz, S. Comparison of traditional microscopy and digitalized images analysis to identify and delineate pelagic fish egg spatial distribution. Accepted in Journal of Plankton research.

Lelièvre, S., Vaz, S. and Loots, C. Recurrent spawning grounds and spawning habitat modelling of dab (*Limanda Limanda*), plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*), cod (*Gadus morhua*) and whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*), in the North Sea between 2006-2009. Submitted to ICES Journal of Marine Science.

N 2 Conferences

Lelièvre, S., Fox, C., Vaz, S. (2010) Winter fish egg sampling Continuous Underway Fish Eggs Sampler (CUFES) versus Vertical Egg Trawl (VET). Workshop on Egg Production Method, Athenes, Greece.

Lelièvre, S., Vaz, S., Antajan, E. (2010) Digital fish eggs image analysis using the ZooScan integrated system. Workshop on Egg Production Method, Athenes, Greece.

Lelièvre, S., Jérôme, M., Vaz, S, Verrez-Bagnis, V. (2010) Identification of formalin fish eggs in the Eastern Channel and Southern North Sea by molecular analyses. Workshop on Egg Production Method, Athenes, Greece.

Lelièvre, S., Vaz, S (2010) Fluctuations in spawning location of pelagic fish eggs in the Eastern Channel and Southern North Sea between 2006-2009. Workshop on Egg Production Method, Athenes, Greece.

Lelièvre, S., Vaz, Martin, C, Vérin, Y. (2008) Identification and characterisation of spawning area in Eastern Channel and southern North Sea. ICES CM 2008/M:03, ICES Annual Science Conference 2008 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, September 2008.

N 3 Posters

Lelièvre, S., Vaz, Martin, C, Vérin, Y. (2008) Identification and characterisation of spawning area in Eastern Channel and southern North Sea. Colloque « Approche Systémique des Pêches », Novembre 2008, Boulogne sur Mer, France.

Warembourg, C., **Lelièvre, S.,** Vaz, S., Schmitz, A., Antajan, E. (2008). Contribution of image analysis to ecosystem approach to fisheries: the study of ichtyoplanktonic and zooplanktonic assemblages. Colloque « Approche Systémique des Pêches », Novembre 2008, Boulogne sur Mer, France.
UNIVERSITÉ DE NANTES FACULTÉ DES SCIENCES ET DES TECHNIQUES

ÉCOLE DOCTORALE VENAM

Année 2011

Identification et caractérisation des frayères hivernales en Manche Orientale et sud mer du Nord

Résumés français des chapitres

THÈSE DE DOCTORAT

Discipline : Biologie des populations et écologie Spécialité : Ecologie marine

Présentée et soutenue publiquement par

Stéphanie LELIÈVRE

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Chapitre 1 :

Echantillonnage en continu des œufs de poissons (CUFES) comparé à un échantillonnage par un filet à plancton vertical (VET)

Ce chapitre est basé sur un article accepté dans Fisheries Oceanography, qui présente l'efficacité de l'utilisation du CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler) en Manche Orientale et dans le sud de la mer du Nord afin de collecter les œufs de poissons pélagiques en hiver.

 Lelièvre S., Vaz, S and Fox, C. The effectiveness of the Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler (CUFES) compared with standard vertical plankton hauls for sampling the eggs of demersal species in the southern North Sea. *Submitted to Fisheries Oceanography*

1.1 Introduction

Les frayères sont structurées dans l'espace à très petite échelle (<10 km) et il est donc difficile d'obtenir une haute résolution à partir d'un échantillonnage à l'aide d'un filet à plancton standard où les distances entre les stations sont typiquement de l'ordre de plusieurs dizaines de kilomètres. Pour résoudre ce problème, Checkley *et al.* (1997) ont élaboré un système de pompage en continu : Le CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Eggs Sampler). Cependant, la prise d'eau du CUFES est à une profondeur fixe (5 mètres), il y a ainsi des préoccupations concernant l'utilisation des données du CUFES pour estimer l'abondance totale des œufs, nécessaire lorsque l'objectif est de produire des évaluations de stocks (Armstrong *et al.*, 2001; Priede et Watson, 1993; Lasker *et al.*, 1985).

Les premiers stades de développement des œufs de poissons sont généralement planctoniques, les oeufs ont une flottabilité positive par rapport à la densité de l'eau ambiante. Ils ont donc tendance à s'accumuler dans la couche supérieure de la colonne d'eau (Sundby, 1983; Fritsch, 2005; Coombs *et al.*, 2004). Ainsi, le CUFES semble être une alternative à l'échantillonnage au filet à plancton. De plus, il est possible de prédire l'abondance des œufs sur toute la colonne d'eau à partir des données du CUFES en tenant compte de certains facteurs comme la

vitesse du vent et la profondeur (Pépin *et al.*, 2005; Van Der Lingen *et al.*, 1998; Checkley *et al.*, 1997).

Afin d'évaluer l'utilisation du CUFES dans le sud de la mer du Nord, la composition en espèces et l'abondance des oeufs collectés par le CUFES en hiver ont été comparées aux résultats obtenus en utilisant l'échantillonnage traditionnel par un filet à plancton (VET ou Bongo). Dans cette étude, les résultats obtenus par un échantillonnage au CUFES sont comparés à ceux obtenus par un échantillonnage au filet à plancton. Généralement, les résultats obtenus par CUFES étaient similaires, tant en abondance qu'en distribution spatiale à ceux du VET. De plus, les résultats ont montré que les données du CUFES peuvent être utilisées pour estimer l'abondance totale des oeufs dans toute la colonne d'eau en tenant compte de facteurs supplémentaires tels que la profondeur ou le vent qui affectent la distribution verticale des oeufs de poisson par le mélange de la couche supérieure de la colonne d'eau. Ce chapitre démontre l'efficacité et la pertinence de l'utilisation du CUFES en hiver en Manche Orientale et dans le sud de la mer du Nord.

1.2 Matériel et méthodes

Ce chapitre présente la zone d'étude : la Manche Orientale et la partie sud de la mer du Nord, qui ne présente pas de stratification de la colonne d'eau en hiver. Les données de notre étude proviennent de la campagne IBTS (International Bottom Trawl Survey). L'IBTS a lieu chaque année afin de recueillir des données nécessaires à l'évaluation des stocks de poissons démersaux (ICES, 2007). L'IBTS vise essentiellement à estimer l'abondance et la distribution des poissons, permettant le calcul des indices de recrutement pour les espèces de poissons exploités en mer du Nord.

Echantillonnage des œufs en continu : CUFES

Parallèlement aux actions ordinaires de l'IBTS, le CUFES est utilisé pour collecter les œufs de poissons afin d'obtenir des informations sur la distribution spatiale hivernale des frayères et sur les habitats de ponte de plusieurs espèces importantes. Une description détaillée est fournie par Checkley *et al.* (1997). Essentiellement, le système se compose d'une pompe submersible située sous le bateau à 5 mètres sous la surface de la mer. Un échantillon est prélevé toutes les 30 minutes, 24 heures sur 24 pendant toute la campagne IBTS (ce qui correspond à environ 20 m³ d'eau de mer filtrée par échantillon sur une distance allant de 0 à 7 km en fonction de la vitesse du navire).

Echantillonnage des œufs dans la colonne d'eau : le filet à plancton « BONGO »

En 2006 et 2007, un filet à plancton simple (cylindro-conique) a été utilisé alors que depuis 2008, un filet à plancton WP2 est utilisé. Sur chaque station hydrologique, une pêche verticale à l'aide du filet BONGO est réalisée parallèlement à un prélèvement CUFES. Le BONGO est un filet à plancton muni d'un collecteur aux mailles identiques à celles du CUFES (500 μ m), et équipé d'un débitmètre installé à son ouverture permettant de connaître le volume d'eau filtré et de le comparer avec celui du CUFES.

La conservation et l'identification des échantillons

Les échantillons collectés sont conservés dans une solution formolée (cf chapitre 4). Les œufs de poissons sont identifiés sous loupe binoculaire via des critères morphologiques tels que la forme de l'œuf, le diamètre, la présence de globule huileux, etc. (Russell, 1976; Munk and Nielsen, 2005; Lelièvre, 2007). Les oeufs sont identifiés jusqu'à l'espèce et comptés. Le nombre d'œufs obtenus pour les deux appareils est transformé en densité pour un volume standard de 20 m³. Cette densité est ensuite transformée $\log 10(x+1)$ pour approcher la normalité et permettre des comparaisons statistiques.

1.3 Résultats

Comparaison des deux méthodes d'échantillonnage

Une comparaison est donc réalisée entre les échantillons collectés par le filet à plancton et par le CUFES. Au total, 66 filets verticaux ont été réalisés en 2006, 68 en 2007 et 140 en 2008 (soit un total de 274). La comparaison de la composition relative des espèces entre le filet à plancton et le CUFES montre que l'abondance totale des œufs collectés par le filet à plancton est plus élevée que l'abondance totale des œufs collectés par le CUFES pour un même volume filtré.

L'abondance des œufs collectés par le filet Bongo est liée de façon linéaire à l'abondance des œufs collectés par le CUFES en prenant en compte des paramètres hydrologiques comme la profondeur ou l'intensité du vent. Des modèles GLM ont été construits dans le but de prédire l'abondance des oeufs présents dans la colonne d'eau (filet Bongo) en fonction de l'abondance des œufs près de la surface (CUFES) et d'autres paramètres comme le vent (ou le vent au carré), la profondeur et la tension de cisaillement résultant des courants tidaux. Les modèles obtenus illustrent bien qu'il est possible de reproduire correctement les niveaux d'abondance en utilisant des techniques de régression simple.

Analyse du rythme de ponte : jour-nuit et évolution sur un mois

Des histogrammes et des ANOVA ont été réalisés afin de comparer l'abondance des oeufs collectés le jour et l'abondance des oeufs collectés la nuit. Les analyses réalisées ne montrent pas de différence d'abondance entre le jour et la nuit, pour les poissons plats comme la limande, le flet et la plie. Cependant, il y a une différence significative pour les gadidés. En effet, merlan et morue sont plus abondants la nuit dans les échantillons du CUFES alors que les motelles sont plus abondantes le jour. Une analyse plus restreinte dans l'espace a également démontré qu'il n'y avait pas d'évolution significative de l'abondance des œufs de la plupart des espèces identifiées sur le mois que dure la période d'étude.

1.4 Discussion

Le principal avantage que présente le CUFES est que l'échantillonnage peut se produire simultanément avec les autres activités de la campagne, en station ou en transit, par toutes conditions météorologiques alors que le filet Bongo nécessite des stations fixes et ne peut pas être mis à l'eau dans des conditions de mer agitée (Checkley *et al.*, 2000). Nos résultats ont démontré la validité de l'utilisation du CUFES pendant la campagne IBTS en hiver dans la mer du Nord. Les données collectées peuvent être utilisées pour améliorer l'évaluation des stocks fondée sur la méthode DEPM (estimation journalière de la production d'œufs, Checkley *et al.*, 2000) mais aussi pour déterminer la distribution des frayères.

Les œufs de poissons pélagiques présentent une flottabilité positive et ils se situent principalement en surface. Ainsi, la stratification de la colonne d'eau peut provoquer une rétention des œufs à une profondeur donnée et nuire à l'utilisation du CUFES. Or, les profils CTD recueillis au cours de la campagne IBTS ont montré qu'il n'y avait pas de stratification de la colonne d'eau en Manche Orientale et dans le sud de la mer du Nord.

Les deux méthodes d'échantillonnage collectent les mêmes espèces d'œufs. Cependant, le VET collecte légèrement plus d'œufs que le CUFES. En effet, les œufs sont pondus au fond et remontent à la surface et se distribuent ainsi sur toute la colonne d'eau (Sundby, 1983, Ådlandsvik *et al.*, 2001; Conway *et al.*, 1997). Cependant les oeufs stade 1 sont plus fréquents près de la surface que les œufs de développement plus avancés.

Bien que l'échantillonnage par le filet à plancton collecte les œufs sur toute la colonne d'eau, la couverture spatiale reste relativement faible. En revanche, le CUFES peut filtrer un plus grand volume d'eau sous la surface. Néanmoins, les deux engins peuvent être complémentaires, lorsque l'objectif de l'étude est d'évaluer la biodiversité de l'ichtyoplancton ou de cartographier la distribution des espèces rares (Checkley *et al.*, 2000).

