

Understanding the Decline and Recovery of one of the South Atlantic's largest fisheries (Southern Blue Whiting)

First published 30th September 2020

For his final research chapter PhD student Tom Busbridge has been investigating the effect of two types of fishing behaviour on the spawning dynamics of southern blue whiting (*Micromesistius australis australis*). During austral spring dense spawning aggregations of southern blue whiting form towards the south-southwest of the Falkland Islands. Historically these aggregations have been targeted by both bottom- and pelagic trawlers. This study aims to understand the differences in fishing behaviour between the two fleets and their combined effect on the structure of the spawning stock dynamics. Using 20 years' worth of fisheries data, the results from this study have revealed insights into the spawning hotspots for southern blue whiting, and changes in catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) across depth and half-month periods. The spawning stock structure was also found to have changed with the results indicating that recruitment was significantly reduced during high levels of exploitation as well as being highly dependent on cohort strength. Tom has now started putting his thesis together with the aim of getting it completed within the next couple of months. This project is in collaboration with the Falkland Islands Government Fisheries Department and the University of Aberdeen; and is funded by Fortuna Ltd.