Forage Fish in Nearshore Waters of Prince William Sound, Alaska

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Forage fish are an important prey resource for marine mammals, seabirds, and other fish

Problem: Limited information on forage fish species in shallow, nearshore habitats of Prince William Sound

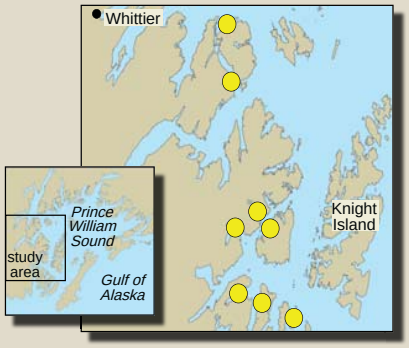
Objective: Identify seasonal distribution, habitat use, and relative abundance of forage fish in nearshore waters

What we did

- Sampled in 2006 (spring, summer, fall) and 2007 (mid & late summer)

- Sampled 3 habitat types

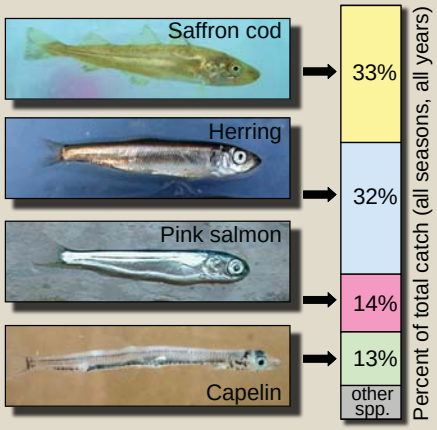
- Sampled 8 locations

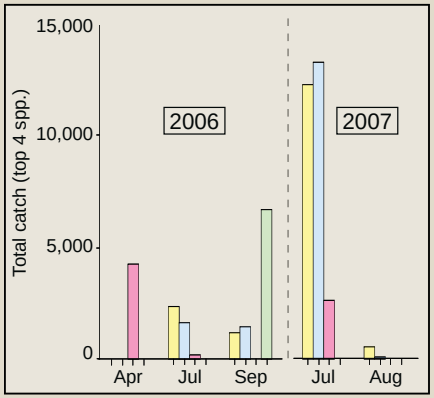


What we found

Species

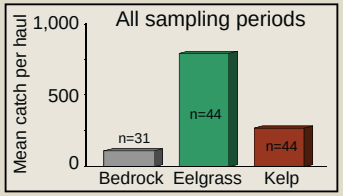
- Juveniles and larvae dominated catch
- 4 species accounted for 92% of catch
- Dominant species changed seasonally

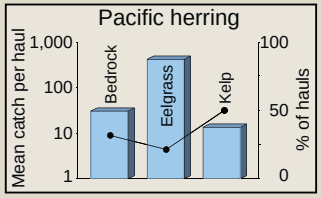


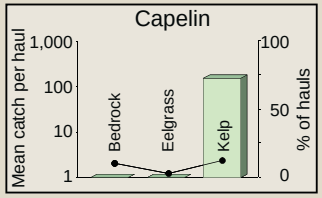


Habitat

- Catch (all spp.) greatest in eelgrass







- Herring captured frequently and in all habitats
- Capelin captured infrequently and mostly in kelp

What we learned

- Catch and composition changed seasonally
- Saffron cod dominate nearshore fish community
- Vegetated habitats used by herring and capelin
- Nearshore habitats used at least 6 months a year

Future plans

- Develop fish habitat model to predict quantity and quality of forage fish habitat in PWS
- Field verify the predictability and accuracy of the model

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