Pour toutes les espèces, il y a une corrélation positive et significative entre l'abondance des œufs dans le CUFES et le filet à plancton confirmant une proportionnalité entre les deux engins. Hors, en utilisant un modèle simple comprenant la densité des oeufs, la profondeur et le vent, il a déjà était possible de modéliser la distribution verticale des oeufs de morue (Sundby et al., 1983) ou d'anchois et de sardine (Boyra et al., 2003). De même, en utilisant un modèle hydrodynamique 1D en fonction de la taille des oeufs et de la densité des caractéristiques conditionnant leur vitesse verticale, Petitgas et al. (2006) ont réussi à reproduire les distributions verticales des oeufs de plusieurs espèces (sardine, sprat, anchois et merlan bleu) dans le golfe de Gascogne. La vitesse du vent semble avoir un effet positif sur certaines espèces grâce à son effet de mélange qui homogénéise l'abondance des oeufs sur la colonne d'eau (Coombs et al., 2003; Pépin et al., 2007). En incluant des paramètres supplémentaires comme le vent au moment de l'échantillonnage, la tension de cisaillement et la profondeur, il est possible de développer des modèles linéaires permettant d'estimer le nombre total d'œufs dans la colonne d'eau (estimation de l'abondance des œufs dans le filet à plancton) à partir des observations du CUFES. En effet, l'abondance des œufs en fonction de la profondeur peut être affectée par le mélange vertical dû aux contraintes de courants induits par le vent ou la marée.

Le CUFES a donc été prouvé comme fiable et simple à utiliser (Lo *et al.*, 2001) pour observer la distribution des œufs comme déjà réalisé par Van der Lingen *et al.* (1998) pour la sardine et le hareng. Cette étude démontre l'efficacité du CUFES pour estimer l'abondance et observer la distribution des œufs en hiver, de plusieurs espèces bentho-démersales en Manche Orientale et la partie sud de la mer du Nord.

Chapitre 2

Analyses géostatistiques et distribution spatiale des œufs

Ce chapitre présente les analyses géostatistiques et la méthode d'interpolation par krigeage permettant d'observer la distribution spatiale des œufs de poissons. Il est basé sur un article accepté et un autre en préparation.

(1) Lelièvre S., Vaz, S and Fox, C. The effectiveness of the Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler (CUFES) compared with standard vertical plankton hauls for sampling the eggs of demersal species in the southern North Sea. *Submitted to Fisheries Oceanography*.

(5) Lelièvre S., Vaz, S. and Loots, C. Recurrent spawning grounds and spawning habitat modelling of dab (*Limanda Limanda*), plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*), cod (*Gadus morhua*) and whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*), in the North Sea between 2006-2009. *Submitted to ICES Journal of Marine Science*.

Les analyses géostatistiques effectuées sur les données collectées par le filet à plancton et le CUFES, visent à confirmer que les distributions observées entre les deux méthodes d'échantillonnage sont comparables. Cependant le CUFES permet une meilleure résolution que le filet à plancton. Ainsi le CUFES permet de représenter les distributions spatiales des œufs des principales espèces de poissons qui pondent des œufs pélagiques en hiver en Manche Orientale et dans le sud de la mer du Nord.

2.1 Introduction

Les populations de poissons ne sont pas distribuées au hasard dans l'espace, mais présentent des distributions spécifiques (Loots, 2009). En effet, chaque phase du cycle de vie d'un poisson présente des structures spatiales différentes, ainsi les zones de reproduction des poissons sont distinctes des zones de nurseries. De plus, Bellier *et al.* (2007) émettent l'hypothèse que la distribution spatiale des œufs peut avoir une incidence sur le recrutement (Borja *et al.*, 1998, 2002) en altérant la composition démographique de la population. Ainsi,

la localisation des frayères est un point essentiel pour comprendre la dynamique spatiale et temporelle des populations de poissons. Planque *et al.* (2004) définissent ainsi les « habitats réalisés » où se produit effectivement la ponte. Le CUFES a été utilisé avec succès pour collecter les œufs des poissons pélagiques (Checkley *et al.*, 1997 et chapitre 1) et cartographier la distribution des œufs comme la sardine et l'anchois (Petitgas *et al.*, 2006).

La structure spatiale observée lors de campagnes scientifiques d'évaluation de stock peut être décrite par les analyses géostatistiques (Petitgas, 2001). Il s'agit d'une technique d'interpolation appliquée afin d'observer la distribution spatiale d'une espèce étudiée (Carpentier *et al.*, 2009 et Martin *et al.*, 2010).

Le but de ce chapitre est de présenter les analyses géostatistiques et la méthode d'interpolation utilisées pour observer la distribution spatiale des oeufs. Ainsi, des analyses géostatistiques ont été réalisées sur les données d'œufs collectés par le filet à plancton et par le CUFES en station afin de prouver la similarité des structures spatiales obtenues par le CUFES. Des analyses géostatistiques ont également été réalisées afin d'observer la distribution des œufs de poissons prélevés par échantillonnage en continu (en-route CUFES) pour localiser les frayères de chaque espèce en Manche orientale et dans le sud de la mer du Nord. La cartographie obtenue à partir des données du CUFES en continu pendant toute la campagne permet une observation à haute résolution. La distribution des œufs de poissons observée chaque année permet d'étudié la dynamique spatio-temporelle de l'utilisation des zones de frayères de chaque espèce.

2.2 Matériel et méthodes

Pour la comparaison de la distribution des œufs collectés par le VET (Vertical Egg Trawl ou filet à plancton) et le CUFES, les données utilisées dans le chapitre 1 sont utilisées. Cependant pour la seconde partie du chapitre concernant la distribution des œufs de poissons collectés par le CUFES en continu, les données d'œufs collectés par le CUFES de chaque campagne IBTS de 2006 à 2009 sont utilisées pour les analyses géostatistiques et les cartographies.

Les analyses géostatistiques

Les géostatistiques permettent l'estimation des valeurs d'une variable étudiée en des localisations non échantillonnées à partir de points de données plus ou moins clairsemés. Les géostatistiques sont plus connues sous le nom de krigeage. La normalité de la distribution

statistique des données a été testée en utilisant le coefficient d'asymétrie et le test de Kurtosis. Les données sont donc transformées $(\log 10(x+1))$ quand la norme du coefficient d'asymétrie et/ou du coefficient de Kurtosis excède 1 (Vaz *et al.*, 2005).

Le variogramme est l'outil central des géostatistiques : c'est une fonction qui mesure la relation entre des paires d'observations séparées par une certaine distance. Il résume la façon dont la variance d'une variable change quand la distance et la direction séparant deux points quelconques varient. Le variogramme peut atteindre une variance maximale appelée le palier de variance. La distance de séparation à laquelle le palier est atteint (la portée) marque la limite de la dépendance spatiale c'est-à-dire qu'elle décrit l'étendue de la structure spatiale observée. Le variogramme a souvent une intersection positive sur l'axe des ordonnées appelée pépite (Carpentier *et al.*, 2009). Quatre modèles (exponentiel, circulaire, sphérique et pentasphérique) sont ajustés statistiquement au variogramme expérimental en utilisant la méthode des moindres carrés. Le modèle présentant le meilleur ajustement visuel et statistique est sélectionné pour le krigeage qui permet d'obtenir une couverture continue.

La variabilité spatio-temporelle est aussi analysée en utilisant les données interpolées. Le ratio de la variance spatiale sur la variance temporelle est alors calculé (). Premièrement, la variance spatiale est calculée comme la moyenne de la variance entre tous les nœuds de grille sur toutes les années (2006-2009), puis la variance temporelle, comme la moyenne de la variance entre les années sur tous les nœuds de grille. Un ratio supérieur à 1 indique que la distribution est persistante dans le temps (Loots, 2009).

2.3 Résultats

Comparaison de la distribution des œufs collectés par le VET et par le CUFES

La répartition des œufs collectés par le filet à plancton, toutes espèces et stades confondus, est similaire à celle des œufs collectés par le CUFES en station pour l'IBTS 2006, 2007 et 2008. Les zones de plus forte abondance des oeufs sont généralement trouvées dans la partie Est de la zone d'étude et en Manche.

Des analyses géostatistiques sont réalisées afin de caractériser les structures spatiales et d'obtenir des couvertures continues de la distribution des œufs collectés en stations par le filet à plancton et le CUFES. La structuration spatiale et les distributions des œufs sont similaires pour les deux techniques d'échantillonnage. Cependant, le CUFES fonctionne en continu durant toute la campagne. Ainsi, les distributions des œufs collectés par le filet à plancton et le CUFES en station peuvent être comparées à la distribution des œufs collectés par le

CUFES en continu et montre ainsi des distributions semblables. L'échantillonnage au CUFES en continu permet d'obtenir un plus grand nombre d'échantillons augmentant ainsi la couverture spatiale et la résolution de la distribution des frayères.

Distribution des frayères

70 variogrammes (un par espèce, par stade de développement et par année) sont réalisés à partir de l'abondance (log-transformée) des œufs collectés par le CUFES en continu.

De façon générale, les oeufs stade 1 sont bien répartis sur toute la zone d'étude, à l'exception du Nord-Ouest, près des côtes écossaises. Les frayères semblent être bien établies au large des côtes belges, hollandaises et danoises. La plie et la limande sont les espèces les plus abondantes. La limande est très présente sur le Dogger Bank alors que la morue est abondante au large des côtes hollandaises avec de plus faibles abondances observées en Manche. A l'inverse, le flet et le merlan sont plus côtiers, présents près des côtes françaises, belges et hollandaises. Le flet s'étend jusqu'aux côtes allemandes en 2009. Les abondances des œufs de flet sont similaires entre les années alors que les abondances d'œufs de merlan sont en augmentation constante entre 2006 et 2009. Le balai de l'Atlantique est localisé au Nord de la zone d'étude et présente des abondances similaires entre les années. La sole est très localisée en Manche orientale et dans le sud de la zone d'étude avec de très faibles occurrences puisque la campagne IBTS correspond au tout début de sa période de ponte.

Une petite différence est observée entre la distribution spatiale des œufs stade 1 et des œufs stade 2 et + qui sont plus diffus et moins abondants. Cela est certainement dû à la mortalité naturelle des œufs ou encore à la dérive des œufs entre le moment où ils viennent d'être pondus (stade1) et les stades un peu plus développés (stade 2 et +).

2.4 Discussion

Les distributions spatiales des œufs collectés par le filet à plancton et le CUFES sont similaires. L'efficacité du CUFES a restitué fidèlement les distributions spatiales des œufs dans toute la colonne d'est est donc confirmé dans la zone d'étude.

Bien que la trajectoire du bateau ne soit pas la même chaque année, les paramètres de krigeage utilisés ont été optimisés afin d'éliminer l'effet de la trajectoire du bateau sur la distribution des œufs. L'utilisation du CUFES en continu permet d'obtenir un grand nombre d'échantillons et donc une haute résolution et précision de la localisation des frayères.

Cependant un échantillonnage à plus faible résolution (un échantillon sur 3) donne des distributions semblables.

Une différence de distribution est observée entre les œufs stade 1 (précoces) et les œufs stades 2 et + (plus développés) soit du fait de la dérive subie par les œufs soit par le phénomène de diffusion. De plus, les œufs sont transportés de façon passive avec les courants de surface (STST, Harden *et al.*, 1979 ; Bakun, 1996 et Van der Veer *et al.*, 1998). En effet, il y a une dérive avec les courants de surface, principalement en direction du Nord-Est, vers la côte pour atteindre les zones de nurseries. Il y aussi la mortalité naturelle des oeufs en raison de mauvaises conditions environnementales, la prédation, le cannibalisme (Bunn *et al.*, 2000) ou le déplacement des adultes qui influent sur la distribution des œufs de stade avancé.

La distribution des œufs présente une certaine stabilité entre les années, confirmée par l'analyse de la variabilité spatio-temporelle. La distribution des œufs de poissons montre l'importance de la Manche Orientale et du sud est de la mer du Nord pour les frayères. Cette étude a lieu pendant la campagne IBTS qui se déroule chaque année en Janvier-Février, depuis quatre ans (2006-2009). De nombreuses espèces pondent en hiver. La période d'étude correspond au pic de ponte de la plie, qui pond de décembre à avril (Loots, 2009) ou de la morue, qui a un pic de ponte de fin janvier à mi-février, alors que dans la partie Nord, la morue atteint un pic de ponte en avril (Heessen et Rijnsdorp, 1989). Toutefois, la limande pond de février à avril (Htun-Han, 1978) et le merlan, de février à juin avec un pic de ponte en avril (Loots, 2009). Le principal problème de cette étude est que l'IBTS semble donner une vision incomplète de l'activité de ponte du merlan et de la limande. Cependant, une augmentation de l'abondance des oeufs de merlan a été observée ce qui signifie que la saison de la ponte a peut-être avancée, comme pour la limande, qui est très abondante dans notre étude. Quant à la sole qui débute la ponte en mars (Munk et Nielsen, 2005), elle est présente dans nos données depuis 2007, ce qui signifie que la période de ponte se produit plus tôt également.

Chapitre 3

Variabilité inter-annuelle de la distribution des œufs de poissons

Ce chapitre est basé sur un article en préparation et présente une analyse de la variabilité inter-annuelle de la distribution des œufs de poissons pélagiques. Pour chaque espèce étudiée, la distribution spatiale des œufs a été cartographiée (chapitre 2). Ces cartographies ont été combinées sur les 4 années d'étude afin de définir les zones de pontes préférentielles, occasionnelles, non favorables et rares.

(5) Recurrent spawning grounds and spawning habitat modelling of dab (*Limanda* Limanda), plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*), cod (*Gadus morhua*) and whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*), in the North Sea between 2006-2009.
Submitted to ICES Journal of Marine Science

3.1 Introduction

Comprendre la variabilité de la distribution des zones de ponte est une question fondamentale. L'identification des zones de ponte de chaque espèce étudiée pendant la campagne IBTS en Manche Orientale et dans le sud de la mer du Nord requiert une description précise de la distribution des œufs. L'étendue spatiale et la localisation de la ponte peuvent varier fortement d'année à l'autre en fonction de la structure de la population et des conditions environnementales (Planque *et al.*, 2005). Toutefois, des expériences de marquage démontre un comportement de fidélité de la plie pour les zones de ponte en mer du Nord (De Veen, 1978, Hunter *et al.*, 2003). De plus, Fox *et al.* (2000) ont suggéré que les frayères de la morue et de la plie n'ont probablement pas beaucoup changé au cours des 30 dernières années.

L'objectif de cette étude était de déterminer la dynamique spatio-temporelle des frayères hivernales pour plusieurs espèces de poissons comme la plie, la morue et le merlan étant des espèces d'une importance commerciale et la limande étant l'espèce la plus abondante en terme de densité d'œufs dans nos données. Toutes ces espèces se reproduisent en hiver, entre janvier et juin avec un pic de ponte de la plie en janvier, de la morue en février et du merlan et de la limande en mars (Munk et Nielsen, 2005).

La méthodologie est présentée dans Bellier *et al.* (2007) et s'appuie sur la relation entre la moyenne et la variance temporelle de l'abondance des oeufs de poisson qui ont été combinés pour définir des catégories les zones de ponte (1) récurrente, où la ponte se déroule chaque année, (2) occasionnelle, où l'intensité de la ponte varie considérablement entre les années, (3) rares où la ponte est rarement observée et (4) défavorable, où la ponte n'est presque jamais observée (Bellier *et al.*, 2007).

3.2 Matériel et méthodes

Les données (nombre d'œufs standard pour 20m³, log-transformée) d'œufs collectés par le CUFES de chaque campagne IBTS de 2006 à 2009 sont utilisées pour les analyses géostatistiques et les cartographies. Seules les données des œufs de stade 1 (peu développés) sont utilisées ici, puisque les stades avancés ont certainement dérivé.

Les cartes de la distribution spatiale des oeufs de poisson résultant des analyses géostatistiques (chapitre 2) ont été utilisées pour étudier la variabilité inter-annuelle des frayères pour chaque espèce entre 2006 et 2009 en utilisant l'extension Spatial Analyst d'ArcMap.

Une carte de la distribution moyenne des œufs a été calculée pour chaque espèce correspondant à la moyenne globale des cartes entre 2006 et 2009. En parallèle, une carte de la variabilité de cette distribution a été calculée pour chaque espèce comme l'écart type global des cartes entre 2006 et 2009. Cette carte représente la variabilité de la distribution interannuelle des zones de pontes. Les cartes de la moyenne et la variabilité ont été combinées afin d'identifier quatre catégories de zones de ponte (Bellier *et al.*, 2007) : (1) récurrente, où la ponte a lieu chaque année (moyenne élevée et écart type faible), (2) occasionnelle, où la ponte varie considérablement entre les années (moyenne et écart type faibles), et (4) rare (basse et haute écart-type). Les seuils de distinction entre la valeur élevée et faible pour la moyenne et l'écart type ont été déterminés en utilisant l'histogramme des données, comme le troisième quintile et le quatrième quintile respectivement.

3.3 Résultats

Fluctuations spatio-temporelles des frayères

De façon générale, les zones de pontes récurrentes sont principalement situées dans la partie sud-est de la mer du Nord, près des côtes hollandaises, allemandes et danoises. Pour toutes espèces confondues, les œufs sont répartis sur toute la zone d'étude, à l'exception du nordouest, près des côtes écossaises, qui semble être une zone de ponte rare pour ces espèces en janvier-février. Les frayères récurrentes de toutes les espèces confondues sont principalement situées au large des côtes danoises et près des côtes hollandaises. La Manche semble être une zone de ponte rare pour la limande, les motelles sp. De plus, elle semble être une zone non favorable pour la morue (à l'exception d'une petite zone près de Boulogne-sur-Mer). Au contraire, la Manche représente une zone récurrente pour le merlan et la sole commune. La zone de ponte de la limande est principalement récurrente au centre de la zone ainsi que près des côtes hollandaises, allemandes et danoises où le flet semble être aussi récurrent. Les motelles ne semblent pas être récurrentes. Cependant le groupe motelle sp. regroupe plusieurs espèces de motelles susceptibles de pondre à cette période en mer du Nord et non différentiables de façon visuelle d'où cette grande variabilité. La morue est distribuée préférentiellement au large des côtes danoises. Le merlan pond essentiellement près des côtes françaises, belges et hollandaises qui semblent ne pas être récurrentes, mais plutôt occasionnelles. Cependant, une petite zone préférentielle est observée au large sous le Dogger Bank. La sole est principalement présente en Manche Orientale et dans le sud de la zone d'étude, mais cette zone ne semble pas très préférentielle. Toutefois, l'analyse de la variabilité de la sole ne porte que sur 3 années de données, puisque aucun oeuf de sole n'a été identifié en 2006. La plie est bien répartie, plus ou moins proche des côtes hollandaises, allemandes et danoises. Le balai de l'Atlantique est essentiellement abondant au large du nord de la zone d'étude, zone qui semble être récurrente.

3.4 Discussion

Les frayères de chaque espèce observée dans cette étude sont semblables à celles démontrées dans des études précédentes. La distribution des zones de ponte de la limande confirme les études précédentes (Bohl, 1957, Van der Land, 1991; Rijnsdorp *et al*, 1992, Martin *et al.*, 2010), comme celle du flet (Van der Land, 1991). Les œufs de sole sont observés plus tôt dans l'année entre 1988 et 1990 qu'en 1984 (Van der Land, 1991). En effet, de fortes densités sont enregistrées en avril comparé aux études précédentes qui enregistraient la sole en mai. La

distribution des œufs de morue près des côtes hollandaises et au large des côtes allemandes et danoises est conforme aux données historiques (ICES Oceanography Committee, 2005, Fox *et al.*, 2005). L'abondance des œufs de morue est moins importante que les années antérieures (Daan *et al.*, 1978). La distribution des frayères du merlan correspond aux zones de pontes décrites par Coull *et al.* (1998) et Gibb *et al.* (2004). La distribution de la sole est observée en Manche et près des côtes belges (Van der Land, 1991) comme le démontre cette étude.

Les frayères de la plie, principalement distribuées au large des côtes hollandaises, allemandes et danoises correspondent aux zones décrites par Harding *et al.* (1978). Cependant une abondance moindre est observée en Manche contrairement à Hessen et Rijnsdorp (1989) et Fox *et al.* (2005). Ainsi la Manche semble être une zone rare pour la ponte de la plie en janvier-février.

Pour chaque espèce étudiée ici, la localisation des œufs semble se répéter dans le temps. Ce qui souligne la forte fidélité des adultes dans leurs frayères. En effet, dans les rapport de l'ICES 2005 et 2007 (ICES 2005 a et b et ICES 2007), les auteurs expliquaient que les frayères de la plie étaient semblables à celle de Simpson (1959). De plus, des expériences de marquage ont démontré cette fidélité pour la plie en mer du nord (De Veen, 1978, Hunter *et al.*, 2003), mais aussi en Islande (Solmundsson *et al.*, 2005) et dans les eaux écossaises (Wright *et al.*, 2006). De plus, Loots *et al.* (in press a) ont montré que le merlan avait un fort attachement géographique pour son site de reproduction et suggère un mécanisme de « homing » (Papi, 1992).

La variabilité des œufs de poissons peut être due à la structure de la population, la croissance, la maturation et la fécondité (Rijnsdorp *et al.*, 1991). La variabilité dans le schéma d'échantillonnage pourrait être une cause de la variabilité de distribution des œufs. Cependant, comme vu dans le chapitre 2, les paramètres de krigeage ont été optimisés afin d'éliminer l'effet de la trajectoire du bateau sur la distribution des œufs.

Les résultats de cette étude soulignent l'importance du sud-est de la mer du Nord comme frayères récurrentes pour les espèces présentes en janvier-février. Cependant, les résultats obtenus par cette étude sont à prendre avec précaution, puisque la campagne est limitée dans le temps (janvier-février) et dans l'espace, ce qui donne une vue incomplète de la distribution des frayères hivernales. Ainsi, pendant l'étude, les espèces ne sont pas toutes dans les mêmes conditions de ponte. La période d'étude correspond au pic de la ponte de la plie, qui se déroule de décembre à avril (Harding *et al.*, 1978) et de la morue. Cependant, la limande, la sole et le merlan sont au début de leur période de ponte (Russel, 1976, Htun-Han, 1978). De plus, une augmentation de l'abondance des œufs de merlan est observée ce qui signifie que la

ponte a lieu plus tôt, comme pour la limande qui est déjà très abondante dès le début de la campagne. Cette étude est réalisée sur les données de 2006 à 2009. Idéalement cette étude devrait se répéter chaque année et tout au long de la période de ponte de chaque espèce afin d'avoir une plus grande couverture temporelle et de couvrir la période de ponte du merlan et de la limande. De plus, il peut y avoir des erreurs d'identification visuelle. En effet, des difficultés peuvent être rencontrées pour distinguer la limande du flet ou la morue du merlan (Taylor *et al.*, 2002). Des analyses moléculaires permettent de confirmer les identifications visuelles (chapitre 4).

Cette analyse peut être utilisée en prenant en compte les paramètres environnementaux comme la profondeur, la salinité, la température, etc. La modélisation de l'habitat de ponte en fonction des variables environnementales est présentée dans le chapitre 6.

Chapitre 4

Identification des œufs de poissons par analyses moléculaires

Ce chapitre est basé sur deux articles : un article publié (1) qui présente une méthode basée sur la technique PCR-RFLP (Polymerase Chain Reaction – Restriction Fragment Length Polymorphism) appliquée à un fragment du gène du cytochrome *b* pour identifier des œufs de poissons formolés de morue (*Gadus morhua*), merlan (*Merlangius merlangus*), églefin (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*) d'une part et de trois espèces de motelles (*Ciliata mustela, Ciliata septentrionalis* et *Enchelyopus cimbrius*) d'autre part, qui ont des diamètres similaires et ne peuvent donc pas être distingués par identification visuelle. Le second article (soumis) présente l'utilisation de la PCR-RFLP sur un fragment du gène codant pour l'ARNr 16S afin d'identifier les œufs formolés de limande (*Limanda limanda*), flet (*Platychtis flesus*) et de trois espèces de tacaud (*Trisopterus esmarkii, Trisopterus luscus* et *Trisopterus minutus*). Dans cette étude, les solutions de fixation et de conservation des œufs ont été optimisées afin de développer la technique de PCR-RFLP sur des œufs formolés. Les techniques moléculaires permettent d'améliorer la précision de l'identification des œufs et donc la fiabilité des limites des frayères.

(2) Lelièvre S., Verrez-Bagnis, V, Jérôme, M. and Vaz, S (2010) PCR-RFLP analyses of formalin-fixed fish eggs for the mapping of spawning areas in the Eastern Channel and Southern North Sea. *Journal of Plankton Research*, 32: 1527-1539.

(3) Lelièvre S., Jérôme, M., Maes, G., Vaz, S. Sachidhanandam, C. and Verrez-Bagnis, V. Molecular validation and comparative mapping of morphologically identified eggs of dab (*Limanda limanda*), flounder, (*Platichtys flesus*) and Trisopterus sp from the Eastern English Channel and southern North Sea. *Submitted to Marine Ecology Progress Series*.

4.1 Introduction

Les oeufs de poissons sont, de façon générale, identifiés de façon visuelle sous un microscope via des critères morphologiques tels que le diamètre de l'œuf, la présence d'un globule, etc. (cf introduction). Cependant, chez certaines espèces comme la morue et le merlan ou encore le flet et la limande, les œufs ont des diamètres similaires ce qui rend l'identification visuelle difficile (Taylor *et al.*, 2002).

Les techniques moléculaires sont fréquemment employées pour l'identification des organismes en utilisant des marqueurs génétiques spécifiques (pour revues Teletchea, 2009 ; Puyet et Bautista, 2010).

Plusieurs méthodes d'analyse des œufs peuvent être utilisées : l'isoélectrofocalisation (IEF) (Mork *et al.*, 1983), les sondes immunologiques (antigène-anticorps) (Del Giacco *et al.*, 2000, Chiou *et al.*, 2004), les microsatellites (Hutchinson *et al.*, 2001; Hoarau *et al.*, 2002 et Hoarau *et al.*, 2004), l'utilisation de sondes TaqMan (Taylor *et al.*, 2002, Fox *et al.*, 2005 a and b and Fox *et al.*, 2008), la technique TaqMan de PCR en temps réel (Taylor *et al.*, 2002; Goodsir, 2007 et Bayha *et al.*, 2008) ou la PCR-SSCP (Single Strand Conformation Polymorphism) (Garcia-Vasquez *et al.*, 2006). Egalement, la PCR peut être couplée à une réaction de séquençage (Aoyama *et al.*, 2001, Akimoto *et al.*, 2002, Shao *et al.*, 2002, Saitoh *et al.*, 2009 and Kawakami *et al.*, 2010). Cependant, la méthode la plus utilisée pour l'identification des œufs de poisson est la PCR-RFLP (amplification suivie d'une coupure de fragment d'ADN par des enzymes de restriction spécifiques) (Comesana *et al.*, 2003, Aranishi *et al.*, 2005 a et b, Akasaki *et al.*, 2006 and Karaiskou *et al.*, 2007, Teletchea, 2009).

Dans cette étude, la méthode PCR-RFLP est utilisée sur le gène codant pour le cytochrome *b* pour identifier les œufs de merlan, morue, églefin et de trois espèces de motelles, puis sur le gène codant pour l'ARNr 16S pour identifier les œufs de limande, flet et de trois espèces de tacauds.

Des analyses géostatistiques sont effectuées sur les données obtenues par biologie moléculaire et comparées aux données obtenues par les identifications visuelles. Les données moléculaires permettent ainsi de localiser de façon plus précise les frayères.

4.2 Matériel et méthodes

Conservation des échantillons

Les données d'œufs collectés par le CUFES lors de la campagne IBTS 2008 sont utilisées. Pendant cette campagne, des muscles de poissons adultes, provenant des chalutages, ont été prélevés et conservés dans l'éthanol, afin d'obtenir des échantillons de référence.

Le problème principal pour l'identification des œufs de poissons par les techniques de biologie moléculaire est le risque de dégradation partielle de l'ADN suite à l'utilisation d'une solution de fixation formolée. Certains auteurs ont ainsi montré que le succès d'amplification de l'ADN par PCR peut être diminué (O'Leary *et al.*, 1994; de Giorgi *et al.*, 1994; Diaz-Viloria *et al.*, 2005). Aussi, les œufs de poissons ont tout d'abord été fixés dans une solution formolée (Mastail and Battaglia, 1978; modifiée par Bigot, 1979) contenant moins de 1% de formol et permettant une meilleure fixation des pigments. Après 2 à 3 semaines de fixation les œufs sont transvasés dans une solution de stockage, ne contenant pas de formol, évitant ainsi au maximum la dégradation de l'ADN.

La biologie moléculaire

Trois méthodes d'extraction de l'ADN ont été testées : la méthode phénol/chloroforme/isoamyle (PCI) (Quintero *et al.*, 1998 et Jérôme *et al.*, 2003 a), puis la méthode Chelex®100 (Jérôme *et al.*, 2003 b). Mais la technique retenue dans notre étude est la méthode d'un kit à billes magnétiques de la société Invitrogen (ChargesSwitch® Forensic DNA Purification Kit, Invitrogen, Carlsbad, United States). Le protocole standard a été légèrement adapté pour l'extraction d'ADN d'œufs de poissons.

Les muscles et les œufs ont été amplifiés par PCR selon un protocole précis (cf chapitre 4) en fonction du groupe d'espèces étudié.

Le séquençage des gènes étudiés (cytochrome b et ARNr 16S) a été réalisé sur les tissus provenant des échantillons adultes de référence afin de compléter les données de séquences accessibles dans les bases de données GenBank et FishTrace et d'observer la présence de polymorphismes inter-spécifique et intra-spécifique.

Enfin les réactions de restriction de polymorphisme de longueur (RFLP) permettant de couper les séquences d'ADN amplifié, grâce à des enzymes de restriction, en des sites spécifiques, est réalisée et les fragments générés sont visualisés après séparation par électrophorèse sur gel d'agarose.

Les analyses géostatistiques

La technique des géostatistiques est décrite dans le chapitre 2. Des analyses géostatistiques sont réalisées sur les données d'abondance (log-transformées) obtenues par les identifications visuelles pour chaque espèce, puis sur les données d'abondance relative obtenues par les analyses moléculaires. Les données provenant des analyses moléculaires, interpolées sont appliquées comme facteur de correction aux cartes interpolées des données visuelles par simple multiplication des cartes.

4.3 Résultats

Groupe 1 : les motelles

La réaction de PCR a été réalisée sur un fragment de 460 paires de base placé en 5' du gène codant pour le cytochrome *b*, avec les amorces Fishcytb-F (Sévilla *et al*, 2007) et R2-cb-plat-428 spécialement dessinée au laboratoire pour l'étude. L'enzyme de restriction choisie (StuI) a permis de distinguer les 3 espèces de motelles du fait de la génération de fragments différents selon l'espèce : *Enchelopus cimbrius* (Ec) 460 bp, *Ciliata mustela* (Cm) 335-125 bp et *Ciliata septentrionalis* (Cs) 189-146-125 bp.

Parmi les 221 œufs de motelle *sp.* analysés, 80 % des amplifications ont été positives. Les œufs de *Ciliata mustela* sont principalement présents à l'est de la zone, près des côtes françaises, belges, hollandaises et allemandes. Les oeufs de *Ciliata septentrionalis* sont présents principalement en Manche et dans le sud de la mer du Nord. Les œufs de *Enchelyopus cimbrius* sont présents au large des côtes hollandaises, au centre de la zone d'étude et totalement absents en Manche.

Groupe 2 : les Gadidae, merlan, morue, églefin

La réaction de PCR a été réalisée sur un fragment de 424 paires de base placé en 5' du gène codant pour le cytochrome *b*, avec les amorces Fishcytb-F (Sévilla *et al*, 2007) et F-cb-SPF-GAD spécialement dessinées pour l'étude. L'enzyme de restriction utilisée, HpyCH4IV, a permis de distinguer du fait de la génération de fragments différents selon l'espèce : le merlan *Merlangius merlangus* (213-211 bp), de la morue *Gadus morhua* (424 bp) et de l'églefin *Melanogrammus aeglefinus* (330-58-36 bp).

Parmi, les 183 œufs de gadidés analysés, 86 % des amplifications ont été positives. 105 œufs de morue ont été confirmés sur les 107 analysés, les 2 œufs mal identifiés se sont avérés être des œufs de merlan, ce qui donne un taux de bonne identification de 98 % pour la morue. Parmi les 76 œufs de merlan analysés, 54 avaient été correctement identifiés visuellement et

22 étaient en fait des œufs de morue, ce qui représente un taux de bonne reconnaissance de 71%. Aucun œuf d'églefin n'avait été identifié de façon visuelle, ce qui est confirmé par les analyses moléculaires.

Le merlan et la morue semblent avoir des frayères bien différentes. La morue pond au large de l'Allemagne et du Danemark, au centre de la zone d'étude alors que le merlan pond près des côtes françaises, belges et hollandaises.

Groupe 3 : limande, flet, tacauds

Un fragment du gène codant pour l'ARNr 16S a été amplifié avec les amorces 16S-F (C. Lemaire, unpublished) et 16S-R-univ (amorce dessinée au laboratoire). Le contrôle de la PCR donne des fragments de 254 paires de bases pour la limande et le flet et de 238 paires de base pour les tacauds. L'enzyme de restriction utilisée, Acil, a permis de distinguer la limande *Limanda limanda* (173-59 bp), le flet *Platichtys flesus* (173 bp), et les trois espèces de tacaud *Trisopterus minutus, Trisopterus esmarkii, Trisopterus luscus* (126 et 112 bp). Les trois espèces de tacaud ne peuvent pas être distinguées par cette enzyme de restriction sur ce fragment amplifié par manque de polymorphisme.

Parmi les 164 œufs analysés, 46 % des amplifications ont été positives. 99 œufs de limande ont été confirmés sur les 107 analysés, ce qui représente un taux de bonne identification de 93 % pour la limande. Parmi les 47 œufs de flet analysés, 30 ont été correctement identifiés et 5 étaient en fait des œufs de *Trisopterus sp.* et 12 étaient des œufs de limande, ce qui représente un taux de bonne reconnaissance de 64 %. Parmi les 10 œufs de tacaud analysés, 7 ont été confirmés et 3 étaient en fait des œufs de flet, ce qui représente un taux de bonne identification de 70%.

Les différentes espèces semblent avoir des frayères différentes. La limande est bien distribuée sur toute la zone d'étude, principalement au centre alors que le flet est plus côtier, près des côtes françaises, belges et hollandaises. Cette étude apporte peu d'information concernant les frayères des tacauds *sp*. de part leur trop faible occurrence. Une concentration d'œufs de *Trisopterus* sp. est observée près des côtes belges et une autre sur le Dogger Bank.

Groupe 4 : plie et balai de l'Atlantique

Seul le séquençage d'un fragment de 460 paires de bases placé en 5' du gène codant pour le cytochrome *b* a été réalisé pour ce groupe après amplification avec les amorces Fishcytb-F (Sévilla *et al*, 2007) et R2-cb-plat-428 spécialement dessinée pour l'étude.

Toutes les séquences obtenues sur 12 œufs de plie et 5 oeufs de balai de l'Atlantique confirment les identifications visuelles.

4.4 Discussion

Les analyses moléculaires permettent de localiser les frayères de façon plus précise. Ainsi, l'application des méthodes de PCR-RFLP, comme décrit ici combinées à une identification visuelle sont complémentaires.

Les études précédentes ont démontré le problème d'ADN endommagé suite à une fixation par une solution formolée (Chang *et al.*, 1994, Skage *et al.*, 2007 et Sawada *et al.*, 2008). La méthode de fixation réduit l'efficacité d'extraction de l'ADN (Caldarelli-Stefano *et al.*, 1999), et particulièrement son extraction à partir d'œufs de poissons (selon les résultats des études préliminaires de Brisson (2007) et Comeau (2007)). Cependant, dans cette étude, les solutions de fixation et de conservation ont été optimisées de façon à améliorer l'extraction de l'ADN et son amplification ultérieure.

La méthode d'extraction utilisée ici est basée sur une technique à billes magnétiques, technique rapide, ne nécessitant pas la manipulation de produits dangereux (Caldarelli-Stefano *et al.*, 1999).

Les échecs d'amplification sont certainement dus aux difficultés rencontrées lors de l'extraction de l'ADN du fait de la petite taille des œufs qui sont difficiles à écraser et à la très faible quantité d'ADN disponible principalement pour les œufs de stade 1 (peu développés).

L'ADN mitochondrial est souvent utilisé en ce qui concerne l'identification des espèces car il est plus résistant à la détérioration que l'ADN nucléaire, en raison de sa petite taille, de sa structure circulaire et de la protection offerte par le compartiment cellulaire de la mitochondrie. Il est aussi en nombre de copies beaucoup plus important par cellule que l'ADN nucléaire . Ainsi, le choix de l'ADN mitochondrial semble être particulièrement pertinent dans le cas de matériel biologique contenant de l'ADN en faible quantité tel que les œufs de poisson.

Les marqueurs mitochondriaux d'espèces les plus utilisés sont les gènes codant pour le cytochrome *b*, pour ARNr 16S ou pour la cytochrome oxidase c sous-unité I.

Les œufs de motelles ne peuvent être distingués de façon visuelle. Ainsi la PCR-RFLP sur le gène du cytochrome *b* a permis d'identifier trois espèces de motelles. En effet, *Ciliata mustela* et *Enchelyopus cimbrius* pondent à cette période mais de façon inattendue *C. septentrionalis*

est aussi présente dans la zone d'étude. Les œufs de merlan et de morue peuvent être identifiés par une réaction de PCR-RFLP sur le gène codant pour le cytochrome *b*. Aucun œuf d'églefin n'est observé dans notre étude. Le gène codant pour l'ARNr 16S permet de distinguer les œufs de limande, flet et tacaud. Cependant, les trois espèces de tacaud ne peuvent être différenciées (*Trisopterus minutus*, *T. luscus* and *T. esmarkii*) par cette technique, le fragment choisi n'étant pas suffisamment polymorphique entre les 3 espèces.

L'utilisation de la biologie moléculaire augmente la précision de la localisation des frayères, cette étude devrait être poursuivie afin d'obtenir une plus grande couverture temporelle car ici, seule l'année 2008 a été étudiée. Toutefois, cette méthode est longue et coûteuse et ne peut donc pas remplacer l'identification visuelle, les deux méthodes sont complémentaires.

D'autres méthodes pourraient être utilisées telles que la PCR multiplex ou la PCR quantitative qui pourraient permettre d'identifier et de quantifier chaque espèce présente dans l'échantillon en une seule étape, sans pré-tri visuel des œufs, ce qui permettrait un gain de temps important.

Chapitre 5

Reconnaissance automatique des œufs de poisson en utilisant un système d'analyse d'image : le ZooScan

Ce chapitre est basé sur un article en préparation (4) qui présente l'identification d'œufs de poisson par un système d'analyse d'images numériques, le ZooScan. Ce dispositif permet de dénombrer et mesurer des organismes zooplanctoniques.

(4) Antajan, E., Lelièvre S. and Vaz, S. Comparison of traditional microscopy and digitalized images analysis to identify and delineate pelagic fish egg spatial distribution. *Accepted in Journal of Plankton Research.*

5.1 Introduction

Les observations en microscopie traditionnelle sont toujours une tâche très coûteuse en temps (Grosjean *et al.*, 2004; Santos Filho, 2008). Dans un tel contexte, de nouvelles technologies basées sur l'analyse d'images automatisée peuvent fournir des données de manière plus rapide sur le zooplancton (Benfield *et al.* 2007). L'analyse d'images est considérée comme une alternative potentielle au traitement manuel traditionnel des échantillons de plancton (Jefferies *et al.*, 1984; Rolke et Lenz, 1984; Gorsky *et al.*, 1989; Steidinger *et al.*, 1990; Tang *et al.*, 1998). Ces dernières années, l'augmentation constante de la puissance des ordinateurs, le développement de matériel d'acquisition numérique et les progrès accomplis dans les techniques d'apprentissage utilisées pour analyser ces données nous permettent d'améliorer les traitements en analyse de l'image.

Mis au point récemment, le ZooScan, capable d'obtenir des images en haute résolution rend possible l'identification automatisée du zooplancton en utilisant des algorithmes d'apprentissage supervisé et peut produire des mesures utiles de l'abondance du zooplancton (biomasse et spectre de taille) pour une variété d'études écologiques (Grosjean *et al.* 2004, Schultes et Lopes 2009, Gorsky *et al.* 2010).

Dans cette étude, le ZooScan a été appliqué à des échantillons d'œufs de poisson fixés au formol, collectés par le CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Eggs Sampler) au cours des campagnes IBTS 2008 et 2009 (International Bottom Trawl Survey) en Manche et dans la

partie sud de la mer du Nord. Des cartes de distribution des oeufs de sept espèces, limande, flet, merlan, morue, sole, plie et balai de l'Atlantique, et des motelles obtenues à partir de l'identification visuelle et de l'identification par le ZooScan sont comparées. Cet outil permet d'acquérir rapidement des données précieuses sur l'identification, la taille des œufs de poisson et de cartographier les frayères.

5.2 Matériel et méthodes

Numérisation des échantillons avec le ZooScan

Les échantillons d'œufs de poisson collectés par le CUFES (350 échantillons provenant de l'IBTS 2008 et 1 050 échantillons provenant de l'IBTS 2009) ont été numérisés en utilisant le système d'imagerie ZooScan (modèle HYDROPTIC-V2) avec des logiciels d'imagerie dédiés ZooProcess et Plankton Identifier (Gorsky *et al.*, 2010). Avant la numérisation, les échantillons formolés sont rincés avec de l'eau du robinet et sont sous-échantillonnés, le cas échéant, en utilisant une boite Motoda (Motoda, 1959). Les échantillons sont versés dans la cellule de numérisation (11×24 cm) et les organismes sont séparés manuellement afin d'éviter qu'ils se chevauchent. Les échantillons ont été analysés avec une résolution de 2400 dpi, donnant des images de 16 bits, ensuite converties en une image 8 bits pour le traitement. L'image finale contient 243 niveaux de gris pour la caractérisation des organismes. Les objets ayant un diamètre circulaire équivalent supérieur à 0,3 mm ont été dénombrés et 51 paramètres (taille, forme et niveaux de gris) ont été extraits de chaque objet. Une vignette de chaque objet est extraite. Les mesures associées ont été sauvegardées dans un fichier texte appelé fichier de PID pour le processus d'identification ultérieur. Après la numérisation, l'échantillon est récupéré et archivé.

Construction et évaluation du fichier d'apprentissage

L'identification automatique des oeufs de poisson est faite en utilisant des algorithmes d'apprentissage supervisé disponibles dans le logiciel libre Plankton Identifier (Gasparini, 2007). Toutes les méthodes d'apprentissage supervisé nécessitent un sous-ensemble d'objets déjà identifiés par un expert (fichier d'apprentissage) pour produire un modèle de classification (classificateur). Premièrement, les oeufs de poissons de l'IBTS 2008 sont identifiés à l'espèce sous microscope afin de créer le fichier d'apprentissage. Deux stades de développement sont identifiés : le stade A (stades I et II), qui correspond à un oeuf sans embryon et le stade B (stade avancé, III et plus), qui correspond à un œuf avec un embryon plus ou moins développé. Par défaut, le classificateur distingue toutes les vignettes, y compris

les détritus, les œufs endommagés ou d'autres organismes (copépodes, chaetognathes, ...) qui auraient pu être collectés avec le CUFES. Comme nous voulions mettre l'accent sur les oeufs de poisson, nous avons créé des classes pour les œufs endommagés par espèce, sauf pour les œufs endommagés de la limande et du flet qui ont été rassemblés, et une classe nommée «détritus», afin de minimiser les biais au cours de l'analyse. Seules les espèces ayant une abondance relative et une fréquence élevée ont été prises en compte pour la construction du fichier d'apprentissage. Le classement a été effectué en utilisant l'algorithme Random Forest (Breiman, 2001), choisi parmi les sept méthodes d'apprentissage supervisé disponibles dans le logiciel Plancton Identifier (PkID; Gasparini, 2007, Gorsky *et al.*, 2010), connu comme donnant les meilleurs résultats. Les performances du fichier d'apprentissage ont été évaluées sur un fichier test indépendant est créé en utilisant un ensemble distinct, comprenant des objets non pris en compte dans le fichier d'apprentissage.

Les analyses factorielles et classification

Une analyse en composantes principales (ACP) suivie d'une analyse ascendante hiérarchique (HCA) ont été réalisées sur le fichier d'apprentissage sous le logiciel Tanagra (Rakotomalala 2005). Il s'agit d'une méthode d'analyse statistique de données multivariées, qui transforment les variables corrélées en de nouvelles variables indépendantes les unes des autres. Ces nouvelles variables sont appelées composantes principales. Cette analyse permet de réduire l'information à un certain nombre de composants plus limités que le nombre initial de variables. Nos objectifs étaient : i) analyser les interactions linéaires entre les 51 attributs du ZooScan, ii) identifier les groupes (sous-groupes d'objets dans le fichier d'apprentissage) et les attributs représentatifs de chaque groupe. La combinaison de l'ACP et l'analyse par groupes est une façon courante d'explorer les relations entre un grand nombre de variables et d'identifier les sous-groupes homogènes dans une population (Lebart et al. 2000). L'ACP est réalisée à l'aide des 51 attributs du ZooScan utilisés comme variables continues actives et les espèces comme variables supplémentaires. La HCA a ensuite été effectuée sur la base des coordonnées factorielles fournies par les deux premiers axes de l'ACP et sur les espèces du fichier d'apprentissage utilisé comme pré-groupes pour gérer l'ensemble de données très importantes et de créer le dendrogramme de ces pré-grappes. Le type de HCA utilisé ici est une classification ascendante (fondée sur le critère de Ward), c'est-à-dire une procédure qui place les objets les plus proches dans des clusters (Legendre et Legendre, 1998).

5.3 Résultats

Les performances du fichier d'apprentissage

Le fichier d'apprentissage et le fichier test sont composés respectivement de 3636 et de 2767 vignettes réparties en 24 classes. Le nombre d'œufs dans chaque classe dans le fichier d'apprentissage a été équilibré afin d'éviter le sur-apprentissage d'une classe par rapport à une autre. Pour la plupart des espèces, 300 à 400 oeufs ont été utilisés, sauf pour le balai de l'Atlantique pour lequel un peu moins de 200 oeufs ont été collectés en 2008.

La classification a donné de meilleurs résultats pour un fichier d'apprentissage où les stades de développement A et B sont combinés en une classe (sans distinction de classe). Ainsi, dans un premier temps, les œufs de poissons sont identifiés par espèce, sans distinction de stades de développement, et dans un deuxième temps, les stades de développement ont été déterminés pour chaque espèce séparément. Pour ces derniers, un fichier d'apprentissage qui permet de distinguer les stades A et B a été construit pour chacune espèce.

La matrice de confusion

La matrice de confusion donne un aperçu des résultats obtenus pour classer correctement les oeufs de poisson via le test indépendant. Les oeufs de de plie, de sole, de morue et de merlan sont bien reconnus (taux de vrais positifs supérieurs à 90%). Pour les oeufs de balai de l'Atlantique, le taux de bonne reconnaissance est de 86%. La principale confusion a été observée entre les oeufs de limande, de flet et de motelles avec des taux de bonne reconnaissance inférieurs à 80%. Les oeufs de poisson ont été distingués de la classe de détritus avec une très bonne précision.

L'analyse factorielle et le regroupement sur le fichier d'apprentissage

Les deux premiers axes de l'ACP effectués sur le fichier d'apprentissage expliquent 65% de la variabilité totale. La position des 51 attributs du ZooScan est indiquée par des flèches sur les axes factoriels dans le cercle de corrélation et les centroïdes des classes d'identification (des détritus et des oeufs de poisson) ont été tout simplement projetés dans ce plan factoriel sans participer au calcul. Le premier axe (42,83%) a été défini par les paramètres décrivant la circularité (circ., circexc., roundness) et la variabilité des niveaux de gris (Stdev., CV, Range) des objets sur le côté positif (r > 0,8) et les paramètres décrivant les objets ayant des niveaux de gris faible (moyenne, mode, médiane, Min, Histcum 1 et 2) sur le côté négatif (r < -0,8). Donc le premier axe oppose clairement la classe de détritus de toutes les classes d'œufs de

poisson. Le deuxième axe (23,63%) a été défini par des paramètres de dimension (Perim., Major, Feret, Skelarea, Convexperim, Convexarea) et permet la distribution des œufs de poisson le long de l'axe en fonction de leur taille. Ainsi, les gros oeufs de balai de l'Atlantique et de plie sont opposés aux oeufs de petite taille comme la limande, le flet et les motelles le long du deuxième axe.

Comparaisons des cartographies

Les mêmes schémas de distribution des oeufs de toutes les espèces confondues, identifiés au microscope et au ZooScan, tous stades confondus en 2008 et en 2009, sont observés. De fortes abondances sont observées dans la partie Est de la mer du Nord, des eaux françaises jusqu'aux eaux germaniques, en Manche, près des estuaires de la Canche, de l'Authie et de la Somme. Le taux d'erreur relative était en moyenne de $2\pm3\%$.

Comme attendu de part la matrice de confusion, la distribution des œufs de limande, flet et motelles sp. montrent des distributions différentes selon la méthode d'identification. L'abondance des œufs de limande (tous stades confondus) est plus faible avec le ZooScan par rapport à l'identification au microscope, contrairement aux abondances de flet et de motelles, pour les 2 années. L'erreur relative du flet et des motelles sp. est de $12 \pm 2\%$ et $20 \pm 40\%$, respectivement. L'erreur relative des oeufs motelle était en moyenne de 5% et 20% en 2008 et 2009, respectivement, reflétant la fréquence d'œufs relativement faible de ce groupe taxonomique. L'erreur relative est plus élevée lorsque l'on prend les stades séparément. En effet, l'erreur moyenne sur les stades 1 est de 59% en 2008. A l'inverse, en 2009, l'erreur moyenne est plus élevée pour les stades 2 (en moyenne 71%).

Les mêmes schémas de distribution des oeufs de morue et merlan, identifiés au microscope et avec le ZooScan en 2008 et en 2009 sont observés avec une erreur relative <4%. De plus, la distribution des œufs avec distinction des stades correspond aux observations microscopiques. Selon les identifications visuelles, la sole présentait une faible occurrence. Les œufs de sole été distribué uniquement dans le sud de la mer du nord. En 2008, les mêmes distributions sont observées entre les identifications au microscope et les observations au ZooScan avec une erreur relative inférieure à 2%. Cependant, l'abondance des œufs de sole obtenue par le ZooScan en 2009 était supérieure à celle obtenue par le microscope, donnant ainsi des distributions différentes En effet, la distribution de la sole, selon le ZooScan, s'étend en Manche et en mer du Nord. Comme le montrait la matrice de confusion, d'après le ZooScan, une confusion est possible entre les œufs de sole, merlan et morue, bien visible en 2009.

Cependant, les mêmes schémas de distribution des œufs de plie et de balai sont observés pour les deux méthodes.

5.4 Discussion

L'identification visuelle a permis de distinguer seize espèces au cours des IBTS 2008 et 2009, susceptibles de pondre en hiver et au printemps. La plie, la morue et le balai présentent des période de ponte hivernales avec un pic de ponte en février (Van der Land, 1991). Cependant, la limande et le merlan pondent généralement au printemps, avec un pic de ponte ne marsavril. Des études antérieures ont signalé que ces espèces débuter leur ponte en Janvier (Van der Land, 1991). Cependant, la période de ponte pour la sole commune débute normalement à partir de Mars avec un pic en avril-mai, mais depuis 2008 nous avons observé des oeufs de sole en hiver entre les côtes anglaises et belges. Comme nous avons voulu évaluer la capacité du ZooScan à identifier les principales frayères en Manche orientale et dans le sud de la mer du Nord, nous avons décidé de construire un fichier d'apprentissage avec les espèces présentant une forte abondance et fréquence. Cela peut avoir induit les contaminations mineures entraînant une baisse des performances de reconnaissance lors de l'application du fichier d'apprentissage sur l'ensemble des données. Mais nous avons supposé que la contamination par les autres espèces n'était pas significative en raison de leur faible présence dans la zone étudiée en hiver.

L'utilisation du ZooScan a permis d'analyser un grand nombre d'échantillons prélevés par le CUFES, d'identifier correctement les oeufs de cinq des huit espèces de poissons observés et de produire des cartes interpolées des frayères à haute résolution spatiale. En effet, une étude précédente avait démontré qu'un minimum de 30 objets étaient nécessaires pour permettre la reconnaissance et que plus de 350 objets par classe n'améliorer pas le taux de reconnaissance. Dans cette étude, environ 300-400 oeufs pour chaque groupe (sauf pour le balai de l'Atlantique) ont été utilisées pour le fichier d'apprentissage. La matrice de confusion montre que le fichier d'apprentissage permet de distinguer facilement la classe de détritus des œufs, avec une bonne précision, principalement en raison de paramètres tels que la circularité (comme le montre les résultats de l'ACP).

De façon générale, pour toutes les espèces confondues, la même distribution est observée entre les œufs identifiés par le microscope et avec le ZooScan. Cette similitude entre les cartes de répartition des oeufs a confirmé la validité de l'approche du ZooScan afin d'obtenir une estimation rapide de l'abondance des oeufs, de la distribution, et les spectres de taille. Cependant, il y a une différence d'abondance d'œufs entre les deux méthodes en raison d'une perte d'œufs entre chaque étape du processus d'identification (collecte, rinçage, identification au microscope, numérisation au ZooScan...) ou les œufs peuvent être endommagés ou collés ensemble de sorte qu'ils ne peuvent pas être identifiés par le ZooScan.

Une difficulté dans la reconnaissance automatique du plancton est le choix du nombre de classes (Fernandes *et al.* 2009). Nous avons démontré que la fusion des stades de développement des oeufs de poissons dans une seule classe permettait d'améliorer les performances de bonne reconnaissance de chaque espèce. Les détritus (qui comprenait également d'autres taxons du zooplancton) ont été très bien distingués des oeufs, principalement sur la base des paramètres de circularité comme le montre l'analyse ACP : les petits œufs (limande, flet, motelles sp.), les moyens (merlan, morue et sole) et les gros œufs (plie et balai de l'Atlantique).

La méthode d'apprentissage supervisé (Random Forest) utilisée dans cette étude a permis d'obtenir une bonne reconnaissance des œufs de balai de l'Atlantique, de plie, de merlan et de morue. Pour ces espèces, les distributions d'abondance sont comparables pour les deux méthodes d'identification, avec une erreur relative raisonnable (<10%). Cependant, cette méthode ne permet pas de distinguer les petits œufs (limande, flet, motelle), donnant des taux de bonne reconnaissance faibles (<80%) et des contaminations élevées (> 30%). En effet, les œufs de limande et flet ainsi que les œufs de merlan et morue sont difficilement distinguables, en particulier pour les premières stades de développement (Taylor et al., 2002). Afin de valider les standards, identifiés préalablement au microscope, utilisés dans le fichier d'apprentissage, des analyses moléculaires ont été réalisées (Chapitre 4). Si 92,5% des œufs de limande ont été correctement identifiés, seulement 63,8% des œufs de flet sont correctement identifiés, les oeufs restants (36,2%) étant les œufs de limande. De même, 98% des oeufs de morue ont été correctement identifiés, mais seulement 71% des oeufs de merlan, le reste (29%) étant des oeufs de morue. Ainsi, la répartition des œufs de morue et la limande, sur la base des identifications au microscope sous-estime l'abondance de ces espèces dans les frayères, alors que les abondances ont été surestimés pour les oeufs de flet et le merlan. Ces confusions possibles dans les standards a eu des conséquences graves sur la précision de l'identification et la cartographie des données du ZooScan.

L'identification des œufs de motelles sp. et de sole n'a pas entraîné de confusion au microscope en raison de la présence d'un ou plusieurs globule d'huile. Malheureusement, selon la position des oeufs sur la cellule de lecture, le globule n'est pas toujours visible, et

n'est donc pas utile pour l'analyse d'image. Cela explique pourquoi de mauvais résultats ont été obtenus suite aux identifications au ZooScan. Ces deux espèces ont été confondues avec d'autres espèces de la classe de taille similaire.

En effet dans des travaux futurs, l'effet au cours du temps, de la solution de fixation sur les oeufs devra être testé. En effet, une solution formolée peut changer la taille du diamètre des oeufs (Hislop et Bell, 1987). Cependant, la solution de fixation utilisée dans cette étude comprend moins de 1% de formol (cf. chapitre 4) ce qui devrait réduire tout effet de rétrécissement. Toutefois, le formol peut également augmenter l'opacité des œufs au fil du temps. Nous avons observé que les œufs de IBTS 2008 utilisés pour construire le fichier d'apprentissage étaient plus opaque et jaunâtre que les oeufs de 2009.

Afin d'améliorer les performances d'identification du ZooScan, plusieurs pistes peuvent être suivies. Tout d'abord le fichier d'apprentissage doit être équilibré pour les espèces qui sont sous-représentées (balai de l'Atlantique, motelles sp., morue et sole commune). Deuxièmement, l'analyse ACP a montré que parmi les 51 paramètres certains sont fortement corrélés et redondants. L'application d'une méthode de sélection des variables sur le fichier d'apprentissage pourrait probablement augmenter les performances du classificateur et conduire ainsi à une meilleure reconnaissance des espèces d'œufs de poisson. Enfin, la comparaison entre le ZooScan et les méthodes traditionnelles de comptage a montré que le ZooScan permet de donner une estimation de l'abondance des espèces (ou classe de taille) d'œufs. De plus, un facteur de correction obtenu par l'analyse moléculaire sur un sous-échantillonnage représentatif de chaque espèce peut être appliqué sur chaque groupe afin d'obtenir des cartes de répartition par espèce, d'une manière similaire à celle appliquée dans le chapitre 4.

Enfin, le ZooScan est d'un grand intérêt à envisager une plus haute résolution d'échantillonnage des frayères afin de cartographier la distribution des œufs. A côté de certains problèmes taxonomiques, le ZooScan peut rapidement donner des spectres de taille utile et estimer la biomasse des oeufs pour des études orientées vers l'environnement. Cette étude a donné des résultats encourageants sur la faisabilité d'identifier les œufs de poissons pélagiques en Manche orientale et dans le sud de la mer du Nord.

Chapitre 6

Modélisation de l'habitat de ponte des poissons

Ce chapitre est basé un article en préparation (4) qui présente la modélisation de l'habitat de ponte des poissons. Elle a été réalisée en utilisant l'abondance des œufs de stade 1 (peu développé) et les conditions environnementales comme la température, la salinité, la tension de cisaillement, la concentration en chlorophylle a et le type sédimentaire.

(5) Lelièvre S., Vaz, S. and Loots, C. Recurrent spawning grounds and spawning habitat modelling of dab (*Limanda Limanda*), plaice (*Pleuronectes platessa*), cod (*Gadus morhua*) and whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*), in the North Sea between 2006-2009. *Submitted to ICES Journal of Marine Science*.

6.1 Introduction

L'habitat du poisson est défini comme un espace physique ou géographique indispensable à la réalisation du cycle biologique de l'espèce. Dans le cas particulier des espèces exploitées, il est nécessaire de connaître la nature et la qualité de tous les habitats critiques pour une gestion durable de la ressource. La protection des frayères constitue une condition indispensable pour la gestion des stocks des espèces de poissons présentes dans la mer du Nord.

La distribution spatiale des oeufs de poisson est influencée par les préférences d'habitat, la taille de la population adulte et l'environnement (Bellier *et al.*, 2007). L'habitat est défini comme un ensemble complexe de réactions, des espèces de poissons, vis à vis de l'environnement biotique et abiotique (Benaka, 1999). En effet, la ponte est souvent liée à la formation de zone frontale (Munk *et al.*, 2002 et Munk *et al.*2009). En outre, la configuration de l'habitat de ponte influence le recrutement et donc la structure de la population adulte.

Les techniques de modélisation d'habitat (Guisan *et al.*, 2006; Austin, 2007) permettent de prédire la distribution potentielle d'une espèce par l'abondance des données et leur relation avec les variables environnementales. Un grand nombre de techniques de modélisation existent (Guisan *et al.*, 2006) : les modèles linéaires généralisés (GLM, McGullach et Nelder, 1989), les modèles additifs généralisés (GAM, Hastie et Tibshirani, 1990) et les régressions quantiles (RQ, Koenker, 2005, Guisan et Zimmerman, 2000 et Guisan *et al.*, 2006).

Les GLM appartiennent à la famille de régressions linéaires et permettent la modélisation de la réponse moyenne d'une variable. Cette méthode consiste à générer un modèle qui résume la relation entre la présence ou l'abondance d'une espèce et les variables explicatives de l'environnement. Les régressions quantiles sont utilisées pour modéliser l'enveloppe supérieure de la réponse de la variable, en explorant la façon dont l'abondance maximale évolue en fonction des variables environnementales, et d'estimer les effets limitants de cellesci. Les modèles peuvent produire des cartes de répartition potentielle qui permettent de refléter l'habitat optimal d'une espèce (Cade *et al*, 1999, Eastwood *et al*, 2003).

L'objectif de cette étude était de modéliser l'habitat de ponte en utilisant des modèles linéaires généralisés (GLM) et des régressions quantiles (RQ) pour identifier les facteurs environnementaux (température de surface de la mer, la salinité de surface de la mer et des fonds marins, la contrainte de cisaillement, la concentration de chlorophylle et le type de sédiments de fond) pertinents pour caractériser et prévoir l'emplacement des frayères.

6.2 Matériel et méthodes

Les données d'œufs collectés par le CUFES lors des campagnes IBTS de 2006 à 2009 sont utilisées. Dans un premier temps, seules les données des œufs de stade 1 (peu développés) des campagnes IBTS 2006-2009 ont été utilisées. Puis dans une seconde étape, les données corrigées issues des analyses moléculaires de la campagne IBTS 2008 (chapitre 4) ont été appliquées à toute la zone d'étude et utilisées pour la modélisation de l'habitat de ponte de 2008.

Les données environnementales

Trois variables environnementales ont été enregistrées au cours de l'IBTS. La température de surface (°C) et la salinité de surface ont été mesurées en continu en utilisant un thermosalinomètre de surface (3-5 m). La concentration en chlorophylle a (µg/L) a été mesurée à l'aide d'un fluorimètre. La profondeur de l'eau (m) a été mesurée en utilisant une sonde acoustique. La carte des sédiments de la Manche et de la mer du Nord a été modifiée par Carpentier *et al.* (2009), d'après le projet Margis et la carte des sédiments superficiels de Larsonneur (1982). Les sédiments ont finalement été reclassés en cinq catégories: la boue, le sable fin, le sable grossier, le gravier et les cailloux. La tension de cisaillement (Nm⁻²), est une mesure de la friction de l'eau sur le fond en raison des courants de marée. Elle a été estimée en utilisant un modèle hydrodynamique 2D développé à l'origine dans les laboratoires Proudman Oceanographic (Aldridge et Davies, 1993).
La modélisation d'habitat

Dans les GLM, les données de présence-absence ont été modélisées par un modèle binomial, séparément des données d'abondance positive, modélisées par un model Gaussian (McCullagh et Nelder, 1989). Cette approche permet de distinguer les variables environnementales qui influencent la présence ou l'absence des oeufs et celles qui influencent leur niveau d'abondance. Pour chaque modèle (binomial ou gaussian) la sélection des variables significatives est faite de manière progressive, à partir d'un modèle complet contenant toutes les variables et en utilisant le critère de l'AIC (Akaike Information Criterion; Akaike, 1974; Sakamoto et al., 1986). L'AIC est une mesure de vraissemblance entre les valeurs ajustées du modèle et les valeurs observées, pénalisées par le nombre de paramètres (nombre de variables explicatives) dans le modèle. Par conséquent, la sélection du modèle, basé sur l'AIC est exécutée comme un compromis entre l'ajustement du modèle et sa parcimonie. Les coefficients de régression pour chacune des variables retenues à la fin de la sélection ont été appliqués aux cartes moyennes des variables de l'environnement à l'aide de la calculatrice raster d'ArcMap. Deux cartes de prédiction sont ainsi obtenues, l'une décrivant la probabilité de présence (binomial) et l'autre décrivant les abondances (Gaussian). Ces deux cartes ont été combinées en un modèle delta, où les probabilités de présence ont été multipliées aux abondances (Stefanson, 1996 et Le Pape et al., 2003) pour obtenir une carte de prédiction de la répartition des frayères.

La technique des RQ permet de modéliser l'habitat potentiel plutôt que l'habitat réalisé, puisqu'elle analyse la limite supérieure des données en fonction des facteurs environnementaux (entre les 0,75 et 0,95 quantiles). Le modèle initial tient compte de toutes les variables disponibles et des polynômes du second ordre. Puis, à partir du modèle initial complet, les termes ont été enlevés par un processus d'élimination successive. Le but étant d'arriver à un modèle où tous les termes restant sont significatifs (p <0,05) sur au moins l'un des quantiles étudiés (Vaz *et al.*, 2008).

L'erreur de prédiction a été calculée pour chaque modèle sélectionné comme étant la différence entre les données observées et les données prédites relative à l'erreur maximum permise par les données. Ces erreurs de prédiction ont été cartographiées sous ArcMap, pour chaque espèce et chaque type de modèle afin d'observer la localisation de l'erreur et de visualiser l'ajustement des modèles.

Les modèles sélectionnés sont évalués par le coefficient de détermination qui mesure la proportion de variance expliquée par le modèle de l'abondance et / ou la probabilité de présence. Trois autres tests statistiques sont réalisés : la corrélation de Spearman, le test de Wilcoxon et le test de classement correct, en comparant les abondances observées et prédites appliquées à des données autogénérées (bootstrap). Le test de corrélation de Spearman permet de détecter une relation significative entre les observations et les prédictions. Le test de Wilcoxon permet de comparer la moyenne des abondances observées et prédites. Le test de classement correct a été effectué uniquement sur les RQ, il est défini comme la proportion des valeurs observées qui sont inférieures à celles prédites (Eastwood *et al*, 2003).

6.3 Résultats

Les cartographies de l'environnement

Tous les paramètres environnementaux et physiques ont été cartographiés pour la période 2006-2009, pour chaque année. Seules les cartes correspondant aux paramètres moyens des quatre années ont été présentées.

La température de surface dans la mer du Nord varie au cours de l'année. Les eaux pendant l'hiver sont bien mélangées (entre la surface et le fond). En été, cette tendance est inversée, la partie nord étant plus froide, et les eaux moins mélangées. Toutefois, en raison de la profondeur relativement faible et de la présence de vents forts et de tempêtes, il y a généralement peu de stratification dans le sud de la mer du Nord (Nielsen et St John, 2001). Dans la partie centrale de la mer du Nord, les températures de surface varient annuellement entre 3°C (minimum en janvier) et 18°C (maximum en août). Au cours de la campagne IBTS, les températures les plus élevées ont été observées près des côtes écossaises, alors que des températures plus froides sont observées le long des côtes allemandes et danoises. Au cours de l'IBTS, les températures varient de 4.0 à 9.0°C. La salinité moyenne dans la zone d'étude est de 30.2, le long des côtes belges, hollandaises et danoises, et peut augmenter jusqu'à 34.9. L'eau douce qui se jettent dans la mer du Nord par les estuaires (Meuse, Rhin, Escaut, Elbe) est responsable des faibles salinités observées. Une diminution de la salinité a pu être observée près de l'estuaire de la Tamise. La concentration de chlorophylle a est faible, mais visible à proximité des belges et hollandaises. Une plus forte concentration de chlorophylle a (0,18 mg / L) a été observée sur le Dogger Bank. La zone d'étude est relativement peu profonde allant de 30 m dans le sud-est à environ 200 m dans le nord-ouest. Le Dogger Bank est un grand banc de sable peu profond (15-36 m). Le type sédimentaire de la zone d'étude est principalement composé de sables fins. Un certain nombres de bancs de sable traversent la

mer du Nord. Des sables grossiers, des graviers et des cailloux se trouvent principalement dans le nord-est de la zone ou également dans le détroit de Douvres. La tension de cisaillement est plus forte dans la partie sud de la zone d'étude, près des côtes françaises, belges et anglaises. Pour la modélisation d'habitat, la profondeur, la concentration en chlorophylle *a* et la tension de cisaillement ont été log-transformées, tandis que la salinité a subit la transformation suivante : (exp (x) / 10^{15}) pour améliorer la linéarité de la relation avec la densité des œufs.

La modélisation d'habitat

La modélisation d'habitat a été réalisée pour toutes les espèces observées lors des campagnes IBTS (2006-2009), puis, la modélisation des habitats a été réalisée sur les données corrigées par les analyses moléculaires lors de l'IBTS 2008 (chapitre 4) afin de prédire la distribution des oeufs de poissons avec plus de précision pour la limande, la plie, le merlan, la morue et les trois espèces de motelle identifiées.

Les modèles sélectionnés

La pertinence des variables environnementales a été évaluée en utilisant le critère d'information d'Akaike. Toutes les variables ont été déterminées comme importantes, sous forme linéaire ou polynomiale dans la plupart des modèles. La concentration en chlorophylle *a* et sa forme polynomiale ont été sélectionnées dans tous les modèles binomiaux comme la température et la profondeur. Ainsi, ces paramètres semblent être particulièrement importants pour la présence-absence des œufs de chaque espèce. Le type sédimentaire a été sélectionnée dans chaque modèle binomial ou gaussien.

La probabilité de présence des œufs de limande, de flet, de plie et de morue était plus élevée dans des zones de faible tension de cisaillement et température, contrairement à la sole qui préfère une température élevée. Pour toutes les espèces, probabilité de présence des œufs augmente avec un niveau intermédiaire ou élevé de salinité, sauf pour la motelle à 5 barbillons et la motelle nordique.

Les analyses obtenues à partir des données de l'IBTS 2008 (corrigées par les analyses moléculaires) ont donné des modèles similaires. En effet, les mêmes variables ont été sélectionnées dans les modèles correspondants. La tension de cisaillement semble être explicative pour les trois espèces de motelle, principalement pour prédire la présence ou l'absence de la motelle à quatre barbillons (*Enchelyopus cimbrius*) et la motelle à cinq

barbillons (*Ciliata mustela*) alors qu'il semble important pour prédire l'abondance de la motelle nordique (*Ciliata septentrionalis*).

Les résultats de la modélisation (GLM et RQ) sont présentés dans l'annexe L. Les modèles binomiaux ont permis de prédire la probabilité de présence des oeufs de poisson pour chaque espèce, sauf peut-être le long des côtes belges et hollandaises, où une plus faible présence d'œufs de merlan, morue et limande a été prédite comparée aux données observées

Les deux modèles (binomial et Gaussian) ont été combinés en un modèle delta. En règle générale, les deux modèles, GLM delta et RQ étaient similaires pour toutes les espèces sauf pour la sole commune, le balai de l'Atlantique et la motelle nordique. Il semble donc difficile de prédire la distribution des oeufs de poissons de ces espèces. En effet, le modèle RQ de la sole commune prédit une abondance d'œufs potentielle sur le Dogger Bank, non observée lors de l'étude (2006-2009). En outre, le modèle de RQ de la motelle nordique prédit une faible abondance d'œufs à proximité des côtes danoises, non visible en 2008 des données corrigées.

En règle générale, la répartition prédite par les modèles (GLM et RQ) était cohérente avec les cartes interpolées pour toutes les espèces, mettant en évidence la capacité des méthodes de régression à reproduire les tendances observées en fonction de l'environnement.

Pour chaque espèce et chaque modèle sélectionné, l'erreur relative entre les données de distribution observées et prédites a été calculée et cartographiée. En règle générale, les erreurs sont plus élevées pour les GLM que les RQ dont les erreurs sont plus localisées. La moyenne des erreurs est comprise entre 0 et 0,18 avec une valeur moyenne de 0,09 pour les modèles GLM et de 0,02 pour les modèles RQ. Les cartes d'erreur ont montré la localisation des erreurs de prédiction, comme pour le flet et le merlan sur le Dogger et permettaient de connaître les zones de plus fortes incertitudes des modèles. Généralement l'incertitude était faible dans les zones de fortes abondances où les modèles semblaient moins à même de restituer le niveau d'abondance avec précision.

La validation des modèles

Les modèles ont été évalués en interne en utilisant le coefficient de détermination, une corrélation de Spearman, un test de Wilcoxon et un test de classification correcte. Pour chaque modèle, le coefficient de détermination, qui permet de mesurer l'ajustement du modèle aux données diffère pour chaque espèce. Les corrélations de Spearman révèlent une corrélation élevée et significative entre la valeur observée et prédite pour chaque modèle.

Ainsi, les prédictions et les observations sont cohérentes. Pour toutes les espèces, les tests de Wilcoxon étaient significatifs, confirmant qu'il y avait une différence notable entre l'abondance observée et prédite par les modèles delta GLM. Enfin, le test de classification montre que les modèles RQ sélectionnés délimitent bien l'enveloppe supérieure de la distribution des données et décrivent l'effet limitant de l'habitat modélisé. Cependant, les modèles réalisés sur des données corrigées par analyses moléculaires (2008) présentent un coefficient de détermination assez élevé pour tous les modèles. Pour les modèles effectués sur les données corrigées par la biologie moléculaire, les p-value du test de Wilcoxon ne sont pas significatives, pour toutes les espèces, ce qui signifie qu'il n'y a pas de différence entre les données observées et prédites. Sauf pour la motelle à quatre barbillons pour laquelle il y a une différence, sans doute en raison de sa faible occurrence.

6.4 Discussion

Cette étude a permis la modélisation de l'habitat de ponte des poissons et de quantifier l'importance relative de l'environnement sur la distribution des oeufs par les méthodes des GLM et RQ. Ainsi, l'«habitat potentiel », où les conditions environnementales sont adaptées, est décrit, par opposition à «l'habitat réalisé », qui est la partie de l'habitat potentiel où l'espèce est effectivement présente (chapitre 2).

Tous les paramètres environnementaux disponibles dans cette étude ont été retenus dans les modèles. Cela signifie que tous les paramètres environnementaux peuvent jouer un rôle important et complémentaire dans la détermination de l'habitat de ponte de ces espèces ou être de bon descripteurs indirects des facteurs réellement contraignant de cette distribution.

La modélisation par la méthode des GLM requiert deux étapes pour obtenir la prédiction finale et chaque modèle donne des informations complémentaires. Entre la présence-absence et l'abondance des modèles, les variables significatives ne sont pas toujours les mêmes. La combinaison des deux sous-modèles démontre que certaines variables peuvent être importantes pour la présence de l'espèce et d'autres pour l'abondance. La présence d'œufs de poisson a été essentiellement caractérisée par une température et une profondeur moyenne (Munk *et al.*, 2002). Au contraire, la tension de cisaillement a été principalement retenue dans les modèles Gaussiens pour prédire l'abondance des oeufs de poissons. En effet, les zones de ponte de la limande ont été observées dans des zones peu profonde (Martin *et al.*, 2010), entre 20 et 40 m de profondeur (Van der Land, 1991, Rijnsdorp *et al.*, 1992; Carpentier *et al.*, 2005), sur le Dogger Bank et au centre de la mer du Nord. De plus, la forte concentration des

oeufs de plie a été observée dans les zones peu profondes, moins de 50 m (Hardindg et al., 1978). L'influence de la salinité sur l'habitat de ponte est peu étudiée, cependant, Riley et Parnell, (1984) ont signalé que la morue pond dans des eaux de salinité de 34-35. La salinité moyenne dans la zone d'étude était comprise entre 30.2 et 34.9. De plus, les distributions d'œufs de poisson semblent être particulièrement liées à la concentration en chlorophylle a, notamment pour les œufs de limande dont la distribution semble suivre la répartition de la concentration en chlorophylle a. Au cours des campagnes IBTS, les températures les plus élevées ont été observées près des côtes écossaises (9°C), tandis que des températures les plus froides (4°C) sont observées le long des côtes allemandes et danoises. La survie des œufs de plie ont une marge de tolérance de 2-8°C (Harding et al. 1978). Le merlan préfère des températures comprises entre 6 et 9°C (Loots et al., sous presse a). Cependant, la température peut influer le temps d'incubation et la survie des oeufs (Bunn et al., 2000 et Van der Land, 1991). En effet, la mortalité des œufs de plie était plus élevée en 1988 et 1989 qu'en 1987, coïncidant avec une température plus élevée (Van der Land, 1991). Les adultes en ponte semblent préférer des zones de faible tension de cisaillement (Loots et al., sous presse b, Martin et al., 2010). Dans notre zone d'étude, la tension de cisaillement est plus forte dans la partie sud, près des côtes françaises, belges et anglaises. Le type sédimentaire est retenu dans chaque modèle. Cependant, principalement composé de sable fin, cette variable ne semble pas être très utile comme indicateur de l'habitat de ponte.

Les distributions des frayères prédites (GLM et RQ) de certains modèles sont en accord avec les distributions observées. Ainsi, la limande pond dans des eaux peu profondes, de température et salinité moyenne et à faible tension de cisaillement. Les oeufs de limande sont distribués près des côtes belges, hollandaises, allemandes et danoises et sur le Dogger Bank, tout comme les œufs de morue. Ces distributions ont également été confirmées par le modèle réalisé à partir des données corrigées à partir des identifications moléculaires de l'IBTS 2008. Les mêmes paramètres ont été sélectionnés pour les œufs de plie, ce qui confirme que les oeufs de plie ont été observés dans le centre de la zone d'étude. Toutefois, le merlan est plus côtier, observé près des côtes françaises, avec une tension de cisaillement élevée, près des côtes belges et hollandaises. Les oeufs de morue sont distribués principalement au large des côtes allemandes et danoises avec des petites concentrations côtières, près des côtes françaises, belges et hollandaises. Ainsi, les oeufs de morue sont principalement observés dans des eaux peu profondes, de température et salinité moyenne. Le balai de l'Atlantique est observé dans le nord de la zone d'étude avec une tension de cisaillement très faible. Les oeufs de sole commune sont observés en Manche et dans le sud de la zone d'étude, près des côtes françaises et belges, présentant une tension de cisaillement élevée.

Les oeufs de motelle à cinq barbillons sont principalement présents près des côtes françaises et belges, dans des eaux de faible profondeur, de salinité et température moyenne. En effet, la motelle à cinq barbillons est présente dans la zone intertidale, à moins de 20 m (Gibson, 1999). Toutefois, la motelle nordique peut être présente dans des eaux plus profondes (Claridge et Gardner, 1977) et les œufs sont principalement observés en Manche et près des côtes anglaises, avec une température et une salinité élevée. Les deux espèces semblent préférer une tension de cisaillement élevée, à l'inverse, les œufs de motelle à 4 barbillons sont présents près des côtes hollandaises, avec une faible tension de cisaillement, des eaux peu profonde et de température et salinité moyennes.

Les cartes d'erreurs aident à délimiter les zones où les modèles sont moins précis. L'incertitude des modèles peut être due au schéma d'échantillonnage ou aux modifications de l'environnement. La qualité du modèle varie selon l'espèce considérée. En effet, le coefficient de détermination du modèle Delta (GLM) est plus élevé pour la plie et la limande que pour la morue et le merlan. La pertinence des variables environnementales déterminées à partir de la modélisation de l'habitat reflète le fait que ces espèces ont des exigences différentes. Les poissons plats semblent être plus influencés par des paramètres de l'environnement que les gadidés.

Cette étude souligne la capacité des méthodes de régression à reproduire les distributions observées en fonction de l'environnement. Toutefois, les modèles Gaussiens peuvent prédire avec précision la moyenne des niveaux d'abondance observée. L'abondance des oeufs de poisson pourrait être mieux expliquée par des facteurs autres que les variables environnementales. L'efficacité de la prédiction est principalement due à la présence-absence des œufs, soit par le modèle binomial. Considérant que les conditions environnementales peuvent être utilisées pour prédire les zones de présence des œufs, l'abondance des oeufs peut être influencé par d'autres facteurs relatifs aux caractéristiques intrinsèques de la population (Loots *et al.* 2010). Par conséquent, les futures études sur la modélisation des frayères devraient tenir compte de ces facteurs. Néanmoins, la modélisation RQ a l'avantage de permettre de modéliser les limites supérieures des relations espèces-environnement et donc d'estimer les effets limitants de l'habitat d'une espèce. Cette approche permet de compenser le biais de la période d'échantillonnage ne couvrant pas le pic de ponte de toutes les espèces. En fusionnant plusieurs années d'observation, les modèles RQ permettent de refléter l'ensemble

des frayères potentielles. Cette méthode est également plus pertinente d'un point de vue écologique car elle permet d'identifié les paramètres limitant réellement l'abondance.

Les modèles obtenus à partir des données corrigées issues des analyses moléculaires (2008) semblaient être mieux adaptés que les modèles d'habitat pour les quatre années (2006-2009). Donc, il semblerait possible de modéliser l'habitat de ponte sur uniquement une année, bien que cela limiterait le pouvoir prédictif du modèle.

Toutefois, les conditions environnementales ne peuvent pas expliquer à elles seules la distribution observée, qui semble être influencée par d'autres facteurs relatifs aux caractéristiques intrinsèques de la population comme la densité ou la structure démographique (Loots *et al* 2010;. Loots *et al* sous presse a), ou l'état de la population adulte (Bellier *et al.*, 2007). La modélisation de l'habitat peut être améliorée ou complétée en incluant d'autres paramètres biotiques (taille de la population) ou abiotiques (situation géographique) ou encore les interactions entre les paramètres. Ces modèles peuvent non seulement être utilisés pour caractériser et délimiter les frayères, mais peut aussi ils peuvent servir à évaluer différents types de scénarios couvrant les changements climatiques, l'évolution de la biomasse du stock reproducteur, la dégradation d'habitat due aux activités de l'homme (Rochette *et al.* 2010).

Identification et caractérisation des frayères hivernales en Manche

Orientale et sud mer du Nord

Une meilleure connaissance des frayères des principaux poissons commerciaux de la mer du Nord semble nécessaire pour leur surveillance. La composition et l'abondance des espèces d'œufs collectés par le CUFES (Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler) sont comparées à celle collectées par le VET (Vertical Egg Trawl) permettant de prouver l'efficacité du CUFES en Manche et mer du Nord. L'identification des œufs de poissons principalement basée sur des critères morphologiques n'est pas toujours fiable. En effet, certaines espèces comme la morue (Gadus morhua) et le merlan (Merlangius merlangus) ont la même gamme de taille, ainsi des méthodes alternatives ont été développées. Premièrement, une technique de biologie moléculaire par PCR-RFLP puis un nouveau système d'analyse d'images, le ZooScan ont été développés pour identifier les œufs de poissons. Des cartes annuelles des frayères hivernales ont été réalisées et comparées entre elles afin de déterminer des zones de ponte récurrentes. Les œufs sont généralement bien distribués sur la zone d'étude, à l'exception de la zone Nord-Ouest de la mer du Nord, près des côtes écossaises. Et enfin, l'habitat de ponte des poissons a été modélisé en utilisant les méthodes GLM (Generalised Linear Model) et RQ (Regression Quantile) en fonction des paramètres environnementaux disponibles afin de prédire les frayères. Les résultats de cette étude multidisciplinaire ont permis d'améliorer les connaissances sur les frayères hivernales en Manche Orientale et sud mer du Nord et ont été discutés dans une perspective de protection et de conservation de ces zones.

Mots clés : Œufs de poissons, CUFES, VET, PCR-RFLP, cyt b, 16S, ZooScan, analyses d'images, analyses géostatistiques, interpolation, modélisation d'habitat, GLM, RQ

Discipline : écologie marine, ichtyoplancton

Identification and characterisation of winter spawning ground in the English Channel and Southern North Sea

A better knowledge and monitoring of principal commercial fish spawning grounds have become necessary in the North Sea. The efficiency of CUFES was proved by sampling pelagic fish eggs in winter in Eastern Channel and Southern North Sea. Fish egg taxonomic identification based on visual criteria cannot always be carried out effectively. In particular, cod (Gadus morhua), and whiting (Merlangius merlangus) or flounder (Platichthys flesus) and dab (Limanda limanda) have the same range of egg diameter and similar morphologies. Alternative identification methods using molecular techniques were developed to improve the accuracy of egg taxonomic identification. First, PCR-RFLP method, then, in order to accelerate egg identification, the use of a new laboratory imaging system, the ZooScan, able to produce high resolution images of zooplankton samples, was adapted to fish eggs and allowed their automated identification using supervised learning algorithms. The location of winter spawning grounds of fishes in the Southern North Sea and the Eastern Channel was illustrated using yearly maps and analysed over the available period to define recurrent, occasional and unfavourable spawning areas. Generally, fish eggs were found over the study area, except for the North Western of the North Sea, near Scottish coasts. Important spawning areas were clearly localised along the Belgian, Dutch and Danish coasts. Habitat modelling of these fish spawning areas was carried out using both GLM (Generalised Linear Model) and QR (Regression Quantile) and associated egg abundance to physical conditions such as temperature, salinity, bedstress, chlorophyll *a* concentration and bottom sediment types to characterise spawning habitat conditions and predict their extent and location. The results of this approach improve the understanding of spawning grounds' distribution and were discussed in the context of the protection and conservation of critical spawning grounds.